12-2014

Reforming Christianity by Reforming Christians: Devotional Writings of the Late Medieval and Reformation Era

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Devotional Writings of the Late Medieval and Reformation Era

by

Christopher J. Quail

An Abstract of a Thesis
in
History

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

December 2014

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History and Social Studies Education

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Reforming Christianity by Reforming Christians:
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During the late medieval and Reformation era in Europe, a series of Christian devotional works were created that stressed a deeper personal relationship with Christ, rather than ritual and public devotion alone. These works span the time period from the early fifteenth century through the early seventeenth century and prepared the way for and shaped the Protestant and Roman Catholic reformations alike. The devotional works addressed here were created in the quest for reform, of both the individual and the Church. This occurred as the importance of developing a better relationship with Jesus was taking on a new urgency for both pre-Reformation and post-Reformation Catholics as well as for Protestants. For all denominations an important social common denominator was the emergence of a larger group of educated, literate laity confronting very difficult times. In the end, Latin Christianity would not survive the new approaches to Christianity intact, although varying branches of Christianity would find the reform and direction they craved—albeit at the price of religious and cultural unity that continues to influence (and trouble) European civilization to this day.

DEDICATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to those people who always knew that I could finish it.

Special thanks go to my wife Melanie, my mother Dale, and my aunt Deb for their support and motivation.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ederer for his most generous contribution of time, expertise, and patience.

Thanks also go to Dr. Norman for agreeing to be on the committee.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

Introduction

The later Middle Ages through the Reformation era was a time of abrupt and widespread change.[1] A Christian Europe would be fragmented, as the Roman Catholic Church ceased to be the sole ecclesiastical authority in Western Europe. From this period emerged several devotional Christian writings that stressed a deeper personal relationship with Christ, rather than ritual and public devotion alone. For the first time, an individual and private spirituality was becoming more common.

The devotional writings of Thomas à Kempis, Martin Luther, Ignatius Loyola, and others were the means by which these authors and their readers were able to reconcile their flawed human natures with the rigid and terrifying undercurrent of Ockhamist theology that had become prevalent in the late Medieval period. To some degree, the devotional works were also a reaction to the harsh realities of late Medieval life that seemed to make a deeper devotion advisable. While these works of Christian devotion also represent an underlying spirituality that was always part of the Roman Catholic tradition, these were increasingly intended for a broader, non-monastic readership, and always stressed reform of the individual and of Christianity. With that common denominator, these works span the time period from the early fifteenth century through the early seventeenth century and prepared the way for the Protestant and Roman Catholic reformations alike.

For most Europeans, the later Middle Ages bordered on the apocalyptic. After a period of relative peace (1214-1294), the continent consistently endured warfare, famine, and disease. As a result, these factors contributed to a culture that grew fixated with death. Ironically, at the

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[1] Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Protestant Reformation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) , xi.

same time Europe was in the midst of social and material progress. By 1300 Europe had become

a land of extensive farming and livestock development with landlords seeking to maximize their

crop yields. There was also a noticeable increase in the proportion of the urban to the rural

population.[2] During the late medieval period Europe also began to move from a sort of post-

Roman political territory to a continent of nation-states. Of course, these territories were a long

way from the centralized nation-states of the present day, but by the sixteenth century, the

foundations of what eventually become the modern nations of France, England and Spain were

beginning to take shape.[3]

The reign of Philip IV in France (1285-1314) advanced France's status as a powerful

centralized state. With the prospect of war with England in mind, Philip began to create a

national bureaucracy, which was meant to promote the interests of the crown. This bureaucracy

would ensure that more of the nobility would look to the crown as their ultimate authority. A

larger government and the threat of war would naturally require more revenue. Following this

line of thought, Philip found ways to tap into the Church's wealth in order to realize his plans.

He was effective in checking the power of the papacy by securing the right to tax French clergy

and to make certain ecclesiastical appointments. Philip also brought an end to the Knights

Templar, which were a military/monastic order founded in 1118 to secure peace in the short-

lived Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.[4] Over the course of roughly two hundred years, they had

evolved from a military/monastic order into a wealthy, international banking institution.[5] The

Templars were an easy target because of their status as a wealthy creditor to many states. Philip

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[2] Norman Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*(New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 475-477.
[3] Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era: 1500-1650* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 19-37.
[4] Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550:An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 182-183.
[5] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1963), 188-189.

IV and his royal council pursued the Templars and their wealth by bringing many outrageous charges against them. As a result the Templars were officially disbanded in 1314.[6]

In England, the trend toward centralization began to accelerate around the time of Edward I (1272-1307). Edward is credited with restoring royal authority in England, and would claim suzerainty over Scotland. The Hundred Years War with France accelerated this trend since the monarchy, parliament and the nobility were compelled to work toward a stronger, more unified state. After the Hundred Years War and the War of the Roses, Henry Tudor would continue to bring an end to opposition by bringing dissenting nobles before the Court of Star Chamber.[7]

A centralized Spain resulted from the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469. Together the two consolidated their rule, quelling dissent and driving out the remnants of a long-standing Muslim presence. In the quest for religious uniformity, Ferdinand and Isabella incorporated the higher Catholic clergy into their government by essentially making the Inquisition another arm of the law.[8]

Germany and Italy, on the other hand, would not successfully centralize until the late nineteenth century.[9] While there were efforts to consolidate power in both Germany and Italy, both those regions had different political structures compared to France or even Spain. In Germany and Italy regional lords held a great deal of power and were more independent of the central authority. In Germany for example, since even before the reign of Emperor Frederick II (1215-1250) the nobility had grown in strength. In a quest to augment his legitimacy as an 'emperor of the Romans' Frederick desired to broaden his reach south into the Italian Peninsula.

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[6]Ibid., 345-350.
[7]Ibid., 183-184.
[8] Ibid.
[9]Ibid., 184.

Frederick's ambitions were met by a defensive papacy, and the two forces were embroiled in conflict for many years. With the emperor frequently busy in the south, the local nobility in Germany took advantage of the power vacuum.[10] Like Germany at this time, the Italian Peninsula lacked uniformity and served as the backdrop for different factions vying for power. There was the papacy, which at this time was increasing in power, and the local nobility, who were constantly looking to overcome their neighbors.

Meanwhile in the late medieval period, the development of a centralized England and France was closely connected with The Hundred Years War (1337-1453). Monarchy was firmly established in both countries since the thirteenth century. The two states, moreover, had shared close dynastic ties since the reign of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. Until the fifteenth century the English king, who also happened to be a vassal of the King of France, actually considered a great deal of what would become western France to be his own territory. Leading up to the Hundred Years War, England would develop a national consciousness distinct from that of France. This would help to fuel a mutual enmity.[11]

Edward I of England (1272-1307) was considered an effective and ambitious ruler. Edward was interested in expanding the reach of the English government. He was victorious in Wales, but not so much in Scotland, where military aggression only stirred strong Scottish resistance. Edward also looked to expand his reach in continental Europe. These campaigns were costly and called for increased tax revenue. Through Parliament, Edward was able to rally national support and fund his military aggressions. Philip IV the Fair of France (1285-1314), like his English counterpart, was also determined and aggressive. Philip was also able to

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[10] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 30-31.
[11] Cantor, 513.

increase the standing of the monarchy, and through taxes was able to fund his military campaigns.

The conflict that would later be called the Hundred Years War began over the French territories of Flanders and Aquitaine. Aquitaine was the source of Bordeaux wines and the English had a strong appetite for them. Aquitaine was also a fief of the English king. As a ruler of this territory, however, the king of France considered the king of England a vassal. This meant that the English King had to do homage to the King of France, at least with respect to Aquitane. The French bureaucrats who enforced this relationship naturally favored the French king's interests. The English Kings, however, did not maintain a strong presence in the duchy and the French kings were quick to take advantage of the power vacuum.[12]

King Philip IV the Fair of France died in 1314, leaving three sons. All three of Philip's sons served very short reigns and each died without a male heir, which ended the direct Capetian line in 1328. Edward III of England had a fairly substantial claim to the French throne, due to the fact that Edward I married the daughter of Philip the Fair, making Edward III Philip's grandson. The French were not particularly eager to see a king who would cater to English interests even though he possessed a French background. The French chose Philip of Valois, whose father was the youngest brother of Philip the Fair.[13]

After the accession of Philip IV (r.1285-1314), there were disputes between the French and English governments over the proper homage that was to be given by the English king. King Edward II had avoided paying homage to King Louis X of France and only paid homage to Philip V under great pressure.[14] During the reign of Charles IV of France (r.1322-1328), tensions between the French and English kings had risen to the point of war; during the War of

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[12]Ibid., 516-517.
[13] Ibid.
[14] George Holmes, *Europe, Hierarchy and Revolt, 1320–1450, 2nd edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 16.

Saint Sardos Charles IV had successfully taken control over most of Aquitaine from Edward II except for Gascony, even though Edward still held the title of Duke of Aquitaine.[15] King Edward III (r.1327-1377) of England took action by securing alliances and building up an army to invade France. English allies included the leader of the Flemish rebels, a group that had successfully removed a French count from power in the Flanders region, as well as the Holy Roman Emperor and many of the German lords.[16]

A quick glance at the two warring nations would most likely lead one to believe that the French would emerge victorious. France had a larger population, more resources, and was considered the most powerful state in Europe at the time. England, however, had a sufficient enough force to invade the continent and King Philip did not have the capabilities to prevent it from doing so. He also lacked capabilities for invading England. This was due to the fact that France lost its entire naval fleet early in the war.

Early in the conflict the English took advantage of their superior naval position and began raiding the French countryside. This initial effort ravaged the French peasantry more than the actual French military effort. The English relied on superior tactics and new weapons such as the longbow and the pike. By 1360, The English held Calais and a large portion of Aquitaine, and they had also captured the French King (John II) at this time. The Treaty of Brétigny included a large ransom for the captured French king and effectively gave Edward III control over about one-third of France. Along with the king, several other French lords were held as security for the king's ransom. When one of the hostages escaped, King John was returned to England to surrender. The French king would die a prisoner of the English.[17]

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[15] William W. Kibler, *Medieval France: an Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 1995), 201, 314.
[16] Cantor, 516-517.
[17] Ibid., 518.

