

## Protestant Reformation & European Rivalries

### **Introduction**

Previously, the Catholic Church tolerated and embraced a wide range of practices that all fell under the rubric of Christianity. As discussed in week 2, there existed *syncretism*: cults, mysticism, saint worship, pagan rituals cloaked in Christian garb, etc. Mysticism was the only way for lay people to experience religion directly. It also opened up opportunities for women: i.e. you can be a mystic, but not a priest. There were large numbers of female mystics in the 14th and 15th centuries--e.g. Joan of Arc (d.1456).

### **Precursors to Reformation:**

Rise in urban literacy--allows people to read the Bible on their own--before focus of religion was on the ritual of the sacraments and easy lessons, e.g. 7 deadly sins.

One of the reasons for the rise in literacy was improvement in paper technology--13th and 14th centuries--and the development of movable type in the 15th century.

A related development was reading glasses, which enabled those with poor vision to read.

A movement called Brothers of the Common Life, later known as Modern Devotion encouraged religious life outside formal religious structures. It began in the late 14th century in the Netherlands and spread throughout N Europe. *The Imitation of Christ*, written in 1425, summarized the philosophy of the movement.

The rise of humanism in Renaissance Italy (15th century--spread N&W thereafter)--movement which involved the self-conscious idea of entering a new age: the ancient world was distinct from the medieval one, and people were embarking on another phase. This movement involved the copy, preservation, and study of ancient texts.

### **Abuses of the Church**

There were large numbers of priests who did not satisfy the obligations of priesthood: illiterate, ignorant, and not necessarily celibate.

There are Bishops who don't even live in the territory for which they are in charge.

Accumulation of revenue utilizing less than legitimate means: sale of high church offices and sale of indulgences. In the 14th century Pope Clement VII proclaimed the existence of a "treasury of merit" which could be dispensed at the Pope's discretion. It was on this basis that the Church could sell letters of indulgence covering works of satisfaction owed by penitents. About a hundred years later, the Pope extended indulgences to purgatory such that a person could pay not only for their present and future sins, but also the sins of relatives suffering in purgatory.

### **Martin Luther (d. 1534)**

He was born to a simple miner's family in what today is central Germany. He was fixated by the idea of guilt/evil. Consequently he spent a lot of time thinking about the use and abuse of indulgences. Originally schooled as a lawyer--a stepping stone to public office--he joined an Augustinian monastery after being thrown to the ground during a thunderstorm. He begins the reformation in 1517 by nailing his 95 theses against indulgences to the door of a Church in Wittenberg.

His message can be condensed into three main ideas. *Authority of Scripture*--the Bible is the sole foundation of Christian thought--not what other people say about it. *Justification by Faith*--More faith, less ritual--keeps only Baptism and Eucharist. *Priesthood of Believers*--no separation between the lay people and the priests--no need for celibacy--no miracle in mass--language of the believers should be the vernacular--translates Bible into German.

### **Spin-offs, Responses, & Consequences**

Zwingli (d. 1531)--likes Luther's simplicity. Belief that man is good, but needs constant correction and reminders to stay that way.

Anabaptists--while Zwingli and Luther see some role for church authority, these radical Protestants take things one step further. They want to return to the simplicity of the Church in the time of Christ--adult baptism, communal property, etc.

Calvin--discuss in class--predestination--much larger and longer lasting impact than Luther.

Counter-Reformation--Reform against the worst examples of corruption and extreme repression of heterodoxy via the Inquisition. Catholic orders, e.g. Jesuits, arise to emphasize good works and community service.

Catholicism and Protestantism become almost like two major international parties which can intervene in and complicate local disputes. Watch as people become more concerned with their allegiance to their state rather than their religion. A strong monarchy and a strong church will support each other, and the most effective monarchs place political objectives before religious ones.

### **Impact on Women & Family**

Protestantism places a high degree of emphasis on the family. One did not have to pledge his or her virginity to God to achieve a higher state of religiosity.

While there existed the notion of an equality of believers and a high degree of individualism, this did not mean equality in marriage. The husband and wife and complementary roles. Sexual fidelity was demanded by both sexes. The main function of sex is procreation, but recreational sex is OK within the bounds of marriage.

There is no place for women as pastors, eliminating a space that had existed in Catholicism for nuns and Saints.

### **Charles V & Protestants**

Charles was just a teenager in 1516 when he ascended to the Spanish (Castile & Aragon) throne as Charles I--he was schooled in the Netherlands and did not even speak Castilian Spanish. He had trouble getting his subjects to accept him, and when his Grandfather died, it created the opportunity for becoming Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. He borrowed money from Fugger banking family (Augsburg) to bribe the electors (see below). See chart for geneology and land.

As the old adage goes, the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman. It had been dominated by the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family since the 13th century. The empire consisted of 2000 imperial knights, some of whom owned no more than a few acres of land; 50 ecclesiastical and 30 secular princes; more than 100 counts; 77 prelates; and 66 cities all of which were politically independent but subordinate to the emperor. The unifying institution was the Diet, which had 3 assemblies: reps. of the cities, the princes, and the electors (the seven princes who decided who would be the emperor).

Early in his reign (1521), Charles takes a firm stand against Protestantism. About a year after Luther had been excommunicated, he issues the Edict of Worms, the secular equivalent of excommunication.

