

### Church History, Lesson #22

(This lesson is based on The Story of Christianity by Justo Gonzalez.)

#### Germany and the Thirty Years War –

- The Peace of Augsburg brought an end to the religious wars in Germany of the 1500's but it couldn't last.
  - It stated that Catholic regions must remain Catholic, Lutheran areas remained Lutheran. But the Reformation continued to spread.
  - This led to a renewed state of war.
- Because the Emperor(s) wanted to reestablish Catholicism, there was constant intrigue and maneuvering. The Protestants banded together for their own protection.
- Constant wars for 30+ years.
- One example of the devastation – Some estimate that the population of Bohemia was reduced by 4/5's.
- **The Peace of Westphalia – 1648**
  - This gave religious freedom to not only princes but also their people.
  - However, people only had three choices: Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed.
  - Buildings and property reverted to those who had held them in 1624.
- This was basically the beginning of the modern secular state.
- At the same time, these events began to lead to an attitude of doubt regarding religious convictions:
  - *"Could any doctrine be true that produced the atrocities of the Thirty Years' War? Was there not a more tolerant, more profound, and even more Christian way to serve God, than simply following the dictates of orthodoxy, be it Catholic or Protestant?" – Justo Gonzalez pg. 141*

#### France and the Huguenots –

- The Monarchs of France basically tolerated the Protestants in the early 1600's as long as they didn't have concentrated power.
- However, King Louis XIV, known as the "Sun King", began stamping out Protestantism. He began with mild pressures and moved toward violence and forced conversions of Protestants to Catholicism. Tens of thousands converted, some secretly continued to hold their Protestant convictions and even met secretly in the fields and woods. Because of this, these secret Protestants became known as "the Church of the Desert".
- In 1685 the King Louis XIV issued the Edict of Fontainebleau and made it illegal to be a Protestant in France. There was a mass exodus of Huguenots to Switzerland, Germany, England, the Netherlands, and North America.  
Because many of those who left were middle class, some say that the exodus of skill and capital caused by this edict created the economic disruption that eventually led to the French Revolution.
- Eventually, those secret Protestants turned to armed rebellion. And their "gorilla rebels" of only a few hundred kept the standing army of 25,000 fully occupied.
- But because the army could not defeat them, they turned to razing the villages and hamlets that harbored them. Approximately 500 villages were destroyed.
- Persecution of Protestants continued until 1787, when King Louis XVI decreed religious tolerance.
- Like in Germany, these struggles caused the population to doubt doctrinal convictions and dogmatism.

#### England and Puritanism –

- Remember – Queen Elizabeth had cultivated a "moderate reformation" in England. She didn't want Catholicism, but she didn't want conservative, "radical" reformation. The middle ground was Anglicanism.
- When she died in 1603 she left no direct heir. She named James VI, King of Scotland, as her successor and he became James I of England.

- King James had continuous conflicts with those who thought the reformation had not gone far enough in England. He wanted an absolute monarchy and believed the only way that could be achieved was through the bishops. (If you want to rule by the “divine right of kings” you need a church hierarchy that will support you.) The “Puritans” as the conservative reformers were called believed that the Bible didn’t sanction a hierarchy within the church.
  - Some believed that there were multiple forms of church government in the Bible and therefore there should be freedom for churches to choose their form of government.
  - Others believed in elder rule and wanted a Presbyterian style of church government.
  - Others believed that all churches should be independent and autonomous. And some of these believed in only baptizing believing adults, and these were called Baptists.
- Because King James and the leading theologians of the Anglican Church appreciated and retained the “high church” worship left over from Catholicism, the Puritans saw them as moving toward a return to Catholic doctrine.
- King James’ personal character didn’t help matters. He was a homosexual and showered court positions, power, and wealth on his favorites.
- James I’s son and successor, Charles I, continued the policies of his father.
- In 1633 the Archbishop of Canterbury began persecuting Puritans in an effort to enforce unity in the Church of England. His measures included the death penalty and orders of mutilation.
- Both James I and Charles I needed parliament to be able to raise revenue. BUT... Parliament, especially the House of Commons, was increasingly controlled by Puritans. They refused to raise taxes without dealing with their priorities. They continually saw Charles’ maneuverings as a potential return to Catholicism. The queen’s private Catholic masses didn’t help matters!
- Eventually all of this tension boiled over in civil war. Some troops were loyal to the crown, but Parliament raised an army of commoners. Oliver Cromwell, who had recently come to puritan convictions, raised a cavalry to field against the king’s.
- Cromwell was a charismatic leader and his enthusiasm was contagious. Eventually, the king’s army was defeated at the battle of Naseby, the king was captured, tried for treason, and beheaded.
- This led to a time called “the Protectorate” where Cromwell ruled as “Lord Protector”. He enacted several Puritan reforms. He was relatively tolerant religiously allowing for several Protestant forms of church government.
- Cromwell also tried to reform society. Laws were enacted regulated people’s activities on the Lord’s Day, and that also regulated “frivolities” like horse races, cock fights, and theatre.
- Eventually, Cromwell was offered the crown, but wanting to establish a true republic, he refused.
- “The Protectorate” failed when Cromwell’s son turned out to be less talented than his father.
- Parliament recalled Charles II to take the throne. He had Catholic leanings and restored the episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer, and issued laws against dissidents. On his deathbed, Charles II declared himself a Catholic.
- His brother and successor, James II attempted to reestablish Catholicism in the land. Eventually, William, Prince of Orange, and his wife Mary were invited to take the throne, and James had to flee to France.

#### **Lessons to be learned...**

- All of this religious infighting led people to distrust doctrine, denominational distinctives, and doctrine.
- This led to trusting “reason” to answer the ultimate questions of life and society.
- We should care about religion and we should care about politics.  
But we should be careful how we mix them!
- J.I. Packer has said that the Puritan experiment produced one of the truest expressions of Christianity that has ever existed. He was referring to their personal piety and church reforms, not so much their policies.