Under Charles V (1364-1380) the French military effort would improve. The king was committed to satisfying the Treaty of Brétigny and the resulting ransom payment. Charles V also made changes to the structure of the French military. Instead of building a new force every time a conflict arose, there was now a permanent and paid army under the command of Bertrand du Guesclin. The French forces also changed tactics and began engaging in extensive guerilla warfare while avoiding lengthy battles. Because of the new French strategy, the English were finding it difficult to hold the territories that they had invaded in France. By 1380, English forces had been contained and were pushed back to Calais and part of Aquitaine.[18]

In 1380 both England and France were in the midst of political turmoil. In England, Edward III had died, to be succeeded by Richard II, the son of Edward the Black Prince. Richard II was only ten years old when he was crowned, which led to conflicts among the upper nobility. In France, a young Charles VI succeeded his father. Like Richard II in England, Charles was a minor when he ascended the throne, which meant a power vacuum also in the French royal government.[19]

During the reign of Henry V (1413-31) in England, the Duke of Burgundy led an alliance with the English. The English forces, now supported by troops from Burgundy, triumphed over their French rivals in the Battle of Agincourt (1415). The result of this was the Treaty of Troyes (1420), which left the English, along with their allies, in control of northern France.[20] In France, the son of Charles VI was declared illegitimate due to his mother's (Isabeau of Bavaria) reputation for extramarital affairs, in which case the throne belonged to the Duke of Orléans. On the other hand, the Treaty of Troyes stipulated that the throne should pass to Henry VI of England, the son of Henry V, and Catherine of Valois, the daughter of Charles VI. Because the

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 518-519.

English had control over Northern France and Paris at this point they were able to enforce English interests in the areas they occupied. Even though many regarded him to be illegitimate, Charles VII considered himself the actual king of France and remained south of the Loire River and retained some power.[21]Following that course of events, Henry VI of England would subsequently be crowned king of France. Henry VI would be crowned as a minor and an English regency would rule on his behalf, favoring English interests in France.[22]

Around this time when the French seemed at their most vulnerable is when Joan of Arc enters the story. Joan of Arc was a French farm girl in her teenage years who claimed that otherworldly voices were telling her to join in the fight against the English. The French forces, theologians and even Charles VII eventually took her claims seriously. Joan also convinced Charles VII that he was the legitimate heir of the French throne. Following the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, the English had gained control over much of northern France. In 1429 Joan of Arc led the French forces in an attempt to break the Siege of Orléans. The French must have been truly confident in Joan's abilities to lead because the mission was a success. Shortly thereafter, Joan convinced Charles VII to make his way to Reims to be crowned in the traditional manner.[23]

Because of her heroic efforts, Joan of Arc is celebrated in France to this day. However, Joan was eventually captured by the Burgundians, who then turned her over to the English. Because of her masculine attire, but mostly because the English were politically motivated to do so, she was tried for heresy in an inquisition-like setting. Even though both the grounds to begin a trial and the evidence used against Joan were weak, she was still convicted of heresy and

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[21]Thomas A. Brady, *Handbook of European History 1400–1600*, Vol.2, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 373.
[22] Cantor, 519.
[23] Ibid.

burned at the stake. Joan was eventually posthumously exonerated (1456) and canonized

(1920).[24]

By 1435, the war had come to a draw and negotiations commenced at Arras in

northeastern France. Even after several weeks of discussion, the two sides were unable to reach

a compromise over what kingdom should retain lands on the continent. During the course of the

negotiations, Philip Duke of Burgundy obtained a papal dispensation in order to go back on his

alliance with the English.[25] Having lost the Burgundian alliance, England slowly began to lose

the territory that they had gained on the continent. By 1453 most of the English forces had been

pushed out of France, except for the Calais region, which remained under English control. One

of the biggest factors in the final French victory was their use of artillery. English fortifications

were simply no match for the French cannons. The conflict also took its toll on the countryside

as farms and villages were pillaged and destroyed. The traditional concept of feudalism also

began to change as a response to the war. Traditional mounted knights were gradually being

replaced by infantries and mercenaries as weapons and tactics evolved. By most accounts, the

year 1453 marks the end of more than a century of hostility between England and France. After

that much time both countries were obviously war-weary and embraced peace for the time

being.[26] England, however found itself immediately plunged into an additional three decades of

civil war: The War of the Roses.

Europe of the late Middle Ages was also undergoing an economic shift. New institutions

such as partnerships and joint-stock companies were gradually replacing the feudal manorial

system. A great deal of the new economic activity was spurred by European exploration. By the

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c.1300-c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34.

[26]Ibid., 519-520.

midpoint of the sixteenth century, European explorers had established routes from Europe to

North and South America, India, and the Far East. As a result, both Spain and Portugal became

colonial empires.[27] The Italian Peninsula also benefited from the growing commerce of the

Renaissance era. Venice became a thriving trade city through its monopoly on the import of

spices, cotton and silk. Florence became well known for its production of cloth, especially silk,

which was especially profitable. Since the Church viewed usury as immoral, people began to

find a way around this by offering gifts as thanks for a loan. Traditionally, only land and

agriculture were seen as forms of wealth.[28] Over time, however, the idea of financial profit

became more and more a part of the European economy. Beginning in the Italian Peninsula the

practice of money lending or banking was on its way to becoming an extremely lucrative

industry.

As a result, European society of the thirteenth century was slowly moving from a

hierarchical society to a money-based society. During this time a commoner by birth who had

worked to amass a fortune still did not share the privileges of the nobility. At the same time, it

became more important for the nobility to practice good financial management.[29]

For much of the Middle Ages the nobility served as defenders of feudal society. By the

thirteenth century, however, the lords began to assume a more ceremonial role. Much of this

was due to the long peace of the thirteenth century and new advancements in weaponry.[30]

Following the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, Europe enjoyed a relatively long peace until the 1290s

with the beginning of the Hundred Years' War.[31] In order to project their exclusive status, many

nobles would run into financial trouble by living beyond their means. Especially trying for the

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[27] Grimm, 5-13.
[28] Cantor, 480.
[29] Cantor, 464-468.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

nobility was their desire to emulate the ostentatious display of the monarch, who by this time usually had greater resources at his disposal.[32]

The common man resented and mocked the lords and the higher clergy, in the belief that their elevated status was undeserved. At the same time they were also devoted to their Christian faith. The urban areas of the thirteenth century would be at the forefront of an emerging money economy. The average medieval city was layered with competition and hostility. A merchant or craftsman had to heavily rely on his talent and work ethic in order to avoid poverty.[33]

By the sixteenth century, in terms of sheer population Europe had recovered from the famines and plagues of the fourteenth century. Many cities during the 1500s doubled in size, including Naples, Seville, London, Cologne and Augsburg due to the emerging money economy. Even while the cities grew, they still only represented a small percentage of the total European population. Within these cities however, dwelt the merchants, scholars, bankers and craftsmen, making the cities the source for widespread social and religious change.[34] There existed a strong connection between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the cities in the sixteenth century. Because the urban areas featured a higher concentration of literacy, the seeds of the Reformation sprouted in such environments. There also existed a strong correlation between the Zwinglian and Calvinist forms of Protestantism with the social and political values of those who lived in the free cities of the Holy Roman Empire.

The peasantry, which was the largest class of the Middle Ages, began to experience an increase in their standard of living by the end of the thirteenth century. The peasant class as a whole also became less homologous, with some peasants becoming small landowners

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[32] Ibid.
[33]Ibid., 470.
[34]Ozment, 191-192.

themselves.[35] By the sixteenth century, the relationship between the peasant and the lord known as serfdom became increasingly rare. A slow transition toward a monetary economy was under way. Most peasants of this age continued to work the land as they had always done, except by the 1500s the lord was most likely no longer obligated to support the peasant (shelter, protection, food) as he had previously within a feudal relationship. Now, all that the lord owed to his working peasants was a wage.[36]

Much had changed in the Church as well in the late Middle Ages. By the mid-1200s the papacy had established itself as the superior political power in Europe. Within the eleventh century the higher clergy who were closest to the pope began to be identified as the college of cardinals. The title of *cardinal* is derived from a latin word which specifically refers to a hinge on a door; the college of cardinals was the infrastructure by which the papacy was able to protect and maintain its interests. By the twelfth century the cardinals began to meet together as a single group known as the College of Cardinals.[37] Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) had maneuvered the papacy into political prominence. Gregory reinforced the idea that the world and its politics should be skewed toward the Augustianian tradition, which views secular power as flawed and subservient to clerical power. His papacy published *Dictatus Papae*, which declared that the Chair of Peter was universal in its supremacy. Essentially it stated that the Roman Church was founded by God, that the pope alone was the only individual with the power to appoint and remove bishops, and that the pope alone had the power to depose emperors.[38] Up until this point, the Christian world had more or less acknowledged the papacy as the head of Christendom but

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[35]Ibid., 472.
[36] De Lamar Jensen, *Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992) , 10.
[37] Cantor, 249.
[38]Ibid., 256-259.

rarely was this authority exercised or recognized in the day-to-day affairs of Europe's bishoprics and abbeys, or over the temporal authority of Europe's kings and Emperors.

The political world of the Middle Ages rested firmly upon a Christian base. The pope therefore had certain spiritual powers at his disposal, which naturally were effective within the political sphere. There was the anathema, which was basically a public censure of an individual. Next in severity was excommunication wherein a person is essentially severed from the Church and its sacraments. Along with being separated from the Church, the individual lost all standing within his own household and his community. Worst of all was the interdict, which deprived a whole region or nation of the Church's grace and sacraments with the exception of baptism. The last two methods would essentially strip a disgraced king of power.[39] During the era in which Pope Gregory VII published *Dictatus Papae* (1075), the supremacy of an increasingly powerful papacy began to surpass the authority of a temporal monarch.

The German Investiture controversy that occurred during the latter half of the eleventh century perfectly demonstrates the clash of temporal and papal authority. Henry IV, a Salian who assumed the German crown in 1065, had fully intended to carry on the work of his father (Henry III), which focused on the centralization of the realm. Henry III had relied on the Church within the Empire to maintain his power. This was done through lay investiture, which in turn relied upon the idea of a theocratic monarch.[40] By 1075 Henry IV had emerged victorious against the upper nobility.

Shortly following Henry's triumph he was officially warned to keep his hands off of the affairs of the German Church by the newly installed Pope Gregory VII. Conflict between Church and state now seemed inevitable. By 1074 The Diocese of Milan needed a bishop. Both

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[39] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 93-95.
[40] Cantor, 265.