After dealing with difficulties on the Iberian peninsula, Charles had to deal with peasant uprisings in Germany--part of HRE--where peasants correlated getting rid of church hierarchy with getting rid of feudal hierarchy. Charles with the help of German princes, who are Catholic and Protestant (many convert to get Church land), brutally crush this rebellion.

Because Charles is facing a two-front war with the French and the Turks and needs the support from the HRE, he allows individual princes to enforce or not enforce sanctions against Protestantism that he created in 1521. With respect to the French there is the dynastic issue relating to Burgundy (see geneological chart), and the fact that Francis competed with Charles for the title of HRE. The Turks have completed conquest of the Balkans and

the Middle East--push deep into Hungarian territory--taking advantage of hostility between Charles and Francis.

Wars on all of these fronts sap the coffers of the royal treasury--Aragon with its stronger *Cortes* avoided the brunt--too much pressure put on Castile and later the Netherlands.

Charles abdicates in 1556 in debt and weary from all of these battles. He leaves his E European holdings to his brother Ferdinand, who takes the title HRE.

### **Philip II**

Son of Charles V & Isabella of Portugal. Before his father abdicated in 1556, he had already received his family's holdings in Italy and the Netherlands. With his father's retirement, he gets Castile, Aragon, and New Spain. From his mother's side he inherits Portuguese throne and its Asian outposts in 1580. A master of strategic marriage, he first marries his Portuguese cousin as a teenager. Just two years prior to his father's abdication, he marries Mary Tudor (see chart), aka "Bloody Mary". After her death, he tried desperately to marry her half sister Elizabeth I, but she would not have him. He then tries to use Elizabeth's cousin Mary Queen of Scots to bring her down, but Elizabeth executes Mary in 1587. The big showdown comes in 1588 when Elizabeth's navy defeats his armada. He inherited not only debts from his father, but also war with the Ottoman Turks. With some help from the Pope, he is able to defeat them in the Mediterranean in 1571.

He must also crush the rebellion in the Netherlands.

He marries Princess Elizabeth of France (originally betrothed to his son), and felt the need to interfere in a French succession crisis (on the Catholic side, of course). He sends troops to France (1589) after a Calvinist king takes the throne (Henry IV), but the people rally behind their king, who eventually issues the Edict of Nantes, a guarantee of religious freedom (1598).

## **More Context on Issues Related to Women & Witchcraft**

### **The Woman Question & Demographic Change**

Sometime around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the "woman question" arose in the prosperous cities of Italy and Flanders. The Woman Question was what to do with lay, unmarried urban women.

After the plague (1348), they had been denied access to guilds and a slow decline in their wages. Pre-plague—80% of men's and post-plague over 200 years went to 40%.

There were new definitions of public and private. Before this time there was no separation between the household unit and the unit of production, i.e. no separation between family and work. Medieval clothing was not particularly gender specific until some time after 1300. The plague induced conspicuous consumption and elite creates sumptuary laws to regulate clothing.

The structure of the population was also changing. Husbands were becoming more expensive—dowries rise between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Women found it more difficult to marry a man of their social status. Women often married in their teens to husbands in their 30s. The difficulty of the times meant that there were young, unmarried women outside the convent and there were more widows.

How do you control women who are out of the control of men? This was the "Woman Question". Witchcraft and spiritualism/mysticism were two possible outlets, which were sometimes related. Protestantism with its emphasis on gender complementarity heightened tensions.

**Accusation of Witchcraft:** Writers and judges came up with consistent guidelines, claiming that they were observing something "new", which allowed them to get around older Catholic rejections of the reality of witches. Witches were depraved human beings, usually women, who made a covenant with the devil and participated in nocturnal Sabbath ceremonies in which they renounced and derided Christ, the Church, and the sacraments. Witches could fly and they committed sexual excesses with one another and the Devil.

They could also change their appearance—turn into animals, e.g. wolves, cats, or mice. Witchcraft could be defined as a combination of sorcery—some sort of supernatural power, and heresy—repudiation of Christian beliefs.

Local elites were the ones who investigated claims and decided whether they merited state attention—i.e. it was largely out of the hands of religious authorities. The secularization of the process led to an increase in the number of executions.

### **Religion, Community, Church, & State**

Reformers realized that reforming the church would mean breaking from the Catholic Church to found a truer faith—Catholics, of course, viewed this action as deviating from the true faith. These reformers gained the support of European princes who saw religious change as an opportunity to increase their own power, esp. in the HRE, where the Hapsburgs had a monopoly on power and vigorously defended the Catholic Church.

Protestant princes insisted that their subjects had to follow their faith. Furthermore, they could seize lands belonging to the Catholic Church.

While in a united Christendom, Catholic states and rulers vied for the favor of the pope, but Protestants had no higher appeal than that of their ruler.

As states grew and enforced their vision of Christian doctrine, witchcraft became a major state and religious crime.

### **Protestantism & Changing Views on Poverty**

Medieval Christians did not view poverty with the same disdain that Protestant reformers did. In the past, giving alms to the poor was seen as a route to salvation. According to Calvinist and Puritan doctrine, however, poverty was seen as a moral flaw.