

# The Reformation – A Review

## The Winds of Reformation

- As early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century the papacy had become vulnerable to attack because of the greed, immorality and ignorance of many of its officials in all ranks of the hierarchy
- Vast tax-free church possessions, constituting as much as 1/5 to 1/3 of the lands of Europe, incited the envy and resentment of the land-poor peasantry
- In the 14<sup>th</sup> century English reformer John Wycliffe boldly attacked the papacy striking at:
  - The sale of indulgences
  - The excessive veneration of saints
  - The moral and intellectual standards of the ordained priests
- To reach the common people, Wycliffe translated the Bible into English rather than Latin
- In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Wycliffe's teachings spread to Bohemia, where they found a powerful advocate in Jan Hus (John Huss):
  - His execution in 1415 led directly to the Hussite wars, a violent expression of Bohemian nationalism, suppressed with difficulty by the combined forces of the Holy Roman emperor and the Pope
- The wars were a precursor of religious civil war in Germany in Luther's time

## The French Papacy

- The captivity of popes at Avignon in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the ensuing western schism, gravely impaired the authority of the Papacy and divided its adherents into partisans of one pope or another
- Council of Constance 1414-1418:
  - Declared Wycliffe, posthumously, a heretic and ordered his bones to be dug up and burnt
  - Ambitious programmes for the reorganisation of the entire church hierarchy were debated, but none gained a majority
- In 1516 a Concordat between the French king and the Pope placed the French church substantially under royal authority
- Earlier concordats with other national monarchies also prepared the way for the rise of autonomous national churches

## The Gutenberg Press

- Invention of printing with movable metal type
- The Gutenberg Bible is the first book so printed – by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany in 1455
- Increased efficiency in printing, and a more literate population, enhanced the spread of ideas, fuelling the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation in Germany
- Scholarly studies laid the basis on which Luther, Calvin and other reformers claim the Bible, rather than the church, as the sole authority – this becomes the wedge that divides (and still is today)

## Martin Luther (1483-1546) (see notes on History of the Papacy)

- Born to a coal miner and decides to become a lawyer
- In 1504 an experience in a violent storm changes his course to pursue a doctorate of theology

- He was disillusioned by visit to Rome and burdened by his own sin he takes Habakkuk 2: 4 as his life text
- On 31 October 1517 Luther nails his 95 theses to the door at Wittenburg College which was basically a call to reform, much to do with the indulgences
- On 10 December 1520 a Papal Bul was issued excommunicating Luther and instructing him to 'retract within 60 days or death'. Luther burned it publicly...and the Reformation was born

#### The Centuries of Wars (see notes on History of the Papacy)

- Diet of Worms 1521: Charles V, Emperor of the 'Holy Roman Empire' (Germany, Spain, Netherlands and Austria) summoned Luther to appear – if he would not recant he faced death:
  - Luther says "Here I stand, I can do nought else, so help me God"
  - Because of the support of German princes and others Luther was not put to death
- The centuries of wars began:
  - War on the German Protestants (1566-1609)
  - War on the Protestants of the Netherlands (1566-1609)
  - Huguenot wars in France (1572-1598)
  - Philip of Spain's attempt against England (1588)
  - Thirty Years War (1618-1648)

#### The Jesuits (see notes on History of the Papacy)

- An order founded by Ignatius of Loyola on the principle of absolute and unconditional obedience to the Pope, having as its object the recovery of territory lost to Protestants and Muslims and the conquest of the entire heathen world for the Roman Catholic Church
- Their supreme aim was the destruction of heresy – that is; thinking anything different than that which the Pope said to think
- To accomplish this; anything was justifiable – deception, immorality, vice, even murder
- In France they were responsible for the St Bartholomew Massacre
  - Catherine de Medici, mother of the King (Charles IX), an ardent Romanist and willing tool of the Pope, gave the order and on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1572 a massacre of 70,000 Huguenots took place
  - There was great rejoicing in Rome: the Pope and his College of Cardinals went in solemn procession to the Church of San Marco and ordered the Te Deum to be sung in thanksgiving
  - Rome struck a medal in commemoration of the massacre
  - Sent a Cardinal to Paris to bear the King and Queen-Mother the congratulations of the Pope
- They were also responsible for persecution of the Huguenots, revocation of the Toleration Edict and for facilitating the French Revolution

#### The Roots and Course of Reformation

- Up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century:
  - 1054 Eastern Orthodoxy
  - 1173 Waldensians Peter Waldo
  - 1379 Lollards John Wycliffe
  - 1415 Hussites Jan Hus

- 16<sup>th</sup> century:
  - 1517 Lutheranism Martin Luther
  - 1521 Anabaptists Scandinavian Lutherans
  - 1523 Swinglianism Huldreich Zwingli
  - 1534 Anglicanism Henry VIII
  - 1536 Mennonites Menno Simons
  - 1536 Calvinism John Calvin
  - 1540's German Reformed Church
  - 1550's Hungarian Reformed Church
  - 1560's French Calvinists (Huguenots)
  - 1560's Scottish Presbyterians John Knox
  - 1560's Congregationalism
  - 1560's Puritanism
  - 1570's Dutch Reformed Church
- 17<sup>th</sup> century:
  - 1606 English Baptists John Smyth
  - 1647 Quakers George Fox
  - 1690 Amish Jacom Ammon
- 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century:
  - 1739 Methodism John Wesley
  - 1785 Protestant Episcopal Church
  - 1800 United Brethren in Christ
  - 1819 Unitarianism William Channing
  - 1831 Disciples of Christ Thomas Campbell
  - 1863 Seventh Day Adventists William Miller
  - 1865 Salvation Army William Booth
  - 1879 Christian Science Mary Baker Eddy
  - 1914 Assemblies of God

## The Denominational Church

General characteristics notably in the denominational church today

- 'Soft' hermeneutical (theory of interpretation) traditions – allegorical and thematic approach to the Bible
- Denial of the Millennial Reign of Christ (Amillennialism) – not just Rev. 20 but right through the Old Testament (e.g. Isaiah 65) – this flows out of the allegorical hermeneutic
- Denial of Israel's prophetic destiny – most denominational churches, being Amillennial, as a consequence have no regard or respect for Israel in a Biblical perspective...and many have a tendency to anti-Semitism
- Absence of a Biblical devotional life – having the bible as the centre of one's devotional life...and having a knowledge of God which comes from studying the Bible and a fear of God which comes from the devotional life
- De-emphasis of the Gospel of Christ – as defined by Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 1-4
- Many other issues; e.g. ordination of homosexuals; which would be unthinkable from a Biblical perspective
- Alliances: Evangelicals & Catholics Together:
  - On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1994 a joint declaration was signed called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" –hailed by some as the most significant event in 500 years of church history

- The compromise of the gospel lies at the heart of the agreement:
  - But the gospel hasn't changed
- On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1995 a surprising announcement – the Pope asked forgiveness of all wrongs and crimes committed and permitted by the Roman Catholic Church throughout their history
- Alliances: The 'Christian' Response to 'A Common Word Between Us and You'; an open letter from Muslim religious leaders on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2007:
  - On 18<sup>th</sup> November 2007 Christian scholars and church leaders, largely from the United States, responded en masse via a full-page advertisement in the New York Times. The letter, titled "Loving God and Neighbour Together: A Christian Response to 'A Common Word Between Us and You,'" was drafted by Evangelical Christians at the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture, and signed by more than 300 Christians leaders, a great majority of whom were Western Evangelicals
  - These exchanges have been followed by a joint conference in July 2008 and by other meetings both open and closed
  - Again the compromise of the gospel lies at the heart of these exchanges