Gregory and Henry set about trying to place their own respective candidates into the seat. The two, aware of each other's ambitions, sought to undermine each other. Henry's court sent a strong, well-written letter to the pope stating that he was an imposter to the apostolic throne.[41]

Gregory was prepared for a struggle; he would rely on his alliance with the Norman rulers of southern Italy to provide the necessary military backing. The pope was also counting on the support of the countess Matilda of Tuscany, north of Rome. Upon receiving Henry's letter, Gregory deposed Henry and ordered the whole of the German church to withdraw their support of the Emperor. By 1076 Henry had lost most of his support and was advised to repent and ask the pope for absolution. Henry then decided to travel south to Italy and personally ask forgiveness.[42]

While Henry began his journey south, the pope was also in transit northward to preside over the selection of a new German king. The two parties met in Canossa at the castle of the Countess Matilda. It is recounted that Henry waited outside in the snow for three days before he was allowed an audience with the pope. With the influential abbot Hugh of Cluny and Matilda interceding on Henry's behalf, Henry was forgiven his sins and restored to the throne. At this point it would appear that Pope Gregory held the political edge; however the King was also content: he had saved his throne. Most likely his thoughts of true repentance had dissipated if they were ever there to begin with. Even while his royal power appeared to be restored, the German nobles decided to elect a new king anyway; Rudolph of Swabia. Because Pope Gregory decided to remain neutral during this affair Henry was incensed and began the process of setting up an antipope; Clement III. Pope Gregory retaliated by renewing Henry's sentence of excommunication in 1080.

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[41]Ibid., 265-268.
[42] Ibid.

Even though Henry was again excommunicated he would not find himself as vulnerable as before. In 1085, out of vengeance and with a military offensive, Henry forced Pope Gregory out of Rome. He fled southward to his Norman allies. Gregory would never again return to Rome. Henry's struggles with the papacy weakened his power over the German nobility, who took advantage of the situation. At first, Henry's son (Henry V) would join some of the German nobility in their rebellion against his father due to family infighting. But when Henry V assumed the German throne in 1106 he would continue to oppose the papacy.[43]

By the reign of Pope Callixtus II (1119-1124) the College of Cardinals had began to move away from the absolute stance that Pope Gregory VII took several decades earlier. The Church bureaucracy adopted a more moderate approach to outside political affairs. But again Henry V (1099-1125) clashed with Pope Paschal II (1099-1118). During the reign of Pope Callixtus II however, papacy and emperor reached a compromise with the Concordat of Worms (1122). This agreement officially put an end to the exercise of lay investiture, which meant that only the pope could invest complete sacred authority in Church offices. However, the papacy conceded that the emperor was allowed to require the homage of bishops and abbots within his realm before they were invested with the symbols of their office. In effect, this compromise allowed the emperor to retain a voice in the appointments to Church offices. By the time this agreement was signed however, the emperor had lost considerable control over the empire. Many of the local magnates and even some of the bishops had become semiautonomous at the expense of the emperor's power. Ultimately the Concordat of Worms, then, benefited the nobility in their respective realms more than the emperor. The concordat would only work to the

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[43]Ibid., 268-273.

emperor's advantage when it was applied to the lands that directly belonged to him or his immediate family.[44]

Within the whole of the Middle Ages, the political power of the papacy peaked during the High Middle Ages (1000-1300). Within the last decade of the thirteenth century, both the French and English were gearing up for war and their respective governments were looking to increase royal revenue. Both the English and the French began taxing the clergy based upon the policy that was in place during the crusades; the Church would give a large share of the crusading taxes to royal governments. The discrepancy lay in the fact that the pope did not approve of this new tax. Pope Boniface VIII was outraged over this tax and in response issued the bull *Clericis Laicos* in 1296, which prohibited the taxation of the Church in any specific dominion. Both monarchs reacted to the papal bull; Edward I withdrew the protection of common law from the clergy in England, and Philip the Fair began a campaign of harassment against the clergy in France. As a result of this pressure, Boniface temporarily backed down and reversed his stance of *Clericis Laicos*.[45]

After the Jubilee year of 1300, King Philip again provoked Boniface by arresting a bishop of the Languedoc. Philip's intention was to make a show of his authority over the Church in his land, using the bishop as an example. This time however, Boniface would not react the same way as he did when the French Church was threatened with taxation. Not only did Boniface accuse Philip and his administration of immorality, but the pope also reversed his position of tolerating the taxation of French Clerics. Boniface also went a step further and published the bull *Unam Sanctam*, which stated that there was no salvation outside of the Church and therefore the pope is the ultimate spiritual and temporal authority. The French government

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[44]Ibid., 273-274.
[45] Cantor, 492-494.

responded by issuing a long list of accusations against the pope, including heresy and black magic. Boniface in turn threatened the French King with excommunication. Ultimately, William de Nogaret, a lawyer in the French administration, captured Boniface as a prisoner in Angani. Boniface died shortly after his release and return to Rome.[46]

Following the clash between the King Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII over the taxation of the French clergy, and the brief pontificate of Benedict XI, the French cardinals had noticeably grown in influence. This resulted in the election of Clement V (r.1305-1314), previously a French archbishop. After his election, Clement desired to remain outside of the political fray of Italy. During his reign the papal court was officially transferred to Avignon, France, and would be subsequently dominated by French interests. The Avignon Papacy had relocated the papacy from Rome to Southern France, an arrangement that would last some seventy years.[47]

The conflict between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV of France in the early part of the fourteenth century contrasts with the conflict between The German King Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII in the late eleventh century. In 1076 Pope Gregory emerged with the political advantage over King Henry, even if only temporarily, paving the way for a period of papal hegemony. Some 225 years later, it was clear that the papacy had lost a great deal of prestige when Pope Boniface suffered a considerable defeat at the hands of King Philip IV of France.[48]

A good example of the relationship between the papacy and the French government is the Knights Templar scandal. King Philip pressured Pope Clement V to investigate the Templars and subsequently uphold the charges that had been brought upon them by the French government. The Templars were disbanded by 1314. Clement was also forced to back down on

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[46]Ibid., 494-497.
[47] Cantor, 495-496.
[48] Ibid.

his stance of no clerical taxation in France. With Clement yielding to the French Government, the papacy appeared weak and too partial to French interests.[49]

The French Pope Gregory XI finally returned the papacy to Rome in 1377. Gregory, the last of the Avignon popes, then died the following year. Soon after, the cardinals who returned to Rome with the pope elected an Italian, Urban VI. Urban turned out to be a reformer who would pursue corruption. The French cardinals later retracted their support for Urban and claimed that the election of Urban VI was invalid due to the immense pressure put on them to elect an Italian pope. These French cardinals would then elect their own pope who ruled from Avignon.[50]

The Church was now divided since there were two popes, who each claimed rightful authority.[51] From the national level down to the local monastery, the Church tumbled into a state of disarray with competing loyalties. This era is referred to as the Western Schism.[52] Throughout its history, the Church had used councils to resolve such major problems. Given the problems of leadership that had erupted in the Church, the Conciliar Movement, which asserted that a Church council outweighs the authority of the pope, had grown in influence by the late Fourteenth Century. For good reason this concept would reach the height of its popularity in the midst of this Church crisis. In 1409 the Council of Pisa was convened in order to deal with the problem of a divided Church. However, instead of a solution, the council only exacerbated the problem by producing a third papal claimant, the anti-pope Alexander V.

The Council of Constance (1414-1417) ultimately brought an end to the Western Schism by either deposing or accepting the resignation of the three papal claimants and electing a new

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[49]Ibid., 496-498.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

Italian pope, Martin V.[53] While it appeared the Church was now whole again, it was also

apparent that the mystique and legitimacy of the papacy had suffered irreparable damage. Well

before the Council of Constance, one of the most notable incidents which led to the schism was

the confrontation between King Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII in the last decade of the

thirteenth century. Boniface ultimately gave way to Philip. The competing papacies that

occurred during the Western Schism certainly were not conducive to an overall feeling of

loyalty. The rest of the Church hierarchy at this point were not in a particularly wholesome state

either. The clergy were frequently a target of disdain; St. Catherine of Siena believed that the

priesthood had become lax, St. Bridget stated that the clergy had become decadent, and Denys

the Carthusian was horrified by visions of a Church that had become completely corrupted.[54]

Pope Innocent III (r.1198-1216) had mandated a system during his papacy in which all

bishops were required to visit and evaluate every one of the parishes in their charge. This was

not an easy task, but it was maintained throughout the thirteenth century. During the fourteenth

century, this system would no longer be enforced by the competing papacies and slowly fell out

of practice. As a result, discipline among the lower levels of the clergy began to deteriorate, as

incompetence and greed began to grow more pronounced.[55] Another problem of this period was

the moral degradation of the higher Church offices. Secular rulers insisted upon and sometimes

used force to claim lucrative church offices for their families. Bishoprics and other important

posts were therefore increasingly filled by men who had no real concern for the spiritual

development of the priests and faithful in their charge.[56]

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[53] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons LTD, 1962) , 36-38.
[54] Ibid., 126-132.
[55] Cantor, 501-502.
[56] Ibid.

While most people still had respect for the ideal of the priesthood, there also existed a stereotype that portrayed the clergy as greedy and worldly. This stereotype was not without some basis in truth. The Papal Curia took in a great deal of income and a good portion of it went towards temporal expenses. Cardinals and bishops seemed to have an insatiable desire for benefices, with some claiming seven or eight. In contrast the average parish priest was not well compensated and probably lived close to poverty. To supplement their income, priests would charge fees for performing their expected sacramental duties (marriages, baptisms, confessions). A second problem was absenteeism. The clergy of every rank were commonly accused of ignoring their spiritual duties. Another challenge that the Church faced was the undereducated parish priest. There was no seminary system in place yet; the average priest was trained hastily. Most never possessed even an adequate theological background.[57]

With the election of Pope Martin V undisputed papal power once again returned to Rome. By the beginning of fifteenth century however, conditions within Rome had deteriorated dramatically. The population dwindled to less than 50,000 inhabitants and much of the city was in ruins.[58] The popes of the Renaissance, which began with the papacy of Martin V, undertook the rebuilding of Rome, eventually turning the city into a center of Renaissance art and humanist culture.[59] In order to ensure its survival, the papacy was adapting to new economic conditions that emphasized profit, and the aggressive political nature of the Renaissance. By the sixteenth century the popes had accumulated a large bureaucracy and an elaborate financial system, all of which seemed to draw attention away from spiritual matters and the calls for reform.[60]

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[57] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 126-132.
[58] P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London 1993), p. 97.
[59] Kenneth R. Bartlett, ed., *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 298.
[60] Grimm, 37-42.

