

The Catholic and Protestant Roots of Anglicanism

Saint Barnabas's Church, Falmouth MA

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Session #6: The Radical Reformation

1. The Radical Reformation reveals the fissiparous and violent tendencies of the 16th century
 - a. Holiness and social behavior are seen as expressions of one's justification
 - b. Role of the Church inside/outside of society
 - c. Authority—institutional and charismatic—varies in interpreting the Word.
 - d. Spiritual discernment: individual autonomy or anarchy?
 - e. Luther and Calvin fear the anarchistic potential of 'the lunatics'
 - f. Disdain for cozy relationships with secular society
 - g. Persecution and little structure: leaders were mobile, elusive and short-lived
 - h. Voluntary groups with quick growth and quick shrinkage
2. The different trajectories: Anabaptists, Enthusiasts, Spiritualists, Anti-Trinitarians
 - a. Anabaptists
 - i. Goal to set up primitive apostolic Church: Carlstadt and Zwingli
 1. Swiss
 2. German/Moravian
 - b. Enthusiasts (Netherlands)
 - i. Revolutionists or Melchiorites: OT theocracy anticipating Lord's Coming
 1. Munzer and Zwischau Prophets
 2. Kingdom of Munster
 - ii. Pacifists: Mennonites, Amish
 - c. Spiritualists: taught individualistic, mystical experience
 - i. Pietism: illumination of heart by Spirit through witness of inner Word
 - d. Anti-Trinitarians: Michael Servetus, Unitarianism
3. Five tenants typical of Anabaptists:
 - a. Sola Scriptura, even more intensely than Magisterial Reformers
 - b. Separation of Church and State, as redeemed are antithetical to the world
 - c. Freedom of conscience in which state has no right to punish religious belief

- d. Believer's baptism, since Scripture provides no support for infant baptism
- e. Holiness of life, with no tolerance for back-sliding or unfaithful living

4. Anabaptists cf. Magisterial Reformers:

- a. Reject Augustinian notion of sin: free will and good works are fruit of faith
- b. Reject forensic justification as impediment to true doctrine of 'lively' faith
- c. Reject notion that 'elect' known only to God: church as community of 'visible saints'
- d. Reject Protestant view of humanity as sinner: 'visible saints' live by high standards
- e. Separate selves from sinful society: Christians don't exercise magisterial role
- f. Swearing of oaths is prohibited, as is carnal warfare
- g. Repudiate connection between pure church (spiritual elite) and corrupted state
- h. NT principle of self-denial and brotherhood, tended towards communism
- i. Insisted on churches of exclusively of professed believers, truly regenerate
- j. **Believed practice of infant baptism was unscriptural, incompatible with maintenance of churches of regenerate**
- k. Believed in the solemnity of the Lord's Supper, for baptized believers only

5. Anabaptists on Church & State

- a. Repudiated any connection between church and state
- b. Denied the right of a Christian to exercise magistracy
- c. Regarded oaths as expressly prohibited by Christ
- d. Regarded carnal warfare as completely contradictory to spirit of Gospel
- e. Regarded capital punishment as anti Christian
- f. **Opposed to Augustinian system of doctrine, insisted upon freedom of will and necessity of good works as fruit of faith**
- g. Renounced worldly pleasures and comforts
- h. Very extreme in their separation

6. Thomas Muntzer (1490-1525)

- a. Complex, enigmatic, flawed leader
- b. University-trained priest turned rabble rouser: apocalyptic
- c. Preach full-blooded revelation in dreams and visions
- d. Direct communication of Holy Spirit with elect
- e. Call for elect to turn on the 'ungodly' with violence
- f. The 'godly' found among masses of small-town poor

- g. Prepare for Second Coming by overwhelming religious/class enemy
- h. Violent anti-clericism and emphasis on direct inspiration
- i. Mystical movement of the soul to God through tribulation
- j. Led disastrous Peasants' War

7. Anabaptist and Justification

- a. Reject understanding of justification by faith alone
- b. **Denied forensic nature of justification**
- c. Sinners acceptable to God via 'real' righteousness within person
- d. Forensic justification is impediment to true doctrine of 'lively' faith
- e. Salvation harnessed to visible state of believer's soul
- f. Sudden transformation in life, with no lapse back to old ways
- g. Very strict and high moral demands

8. Anabaptist and Holiness

- a. Strain after sinlessness, strive to be as perfect as possible
- b. **By actions, represented selves as spiritual elite**
- c. More godly: contamination and backsliding unacceptable
- d. Visible Church resembles invisible society of true believers
- e. 'Marks' of the church much more subjective and exclusive
- f. Separation from sinful world and unworthy members of fellowship
- g. Discipline of shunning members who fall short or reject standards

9. The Unitarians

- a. A.I's take: Unitarianism = a liberal, non-creedal religious tradition rooted in Christianity that emphasizes individual freedom of belief, reason, and the oneness of God, rejecting the Trinity and the deity of Jesus. It focuses on ethical living, social justice, and personal spiritual growth, often merging with Universalism to support inclusive, diverse communities.

b. From Wikipedia:

- i. The birth of the Unitarian faith is proximate to the Radical Reformation, beginning almost simultaneously among the Protestant Polish Brethren in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and in the Principality of Transylvania in the mid-16th century; the first Unitarian Christian denomination known to have emerged during that time was the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, founded by the Unitarian preacher and theologian Ferenc Dávid (c. 1520 – 1579).
- ii. Although there is no specific authority on Unitarian beliefs aside from their inclusion of the rejection of the Trinity, the following beliefs are generally accepted:
- iii. One God and the oneness or unity of God.
- iv. The life and teachings of Jesus constitute the exemplary model for living one's own life.
- v. Reason, rational thought, science, and philosophy coexist with faith in God.
- vi. Humans have the ability to exercise free will in a responsible, constructive and ethical manner with the assistance of religion.
- vii. Human nature in its present condition is neither inherently corrupt nor depraved (see original sin) but capable of both good and evil, as God intended.
- viii. No religion can claim an absolute monopoly on the Holy Spirit or theological truth.
- ix. Though God inspired the authors of the Christian Bible, they were humans and, therefore, subject to human error.
- x. The traditional doctrines of predestination, Hell, and the vicarious sacrifice and satisfaction theories of the atonement are invalid because they malign God's character and veil the true nature and mission of Jesus.