Several of the Renaissance popes were outwardly secular, even immoral at times. Following an era in which conciliarism gained popularity as an alternative to a Church ruled over by a single man, the Renaissance papacy was a reassertion of the papal monarchy. By this time it was also evident that the papacy had evolved into a sort of nepotistic dynasty, with cardinal-nephews succeeding popes. This system, while degrading to the papacy's moral standing, allowed it to retain authority and preserve a measure of stability over the Papal States.[61] Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503), one of the most notorious of the Renaissance popes, began his career in the Church with the help of his uncle, Pope Callixtus III. While Alexander VI would not be considered a good spiritual advisor, he was fully engaged when it came to the realm of Italian and European politics. He also expended a great deal of effort preparing for the future careers of his illegitimate offspring. He would secure the Bishopric of Pamplona for his son Cesare, his daughter Lucrezia would go on to rule the Duchy of Ferrara, and his eldest son Juan, became the second Duke of Gandia.[62] Pope Julius II (r.1503-1513) would go to great lengths to secure and expand the Papal States. He desired a united Italy that was under his control. If it was necessary to go to war, Julius would lead his armies in person. Julius was not a spiritual man, but he was a staunch defender of the papacy, not only through his military conquests, but also through his artistic patronage.[63]

While the Church seemed to be mired in secular matters, the Christian faith was still very much a part of everyday life. The liturgical calendar dictated the times of work and rest. Atheism was unheard of during this era, as even the lowest criminal had faith and considered his

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[61] Anthony Levi, *Renaissance and Reformation: The Intellectual Genesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 7.

[62] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 220-227.

[63] Ibid.

own salvation.[64] The people of this era also believed deeply in the saving powers of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints. Jesus, Mary and the saints were relied upon to bridge the vast expanse between God and man. Specific saints were called upon to assist during even the smallest nuisances of everyday life.[65] Devotion to the Blessed Virgin was extremely popular; she was universally regarded as pure, obedient and faithful.[66] Art pieces of the era such as the Pietà, which exhibits a broken Jesus in the arms of his mother, reveal a culture that was growing more Christocentric.[67] Christ also served as the physical manifestation of God's love for humankind. Certain groups such as the cult of Jesus the Living Host celebrated the real presence of Christ in the host. Another focused on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.[68] There was also of course, a great and real fear of evil, specifically the devil. Satan was omnipresent and always looking to lure the innocent into temptation and sin.[69]

The bones of saints and other objects that came into contact with holy men and women regained popularity beginning in the fourteenth century. People went to great lengths to see, touch and possess them. In a time when people had much in the way of problems and little in the way of answers, these objects provided comfort and strength. It was also obvious that some of these supposed relics were little more than worthless trinkets pawned off by swindlers.[70] An attempt was made to curb relic hunters when Pope Boniface VIII issued a bull in 1300, which forbade the mutilation of corpses.[71]

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[64] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 39.
[65]Ibid., 56-64.
[66] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 108-110.
[67] Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation 1517-1559*
[68] Ibid.
[69] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 48.
[70] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 121-122.
[71] Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (New York: The John Day Company, 1969) , 71.

The Black Death also had an enormous and lasting effect on the people and the atmosphere of Europe during the late Middle Ages.[72] Originating from the Far East and moving by way of trade routes, the plague had reached the mainland of Italy by the spring of 1348. Most people of the era believed that the plague was a scourge from God, a punishment for humanity's sins, that God had corrupted or allowed the corruption of the breathable air. The bacteria which caused the plague was actually carried by rats and fleas and flourished in the unsanitary conditions of the urban areas.[73]

The disease is described as highly contagious, most likely fatal, and extremely unpleasant. A common symptom was the appearance of boils or buboes, usually in the groin or the armpit, which was followed by black spots on the skin. Most of the afflicted died within hours or days. In his book *The Black Death*, Philip Ziegler notes that the plague struck Europe during a period of over-population, and that it is probable that one European in three died during the period of the Black Death.[74]

During the mid-fourteenth century in Europe, a fixation on death developed; the people of this time were simultaneously terrified and fascinated by the concept of mortality.[75] It is estimated that the plague killed at least a third of Europe's population. The clergy seemed to be especially susceptible as many of the priests most dedicated to their dying flocks were victims. The pestilence also had a negative effect on the simple economy of the time. Due to such high death rates, a labor shortage emerged in the agriculture and trade sectors.[76]

As the plague wreaked havoc, especially in the urban areas, there was an obvious psychological effect. During their sermons, preachers would describe death at great length and

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[72] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 371-372.
[73] Ziegler, 15-35.
[74] Ibid., 231.
[75] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 116-117.
[76] Cantor, 482.

depth, going into the details of human decomposition, shocking their audiences in an effort to better relay the message of moral rectitude. Artists of the age would personify death as one of the horsemen of the Apocalypse or as a skeleton. Michael Wolgemut's painting *Danse Macabre* (1493) illustrates the Dance of Death, a concept that emerged during the mid-fourteenth century. The Dance of Death involves the dead enticing the living to dance; a dance that unites all humans, from the lowliest peasant to the most majestic sovereign.[77]Another good example is Albrecht Dürer's *Knight, Death and the Devil* (1513), which perfectly characterizes the era. The famous engraving portrays a knight in full armor on horseback while he is tempted by the devil, and reminded of his short life by the personification of death.

In this atmosphere of terror, piety was sometimes carried to violent extremes. In a highly Christian atmosphere the people of this era also seemed to be more aware of their own frailty and inclination toward sin than ever. A painful atonement seemed to be the only way some could put their mind at peace. An example of this was the flagellants, large groups of Christians who whipped themselves while marching through the towns of Western Europe.[78] Flagellants seemed to arrive on the scene immediately following the first outbreak of plague (1348-1350). It was thought that the bloody self-chastisement was a sort of penance to appease an angry God.[79]

From the perspective of the Christian, within this religiously charged atmosphere of the high and late Middle Ages, marginal groups of the European population such as Jews, Muslims and witches were viewed with a mix of fear, suspicion and hatred. Depending upon their location, Jews had been allowed to flourish as moneylenders and even landlords until the twelfth century. With a few exceptions, Spain up until the sixteenth century was particularly hospitable to the Jews, where they prospered commercially and socially. After that time however, Jews

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[77] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 116-118.
[78] H. Daniel-Rops, *Cathedral and Crusade*, 119-120.
[79] Ibid.

would be increasingly considered scapegoats for various problems such as the Black Death and the death of Christian children. After the twelfth century, Jews faced increasing violence, and were forced to flee from their homes, and or pay the nobility for their protection.[80]

In Spain, great numbers of Jews would insincerely convert to Christianity in order to escape persecution while still secretly practicing their Jewish faith. Those who did so were labeled 'Conversos' or 'Marranos.' There were even stories of Marranos infiltrating some of the higher ranks of the Church. Muslims were not accepted due to their history of aggression against Christendom and because of their control over the Holy Land. Even after the Treaty of Grenada (1492), which officially ended the campaign to push all Muslims out of the Iberian Peninsula, there remained a Muslim presence in Spain. Like the Marranos, insincere Muslim converts to Christianity were called 'Moriscos.'

King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella would not tolerate the presence of Jews and Muslims, as well as the insincere converts.[81] By the late fifteenth century, Jews who outwardly professed to be Christian but secretly practiced Judaism were perceived as a grave threat to society.[82] With the reluctant blessing of Pope Sixtus IV, Ferdinand and Isabella therefore restored the Inquisition in 1480. This was largely a state-supervised institution, staffed by Dominicans, whose objective it was to fully convert Jews and Muslims or purge them from the population.[83]

The Spanish Inquisition was the product of an atmosphere of extreme piety, fear and anti-Semitism. The Spanish monarchs were also motivated by the wealth that could be confiscated from convicted heretics. The Inquisition began in Seville, where the converso threat was

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[80] Cantor, 364-372.
[81] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 235-268
[82] Jensen, 194.
[83] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 235-268

believed to be the most severe, and was originally staffed by two or three priests who functioned as inquisitors. In 1481, the first auto-da-fé (act of faith) was held, in which six heretics were convicted and burned at the stake. Later, Tomas de Torquemada was appointed as the grand inquisitor in 1483.[84]

Regardless of whether they truly existed or not, witches captured the popular imagination within this time period. Like the Jews and other marginal groups they served as scapegoats when certain terrible events occurred and as the 'other' or the darkness with which to contrast the light or the pure in society. This makes sense when one considers that the high and late Middle Ages was a period in which practically everyone believed that a battle between good and evil had an effect on their daily lives. Jesus Christ and the Church represented all that was good and holy. Society however, seemed to require an 'other' or an outsider to contrast with the Christian man or woman, perhaps unconsciously acknowledging a careful balance between good and evil. Jews, Muslims and witches were the outsiders and/or the personification of evil.

Due to ignorance, superstition and the difficult nature of life in the late medieval era, many people lived with a great deal of fear. Fear of starvation, disease and war was all part of medieval life. It would not matter if a farmer was industrious in securing his crop; he could be dead tomorrow from disease. This fear of the unknown or the uncontrollable was focused on what society increasingly acknowledged and tried to control: the marginal groups.

De Lamar Jensen remarks that the belief in witches has always been a part of civilization. Despite scientific advancement, the belief in witchcraft grew far more pronounced and complex in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. The Church had associated witchcraft with heresy and evil. In 1484 the Church issued a papal bull that authorized the Dominicans to remove witchcraft from the Holy Roman Empire. Suspicion and fear were aroused even further in 1486

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[84] Jensen, 193-194.

when the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of the Witches) was published. Written by Heinrich

Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, the *Malleus Maleficarum* was written to prove the existence of

witchcraft and also to instruct the reader on how to identify and convict a witch. Both of these

events in combination with fear and ignorance led to an increase in the accusations of witchcraft

and the resulting witch burnings.[85]

       This salvation-obsessed culture was further reinforced by the complex and unsettling

Christian theology that had developed during the late medieval era. Professor Anthony Levi

makes the case that the flawed scholastic theology which developed within the late medieval era

had its roots in Christianity's latinization. The first four ecumenical Church Councils of Nicaea

(AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381), Ephesus (AD 431), and Nicaea (AD 451), all held within

the Greek-influenced eastern vestiges of the Roman Empire produced an official Christology,

which details Christ's incarnation and the nature of the Holy Trinity. Levi states that problems

began when the original documents of these councils were translated from Greek into Latin.

Levi points out that the Greek language was more suited to describe the essence of Christ and the

Trinity compared with the 'relative poverty' of the Latin theological terminology. Because of

the limitations and contradictions found within the Latin theology it could not be perfectly

reconciled with Aristotelian epistemology in the High Middle Ages.[86] It is argued however, that

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the Dominican Scholastic did indeed achieve the best

synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Latin Christian theology thus far in the thirteenth-

century with his *Summa Theologica.*

       For the most part, present day Catholicism looks back to the *Summa Theologica* written

between 1265 and 1274, or Thomism, as the ultimate model of Christian theology. This however

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[85] Jensen, 390-391.
[86] Levi, 22-24.

was not the case during the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Quite radical for his time, St. Thomas Aquinas proposed that human reason was a lesser version of God's own infinite reason, and that the human desire for moral fulfillment is rooted in God's higher divine reason. St. Thomas made the case for a God that revealed himself, to a limited degree, through his own earthly creation, and that humans can achieve an imperfect but rational awareness of the divine through the sensation of nature.[87]

The influences of Aristotle on Europe were hastened through the commentaries of Islamic philosophers like Avicenna and Averroës. Because of its pagan roots and its connection to Islam, the Church officially condemned the growing Aristotelian synthesis in 1270 and again in 1277. The anti-Aristotelian position of the Church at that time emphasized God's omnipotence.[88]

John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) from the Franciscan school of thought argued against Aquinas' natural law theology. Scotus believed that Thomism ultimately limited both the omnipotence of God as well as human free will. Scotus postulated that God was far beyond and isolated from his human creation, that a perception of the divine was not achieved through the senses, but rather through faith. In this case the human will was ultimately free to decide whether or not it wanted to accept the grace of God. This stance was considered Pelegian and therefore heretical.

The Pelagian outlook asserts that humankind has not been absolutely corrupted by Adam and Eve's original sin, and that mankind can choose between good and evil without the aid of God's grace. This is close to the Roman Catholic view except that Catholicism requires God's grace. Scotus utilized a theological loophole and avoided heresy through his recognition of

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[87] Cantor, 443-4.

[88] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 20-21.

predestination. The concept of predestination affirms that from the moment of conception, a person's fate in the afterlife was already sealed. Those who were predestined for eternal punishment were damned for no other reason than original sin. Essentially, the question is whether or not God is more inclined to be of a predictable or arbitrary nature. Pelagianism was sidestepped because predestination destined a person to heaven or hell, at least by the time of their conception; thereby rendering their own desires for God's grace as inconsequential.[89]

Scotus' use of the concept of predestination would force him to add to this initial theory with a chronology of divine acts, essentially attempting to mitigate the unthinkable doctrine of predestination. William of Ockham (1285-1349), also a Franciscan theologian and a nominalist, and a standout figure of the 14th century's *via moderna*, would later contradict Scotus' chronology of divine acts. Nominalism was a school of philosophy which denied the existence of universals outside of the mind. As a label, nominalists were those scholastics who dominated the universities with the *via moderna* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Aquinas and Scotus would both be considered important elements of the former *via antiqua*, which was prevalent in the 13th century. As Ockham negated Scotus' chronology of divine acts into one single divine act, the doctrine of the predestination of the elect would now stand undiluted.[90]

The concept of predestination and its terrifying consequences would spread beyond the scholastics and become a subtle yet menacing influence on the late Medieval culture. The only comfort to the medieval Christian was the theologically unsupported, almost Pelagian, but popular belief or hope that God would reward those individuals who reached their highest spiritual potential, otherwise known as the *Facientibus Principle* (*Facientibus quod in se est*

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[89] Levi, 53-55.
[90] Ibid.

Deus non denegat gratiam).[91] The *Facientibus Principle* emphasized the forgiving nature of the

son, Jesus Christ, but it also involved self-examination; did I make full use of all God's grace?[92]

The uncertainty that the average Christian faced as a result of the theory of predestination almost

inevitably led to the popularity of indulgences and holy relics, or anything that allowed for

reward in the afterlife without a complete moral conversion.

By the middle of the fourteenth century, cracks began to appear in the relative orderliness

which prevailed during the High Middle Ages (1000-1300AD). European society had reached a

critical juncture and was faced with multiple challenges: the extremely difficult nature of life

during the Late Middle Ages, an uncompromising Ockhamist (nominalist) theology, and a

growing disillusionment in the Church. Faced with these challenges, there were noticeable

differences in how the peoples of Northern and Southern Europe reacted. In general, the Italian

peninsula and Southern Europe responded with Renaissance humanism, which in brief,

emphasized human potential, and cited classical Greek influences, such as Plato and Plotinus to

support its philosophy. The Low Countries and Northern Europe however, would answer with

the *devotio moderna* with its emphasis on mysticism and developing an individual spirituality.[93]

The devotional works that follow were the product of this supercharged religious

atmosphere and a tumultuous era. These works would also both reflect and influence the culture

of the Late Middle Ages in Europe. The popularity and acclaim of these works prove that

Christians were attempting to look past a world which was full of death, struggle and sin, to the

city of God or the Christian ideal. The average Christian on a conscious or unconscious level

was most likely influenced by the Facientibus Principle, and attempting to move spiritually,

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[91] Levi, 55-56.
[92] Michael Allen Gillespie, *Where Did All the Evils Go?*:*In Moral Judgment and the Problem of Evil*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[93] Levi, 40-60.

morally and even physically toward God. Another explanation for the popularity of these devotional works, keeping in mind that not all works were specifically designed for the laity, was the increase in lay literacy rates during the late Middle Ages as there was a proliferation of new municipal schools, universities, and printed works.

On a more individual level, Christians were attempting to rise above their own sinful tendencies to more closely imitate the life of Jesus Christ. During the Late Middle Ages when the people of Europe were beset by crisis and tumult, and longed for spiritual comfort, many found the Church's spiritual direction and its moral state to be inadequate. The Church was simply too disorganized to completely sort out during this time period. While European society would retain its Christian character even as the Roman Church appeared to be compromised, many people began looking elsewhere to nourish their faith. With the advice of several spiritual writers, many began to look within their own hearts. Jesus Christ became increasingly popular as a simple, dependable and perfectly virtuous role model. The reading and the practice of these devotional works helped to assuage the guilt of sinful Christians who hoped for salvation. This undercurrent would progress and be interconnected with the evolution of Europe's Christian character.

The popularity of personal piety and mysticism seemed to be on the rise especially among the laity of Northern Europe.[94] A wealthy canon lawyer turned Carthusian monk named Gerard Groote established the Brethren of the Common Life, an informal religious community, which emerged in the low countries, specifically in Windesheim near Zwolle, during the fourteenth century. Those who belonged to this community followed the mystical *devotio moderna*, which advocated a virtuous life close to Christ. The Brethren also gave assistance to

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[94] Lewis W. Spitz, ed., The Protestant Reformation (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 3.

the poor and educated many young people.[95] Compared with the *via moderna* movement, which

could be considered too confusing to be useful, the *devotio moderna* was less scholastic and

philosophical, and more devotional and Christocentric.

      One of the most famous members of the Brethren was Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471),

the author of *The Imitation of Christ*. Published in 1425 and widely read, *The Imitation* would

inspire a new kind of personal spirituality. It stressed the value of the sacraments, the benefits of

a more simplistic lifestyle, and a personal relationship with God.[96] H. Daniel Rops states that it

was during the time of the *Imitation* and the spiritual movement that was associated with it that

partly prepared the Church for the challenges of the Reformation era.[97]

      Humanism, a product of the Renaissance, reawakened an interest in scholarship and

attempted to fuse classical literature with Christian thought. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)

was one of the foremost Christian humanist scholars of the Late Middle Ages/Reformation Era.

He attended a grammar school run by the Brethren of the Common Life. He would go on to pen

many famous works, among them a handbook of Christian virtues called *The Enchiridion* in

1503.[98]

      Martin Luther (1483-1546) agonized over his own salvation. By studying scripture,

Luther came to a new understanding of faith and grace. He was also disturbed by what he saw

within the Church. He would go on to write several works including *The Two Kinds of

Righteousness* (1519), which describes how God is linked to man, *A Sermon on Preparing to Die*

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[95] Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era: 1500-1650* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 58-59.

[96] Sherman, The West in the World: A Mid-length Narrative History, Volume I: to 1715. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004)., 376.

[97] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 4.

[98] Jensen, 40-41.

(1519), which is meant to prepare a Christian for death, and *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), which presents Luther's main theological argument.[99]

The well-learned John Calvin (1509-1564) was at one point a candidate for the priesthood who also devoted himself to Humanist scholarship. Sometime between 1531 and 1534, Calvin underwent a spiritual conversion, which would find full expression in his work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). De Lamar Jensen states that Calvin's *Institutes* "was the strongest weapon of the Reformation against the Roman Church."[100] The work contains Calvin's theology and his plans for a new Protestant Church. It also specifically points out where the Roman Church has failed and argues against the primacy of the Roman see.

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, was first a Spanish soldier. After a devastating injury, he was forced to undergo a long recovery, during which he read the stories of saints and resolved to dedicate the rest of his life to God. He was also inspired by Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* and decided to write another devotional piece: *The Spiritual Exercises* (1550), a work with much of the same intent as *The Imitation*.[101]

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) attended a Jesuit college, and later with St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) would form the Discalced Carmelites. By the time he had written the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night of the Soul* (1582), he had already been kidnapped twice and sent to prison. The *Ascent* and *Dark Night* take the goal of a better relationship with God a step further into the metaphysical.[102]

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[99] John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, (New York: Doubleday, 1962). 42-99.
[100] Jensen, 134.
[101] Sherman, 388.
[102] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 121-126.

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) seemed destined for a career in the Church at a young age. He was a courageous, humble and spiritual man who endured great hardships in an attempt to spread his faith and help others. Later, as Bishop of Geneva he would continue in his humble ministry. De Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1608), is addressed to all those who wish to further develop their faith and their relationship with God.[103]

In general, all the works considered here are considered devotional. They offer advice for a person who wishes to develop their relationship with God, while they differ in method, length and style. They reflect on the author and environment in which they were written. For the average person of the time, the whole of the Christian faith was complex and abstract. These works exhibit a Christianity, which embraces the individual and can be at times intensely personal.

The almost two hundred year time span between the publication of *The Imitation of Christ* in the early fifteenth century through the early seventeenth century when the *Introduction to the Devout Life* was published, was a period of purification for the Christian faith and the Catholic Church. Even while the outer artifice of the Roman Church came under attack during this era, an inner renewal of faith which bore fruit in the minds and hearts of the era's most prominent Christian authors was slowly restoring the Church from the inside out. The consequence of this renewal was the fragmenting of a Christian Europe. Some would remain within the Catholic Church, others only found peace by leaving. These devotional writings were an expression or product of this inner renewal.

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[103] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons LTD, 1962) , 378-384.

Chapter II

Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ*

In Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Christian men and women were

consciously or not burdened with the dilemma posed by Ockham and the theology of the *via*

moderna. Along with the *via moderna* or the nominalist school came its resulting terrifying

theology of the predestination of the elect. South of the Alps, the problem was being addressed

in a more intellectual fashion with scholasticism and its classical Greek influences such as Plato.

Meanwhile, in the Rhine River area of Germany and the Low Countries the *devotio moderna* was

taking hold. Many of the common people in these locations seemed to be turning away from the

religious arguments of the time and embracing a less confusing, yet more demanding approach to

their faith. The *devotio moderna* mostly bypassed complex theology and focused on the example

of Jesus Christ, and could be considered Northern Europe's reaction to the rigid, Ockhamist *via*

moderna.[104]

The *devotio moderna,* which had a great influence on northern and central Europe,

advocated humility before God. With the encouragement of others in a close community there

was also a focus on personal spiritual improvement, introspection, and obedience. Arguably, one

of the most representative works of the *devotio moderna* was Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of*

Christ.[105] Originally published in 1427, *The Imitation* has since been reprinted and translated

countless times. Many scholars believe it to be the work of two or three men, most likely

members of the Brethren of the Common Life. There has been some speculation however, that

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[104] Levi, 133-135.
[105] Levi, 144.

the writings could have been the product of someone else entirely, such as St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, Ludolph of Saxony, or Geert Groote.[106]

The true author(s) of *The Imitation of Christ* remains somewhat of a mystery. In the forward to their translation of the work, Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton explain that the work is likely the product of two or three members of the Brethren of the Common Life. Thomas à Kempis most likely translated the writings of a few members of the Brethren into Latin and organized them into the cohesive form which we are familiar with today. Thomas à Kempis, monk and author, was born in either 1379 or 1380 to John and Gertrude Haemerken "Little Hammer" in the Diocese of Cologne. By 1395 Thomas was attending a school in Deventer, Holland. Thomas proved to be a good student, and went on to be a skilled copyist, transcribing many manuscripts. Thomas' brother John had also attended the school in Deventer.[107]

When Thomas completed his studies in humanities at Deventer in 1399 he then sought admission into the new congregation of Canons Regular of Windesheim at Mount Saint Agnes, near Zwolle. This community was led by Thomas' brother John and was founded in 1398. He would be designated a novice in 1406, ordained a priest in 1413, and was made sub-prior in 1425 and again in 1448. As a sub-prior, he was responsible for guiding the novices.[108]

Thomas à Kempis was a disciple of Geert Groote (1340-84). Groote was born in Deventer in 1340, was orphaned at 10 because of the plague and went on to achieve a master of arts in Paris. Groote studied canon law and acquired several benefices before a spiritual conversion in approximately 1374. After that, he was inspired to spend several years in a Carthusian monastery studying the great northern mystics such as Ruusbroek, who wrote

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[106] Thomas a` Kempis ,*The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Harold C. Gardiner S.J. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 9.
[107] Ibid., 5.
[108] Ibid., 5-9.

extensively on a personal relationship with God.[109] After his conversion, Groote gave away most

of his possessions and contributed to the reorganization of the house at Deventer for the use of a

semi-monastic female order, later to be known as the Sisters of the Common Life. Florenz

Radewijns, a follower of Geert Groote, and later a priest, formed the male version, known as the

Brethren of the Common Life.

Groote became a deacon, thereby securing his ability to preach. In his theology, his

mindset was closer to Aquinas and the *via antiqua*. He subscribed to the notion that good works

and moral effort held value, and that God's grace was ubiquitous. Groote believed that

individual Christians should spend their lives following the example of Christ, and seeking moral

virtue through good works and actions. These efforts would then be rewarded in the afterlife.[110]

Groote believed that the priesthood was ascribed too much status, that priests did more

good in leading by example than by dispensing the sacraments. He believed that attendance at a

mass celebrated by a priest who was known for concubinage was sinful. Groote was also

troubled by some aspects of the monastic system of the time, such as the requirement of a dowry

before one could join an order, and the proliferation of private possessions that could be found

within an order's house.[111] From Groote here, we see some educated and independent thought.

While still remaining in the Roman Church's fold, his ideas are a foreshadowing of what is to

come.

The Brethren of the Common Life were somewhat unique in their time. They were a

quasi-monastic organization of lay, communal houses. Since they could not be considered actual

monasteries, the communal houses of the Brethren needed the approval of the bishop of Utrecht.

On April 30th of 1401, the bishop, who was specifically delegated to this matter by Pope

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[109] Levi, 142.
[110] Ibid., 142-143.
[111] Ibid., 144.

Gregory XI, had to sign off on every detail of the Brethren's way of life, such as reading scripture in the vernacular, obedience to a superior and prohibition of begging.[112]

In 1417, the Brethren came under the attack of the Dominican Mathias Grabow, who disagreed with their quasi-monastic way of living. Grabow first presented his case in Utrecht, but was denied. He then tried to appeal to Rome and the Council of Constance. The Council of Constance is significant in that its main purpose was to resolve the issue of the Western Schism and the Three-Popes Controversy with the election of Pope Martin V. Pierre d'Ailly, a prominent French Theologian and cardinal, and Jean Gerson, a pupil of d'Ailly, rejected the claims of Mathias Grabow. Grabow was subsequently condemned and had to recant in 1419.[113]

Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson both served in succession as Chancellor of the University of Paris. While they did spiritually identify with the Windesheim congregation, which was the monastic offshoot of the Brethren of the Common Life, they were also bound by Ockham's theology. Both d'Ailly and Gerson were conciliarists as Ockham himself was. Ockham was against absolute papal authority and was in favor of a Church that invested some authority in a council.[114]

Thomas à Kempis chronicled the events of Mount Saint Agnes and all of Agnetenberg until his death. The story of the congregation has been published in *The Chronicle of the Canons Regular of Mount St. Agnes*. Thomas was also named procurator, not for his business sense, but out of his love for the poor. However, since Thomas preferred to spend most of his time in study and prayer, he was relieved of this office.[115]

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[112]Ibid., 146.
[113] Ibid.
[114]Ibid., 146-147.
[115] Gardiner, 9.

While Thomas was serving as subprior, the congregation was uprooted from Agnetenberg when Pope Martin V placed an interdict on the area in 1429. The interdict stemmed from the Pope's displeasure of the recently appointed Prince-Bishop of Utrecht, Rudolph of Diepholt. Rudolph was not the Pope's initial choice for the bishopric and was subsequently excommunicated as he attempted to maintain the office against the pope's wishes. Rudolph was eventually recognized as the legitimate bishop by Martin V's successor Eugene IV. The Canons of St. Agnes spent the next few years in Lunenkerk. Meanwhile, Thomas and his brother John spent much of this time in a convent near Arnheim. John would die here in 1432. The Canons returned to Agnetenberg in the same year.[116]

Thomas spent most of his time on literary matters and in prayer. He seemed to have difficulty in discussing non-religious matters as his thoughts were usually turned to God. Besides *The Imitation*, Thomas authored many other works such as the biography of Geert Groote, the hagiography of St. Lydewigis, as well as numerous other sermons, treatises, and meditations. Thomas died on July 25th, 1471 near Zwolle. His remains were at first kept in the priory that he had helped build but were then transferred to a reliquary in Zwolle. Now he rests in St. Michael's Church in Zwolle.[117]

The Imitation of Christ is meant to bring the reader closer to Christ, with Christ serving as the supreme role model and pinnacle of holiness. The work is divided into four parts or books. To put it very simply, the first book is made up of guidelines that are intended to instruct the reader to live more like Christ. Chapters include "Having a Humble Opinion of Self" and "Avoiding False Hope and Pride." The second book, which, also consists of guidelines, instructs the reader on how to keep Christ in mind, such as "Meditation," and "The Joy of a Good

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[116]Ibid., 8-9.
[117]Ibid., 9.

Conscience." The third is a dialogue between man and God on how to live on this Earth. Finally, the fourth is a dialogue between man and God on the subject of Holy Communion.[118]

Beginning in book one ("Thoughts Helpful in the Life of the Soul"), a few themes appear which continue to resurface throughout the rest of the four books. Almost immediately in the first book, it will be obvious to the reader that the number one priority is Christ. This focus on Christ will continue throughout the rest of the four books. This of course confirms the chistocentric faith of the *devotio moderna*. Another trend is à Kempis' view of Earthly life, which is decidedly negative: "To eat and drink, to watch and sleep, to rest, to labor, and to be bound by other human necessities is certainly a great misery and affliction to the devout man who would gladly be released from them and be free from all sin."[119] In writing of the earthly life, à Kempis strongly warns the reader of his eventual and inescapable death, writing that the good Christian should prepare for death every day since he never knows for sure when it will come: "When that last moment arrives you will begin to have a quite different opinion of the life that is now entirely past and you will regret very much that you were so careless and remiss."[120]

The advice that is offered here goes completely against man's natural primitive and instinctive tendencies, as in most people would find it difficult to carry out this advice. For instance, à Kempis tells us that gossiping, bravado and lust are not virtuous and must be resisted in all cases. The author also writes that men should accept living under authority, and embrace the adversity that one will undoubtedly encounter throughout life. Book one recommends the simple and humble life. Living this way, à Kempis tells us, will make one truly happy, far beyond the brief and incomplete happiness that goods and wealth bring. Along with living

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[118] Thomas à Kempis ,*The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), vii-xiii.
[119]Ibid., 20.
[120]Ibid., 22.

simply, we are told that a long life is not necessarily a blessing since earthly life is mostly comprised of suffering and sin.[121]

The second book focuses on the readers' interior or consciousness. Here, à Kempis writes of the benefits of meditation and purity of the mind. The author also addresses humility and how a person ought to view himself. When discussing meditation, he advises beginners to think about the Lord's passion if they are having trouble directing their thoughts toward God, a logical place to start, considering most people have at least seen a crucifix. When attending to the interior life, as the second book is entitled, à Kempis is not just referring to man's mind and spirit; he is also comparing the material or outward life compared to the spiritual or interior life. The author implores us to withdraw from material things.[122]

The last two chapters of book two focus on Jesus' cross and his sacrifice ("Few Love the Cross of Jesus," "The Royal Road of the Holy Cross"). The topic moves then to the suffering of man. Here à Kempis encourages the reader to not only embrace the reassuring knowledge of Christ as the redeemer, but to also imitate His suffering, to take up the cross of Christ. A difficult yet fulfilling life awaits those who deny themselves and embrace the cross willingly. What exactly does à Kempis mean by embracing the cross of Christ? Essentially, it means to live the life that Christ advises by rejecting material goods, wealth, and comfort, and embracing such things as adversity, sacrifice, and service to others. This, à Kempis writes, will lead to eternal life and true peace.[123]

Book three exhibits a change in style. A dialogue between God and the disciple replaces the simple, direct statements seen so far. The focus of the third book is on Christ's support for the life that he desires the reader to live. In this book, the reader is counseled on such things as

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[121]Ibid., 1-27.
[122]Ibid., 28-40.
[123]Ibid., 39-40.

prayer, human suffering, humility, and restraining sexual desire.[124] This part also contains

specific prayers, such as the "Prayer for the Grace of Devotion." This prayer in particular serves

to humble the person who says it: "I am your poorest and meanest servant, a vile worm, much

more poor and contemptible than I know or dare to say."[125]

 À Kempis also touches on the topic of nature versus grace in the third book. Nature is

portrayed as wicked while grace is seen as Godlike. In this section, the author gives the reader

several examples of the contradictory relationship of nature and grace: "Nature is quick to

complain of need and trouble; grace is staunch in suffering want."[126] Evidently, man possesses

some degree of both of these. Nature is what man is born with, a base state, while grace is a gift

of God. Because the first man sinned (Adam) and was relegated to a fallen state, the nature of

mankind retains the stain or taint of Adam's original sin. À Kempis urges the reader to keep his

nature repressed; the more he does this, the more grace he shall receive.   À Kempis tells the

reader on several occasions to "act manfully", or to "bear hardships like a man." This, one

would suspect, is a command to act aggressively or assertively in the quest to defeat temptation

and become more virtuous.[127]

 The final book of the Imitation is exclusively on the subject of The Eucharist. On the

subject of communion, à Kempis implores the reader to receive The Eucharist worthily,

reverently, and often. The author reasons that frequent communion will promote spiritual,

mental and physical health. À Kempis here comments on popular piety, and points out that the

sacrament may be a bit overlooked. For some, the process of transubstantiation and its end

result, in which the bread and wine are physically transformed into the actual body and blood of

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[124]Ibid., 44-113.
[125]Ibid., 47-48.
[126]Ibid., 106.
[127]Ibid., 107-114.

Christ has become commonplace and has lost its value. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist the faithful should keep in mind that they are in the physical presence of the Lord. This incredible phenomenon should be regarded with the greatest degree of reverence, more reverence than people give to the relics of saints.[128] Here à Kempis is commenting sarcastically that while the Lord and Saviour, the living God is present during Mass, people are clamoring to find the bones of saints. While relics have their place in Catholicism they are not as important as the actual body and blood of Jesus.

One of the chapters in this fourth book concerns itself with the priesthood and its relationship to the Eucharist. À Kempis considers the distinction of the priest: "Great is the Mystery and great the dignity of priests to whom is given that which has not been granted the angels."[129] In this section, à Kempis writes as if he is speaking to a priest: "Behold, you have been made a priest, consecrated to celebrate Mass!"[130] It could very well be that *The Imitation* was originally intended for the clergy.

At the end of the last book the author warns the reader to not allow reason to diminish faith. Specifically, à Kempis cautions the faithful to not overanalyze The Eucharist, as well as one's faith in general. The author tells us that one may be overwhelmed or perhaps lose his devotion if he should begin to ponder too much on the mysteries of God. This advice is in line with the *devotio moderna* school of thought. À Kempis calls on the reader to fortify his faith, but also warns that a stronger faith will attract the temptations of Satan.[131]

Throughout *The Imitation*, the reader will notice the focus on Christ, as well as the denial of self. Some may find *The Imitation* to be a bit dark in tone, that à Kempis presents a side of

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[128]Ibid., 115-138.
[129]Ibid., 123.
[130] Ibid.
[131]Ibid., 138-139.

Christianity reserved for the clergy or even the recluse monk. From several of the passages in the book, one may deduce that à Kempis did indeed write *The Imitation* originally for the clergy, especially in those sections when he is specifically addressing priests. This theory is supported by the fact that outside the clergy, it would be difficult to find a person who was fluent in Latin, the official language of the Church and the original language of *The Imitation*.

    The Imitation was arguably the most important work of the *devotio moderna*. While the Church seemed to be falling short of addressing the spiritual needs of the faithful, *The Imitation* attempted to fill that need. Since its publication in the early fifteenth century, à Kempis' work prepared the way for a new interest in personal spirituality and would go on to inspire Erasmus and later Ignatius Loyola, and a whole genre of Christian devotional works.[132]

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[132] Levi, 146.

Chapter III

Erasmus and *The Handbook of the Christian Knight*

When considering the *devotio moderna*, the school of thought which inspired Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, one cannot ignore the influence and writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus was born on the feast of St. Simon (October 28) in Rotterdam, Holland. The exact year of his birth has been debated, although it is widely thought to be within the years 1466 and 1469. He was the second illegitimate son of Gerard and Margaret. Gerard was a priest, and Margaret was a physician's daughter.[133] Around 1475 Erasmus was sent to the well-known school at Deventer, which was founded by Geert Groote in 1380. This was the same Geert Groote who had also established the semi-monastic Brethren of the Common Life.

In his early teens Erasmus lost both his parents. Apparently, Erasmus' father had some kind of inheritance to pass on to his sons, but this was improperly handled and lost. Because of his current situation, still young and without any financial support, Erasmus was pressured into joining the Augustinian Canons in the Emmaus Monastery at Steyn. Never feeling truly called to the monastic life however, Erasmus soon found employment and a life outside of the monastery.[134]

Erasmus caught the attention of Hendrik van Bergen, a member of a highly respected Burgundian family, and Bishop of the diocese of Cambria. Erasmus was chosen to be the Bishop's secretary and traveling companion and was subsequently ordained a priest by 1492.[135] Erasmus was released by the Bishop in 1495 and went on to study in Paris at the Collège de

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[133] Preserved Smith, *Erasmus: A Study of His Life, Ideals, and Place in History* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962), 6-9.

[134] John C. Olin, ed., *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus with the Life of Erasmus by BeatusRhenanus* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1975), 32-33.

[135] Anthony Levi, *Renaissance and Reformation*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 178.

Montaigu. Compared with his life in the Bishop's court, his life in Paris was relatively harsh.

From a conversation in 1498 with the Carmelite brother Arnold Bostius, Erasmus commented

that he sincerely wanted to avoid the sins of youth and embrace his studies, but he expressed

doubt as to whether his health could support such a meager life.[136]

In 1499, Erasmus accompanied Lord Mountjoy, a student of his from Paris, to England.

While in England, Erasmus came in contact with John Colet, a respected court preacher, who

like Erasmus subscribed to the *devotio moderna*. Erasmus also met Thomas More, who would

later become an intimate friend. Erasmus' first publication, the *Adagia*, was a collection of Latin

proverbs intended for those who wished to further their knowledge of the classics and the Latin

form. By 1501 Erasmus had begun work on the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*.[137]

In 1506, Erasmus traveled to Italy and was warmly received in the cities of Padua,

Venice, and Bologna.[138] In 1509, Erasmus produced the *Praise of Folly*, which pointed out the

maladies of society, particularly the abuses in the Church.[139] The year 1516 would see the

release of Erasmus' Greek and Latin edition of the New Testament as well as the *Institutio*

principis christiani. By this time Erasmus' fame had increased a great deal and he became well

known throughout Europe.[140]

Erasmus had many opportunities to stop traveling and settle down somewhere. Many

princes and nobles offered Erasmus generous salaries: Pope Paul III offered him a cardinal's hat

as well as the provostship at Deventer in Utrecht; other similar offers came from Bavaria and

France. Erasmus never explored those options, however, preferring to remain independent.[141]

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[136]Ibid., 178-179.
[137] Olin, 3-7.
[138]Ibid., 28.
[139]Ibid., 14.
[140]Ibid., 14-15.
[141]Ibid., 44-45.

In the context of the religious turbulence of the sixteenth century, Erasmus is frequently compared to Martin Luther. Both Erasmus and Luther desired reform. Where they differed was in method and scale. Luther is seen as more radical and impatient. He envisioned the total renovation of the Church. Erasmus preferred a gradual, more passive reform that included an intact Church and theology. Up until the Diet of Worms in 1521, the two would maintain a correspondence, but they had been steadily growing apart. Erasmus believed that Luther could more effectively advance his cause if he would only tone down his passion and fiery rhetoric. Especially unsettling for Erasmus was Luther's *Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), which attacked the seven sacraments of the Church. By 1521, Erasmus would quietly withdraw his support from Luther so as to not bring about his own condemnation.[142]

Erasmus would relocate to Basel, Switzerland from Louvain in order to escape the hostile climate. In Basel, Erasmus associated with a group of scholarly humanists. While Erasmus preferred to remain neutral during the Reformation era, he did defend himself against Catholic charges that he was a supporter of Lutheranism. In 1524 Erasmus wrote an essay known as *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* or *The Freedom of the Will*, which cited biblical passages that were either for or against the concept of human free will. In the essay, Erasmus ultimately arrives at the conclusion that scripture supports the Church's position of free will and salvation through faith and works. Luther bitterly replied with his *De servo arbitrio* (*On the Bondage of the Will*), which argued that scripture clearly states that man does not have the capacity of free will to choose between good and evil. Therefore, he can have no influence over the status of his individual salvation.[143]

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[142] Smith, 240-243.

[143] Peggy Saari, Aaron Saari. Ed., *Renaissance and Reformation Biographies* (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson/Gale, 2002), 120.

As of 1523 Erasmus' works were investigated by the theological faculty of Paris and many parts of his works were censored. In 1531 the Church formally condemned Erasmus, whereupon he subsequently issued an extensive apology. For the remainder of his life Erasmus was attacked by both Catholics and Protestants for not fully joining one side or the other.[144]

Erasmus was heavily inspired by the Brethren of the Common Life and the *devotio moderna*, beginning with his early education. One can trace the influence of Gerard Groote and Thomas à Kempis down to Erasmus' own devotional work, the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*. First published at Antwerp in 1503, the *Enchiridion* or the *Handbook of the Christian Knight* was not an immediate best seller. The second edition was not published until 1509. Since 1515 however, numerous editions have been printed in several different languages. It was even believed to have inspired some of Martin Luther's sermons.[145]

Raymond Himelick remarks in his introduction that Erasmus had been in England Just before writing the *Enchiridion*. While in England he had come across several members of the religious reform community, most notably Thomas More and John Colet. The *Praise of Folly*, published later in 1509, stems from More's influence, and takes aim at Church tradition, while the *Enchiridion* is based on Colet's ideas of self-sacrifice toward Christ and the Christian faith.[146]

Himelick also notes that Erasmus originally intended the handbook to be a lengthy letter addressed to a specific individual. That individual was John de Trazegnies, a soldier married to an extremely pious woman. Evidently, John had strayed from his Christian habits, which provoked the wife to ask Erasmus for some assistance in returning her husband to the faith.

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[144]Ibid., 121-122.
[145] Smith, 140.
[146] Raymond Himelick, ed., *The Enchiridion of Erasmus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 13.

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Erasmus began writing the text around 1500 while residing in a castle in Tourneham in northern France. The handbook was complete by 1501.[147]

The guidelines originally intended for de Trazegnies were then reworked into a longer form. Erasmus, for whatever reason, decided to publish these guidelines and make them more widely available. Specifically, Erasmus decided that the devoted Christian should be equipped with a resource or weapon to guide him through his travels, something concise yet informative that could be referred to quickly, like a handbook or manual. The title Erasmus chose for this handbook was inspired by a message Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians: to prepare for the struggle of the Christian life one needs "…the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."[148] Essentially, Erasmus interpreted the Christian life as a martial undertaking, a daily struggle against the temptations of the world, the devil and one's own flesh.[149]

At least part of Erasmus' motivation behind the *Enchiridion* lay in his desire to correct what he saw as the empty ceremonialism within religion. Himelick remarks that some of Erasmus' ideas became a natural progression of the Reformation era. Erasmus' vision of the ideal Christian life was more about an individual and his struggle to better himself as a Christian: "That men might better imitate the lives of saints than burn candles to them or gape at one of their soiled handkerchiefs."[150] As a humanist, Erasmus also believed that an ambitious Christian should build their faith upon the foundation of the classics such as Plato, Jerome, and Augustine.[151]

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[147]Ibid., 14.
[148]Ibid., 13.
[149]Ibid., 12-15.
[150]Ibid., 15.
[151]Ibid., 15-16.

Concerning literature and scripture, Erasmus believed that any good work can be read on two levels. There is the literal meaning, which Erasmus calls the "flesh," and there is the deeper level or "spirit." Himelick believes that the *Enchiridion* itself is no exception. The more cerebral plane is pervaded by a humanist tone in which Erasmus has placed a degree of importance on the individual. Erasmus believed that a good Christian would recognize his own deficiencies and then attempt to correct them.[152]

In order to embark on this journey of Christian development, one should have 'two special weapons' at their disposal; knowledge and prayer. Erasmus believes that prayer and knowledge augment each other; prayer allows us to communicate with God while knowledge enables us to comprehend the concept of God and his love. A person would make use of these 'two weapons' to bring himself closer to Christ and beyond the simple ceremonies and rituals which exist within the Church.[153]

One may infer that Erasmus most likely took into consideration that readers of his handbook would not suddenly become saints. It is more likely that Erasmus was providing the public with his view of the ideal Christian. Erasmus seemed to believe that a person could strive toward the ideal Christian life if he took stock of his sins. Like a ledger, more frequent and serious sin meant less room for Grace. "Grace will descend most readily where there is a place for it; one infers from the *Enchiridion* that the amount available to the slack, the stupid, and the humorless is not likely to be abundant."[154] If we keep in mind our sins and know ourselves, then it is possible to improve without the help of divine inspiration. Erasmus as a humanist had faith

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[152]Ibid., 17-19.
[153]Ibid., 18-19.
[154]Ibid., 21.

in the individual and believed that a person could achieve a better Christian life without the constant aid of God or at least the perceived constant aid.[155]

Considering man's ability to better himself, Himelick reminds the reader that Erasmus' contemporary, Luther, believed that man had no power to increase his chances of salvation. Faith and scripture was all a person had. While Erasmus took inspiration from the pagans such as Socrates and Plato and believed in man's free will, Luther had no use for either. Luther even accused Erasmus of using Plato as his model for the *Enchiridion* rather than Christ. Erasmus had come to the conclusion that Christ indirectly inspired the ancient pagans; "Any truth you come upon at any place is Christ's."[156]

The reader may also find that the *Enchiridion* is not a work of anguish. Erasmus seems to remain relatively cool and composed about his subject matter. This is another point of comparison with Luther, who came across as more emotional and passionate when dealing with the subject of Christ and man's salvation. While Erasmus focused on man's capability, Luther worried about what was beyond man's control, such as an uncompromising God. Luther would later chastise Erasmus for his collected nature.[157]

Erasmus opens his handbook with a warning that we are being constantly assaulted by evil. Erasmus tells the reader that man will never be without his original failure (Adam) and that he must never let his guard down. The author also advises the reader to take the middle path between an over-reliance on God's intervention, and being distrustful of one's own effort to resist evil.[158]

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[155]Ibid., 20-21.
[156]Ibid., 22-23.
[157]Ibid., 26-27.
[158]Ibid., 38-46.

Chapter three discusses the weapons of a Christian soldier; prayer and knowledge. As stated before, Erasmus acknowledged that the ancient pagans had a place in the Christian culture. Later in chapter three, Erasmus warns the reader that the pagan classics should be considered in a non-literal sense. He also tells the reader to beware of the iniquity that is frequently found in the classics, "I would advise you, though, not to handle the lewd poets at all, or at least not to study them too closely-unless you perhaps learn how to better avoid the vices described in their works…"[159] From this, the reader may get the sense that Erasmus is being honest here, and not smug, saying the classics are worthwhile yet sometimes dangerous.[160]

The theme of self-awareness can be found throughout the *Enchiridion*. Chapter four states that; "The First Point of Wisdom Is to Know Yourself."[161] Erasmus assigns great importance to understanding one's own body and mind, but he also remarks that a person most likely will not develop such an understanding. He urges the reader to "know thyself," for in doing this, he will more able to engage the enemy, which is himself. To put it a different way, a man is most able to prevent temptation if he knows when he is most susceptible to it.[162]

Chapters five through eight are on the subject of the nature of man. Returning again to the ancient pagans, Erasmus cites Plato and discusses his division of the soul in chapter five; one part is immortal and saintly while the other is more worldly and affected by such things as grief, sadness, and lust. Plato goes on to discuss where each part of the soul is located in the body: reason, a part of the brain, is of course at the top, closest to heaven. Pride and envy is placed between the neck and the diaphragm, and finally, the lust for all pleasures can be found in the

159 Ibid., 51.
160 Ibid., 46-59.
161 Ibid., 59.
162 Ibid., 59-63.

bowels, farthest from reason. Plato's view of the soul is simple but logical. The ability to reason is part of the brain; lustful desires can be difficult to control.[163]

Chapter eight considers Origen's partitioning of the body into three parts: spirit, soul, and the flesh. The spirit is the part which links us to God. The flesh, on the other hand, is closer to the devil and therefore sinful. Finally, the soul is like our consciousness, and is free to swing towards either the flesh or the spirit. Throughout the book, the reader will notice that sexual acts are considered filthy, especially if done outside of marriage. A good example is how Erasmus describes the soul when it swings towards the flesh:[164] "…but if she lowers herself to the desires of the flesh, she will herself degenerate into carnality."[165]

Chapter nine introduces the subject of rules for a Christian life. Here Erasmus discusses three evils, which are believed to be the remnants of original sin. The first, blindness, leads to ignorance. While original sin was the cause, our bad choices and habits perpetuate it. Next was the flesh, which as already mentioned, constantly leads humans in the wrong direction. Lastly, frailty describes our limited attention spans and how we are so easily led off course and fall into temptation.[166] "Blindness affects our judgement, the flesh corrupts our will, and frailty undermines our constancy."[167]

Chapters ten through thirty-two continue on with the subject of rules for the Christian life. The first rule concerns one's faith in Christ and serves to reinforce it. The second goes on to discuss action: a person must immediately resist sin and embrace Christ.[168]

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[163]Ibid., 63-67.
[164]Ibid., 78-83.
[165]Ibid., 79.
[166]Ibid., 83-85.
[167]Ibid., 84.
[168]Ibid., 85-90.

For the fifth rule, Erasmus writes on the progression from the visible to the invisible, from the literal to the spiritual. "If night seems dark and foreboding to you, imagine a soul deprived of divine radiation and darkened by sin. And if you detect any night within yourself, pray that the sun of righteousness may rise for you."[169] Appropriately enough, Erasmus here brings up the subject of the Eucharist. He states very clearly that the body and blood of Christ are to be consumed with a spiritual sense, even while a person consumes the sacrament physically. Erasmus also tells us that obsessive behavior such as traveling great distances to touch holy relics or attending mass twice daily is not necessary. Rather, emphasis is placed on living like Christ.[170]

The sixteenth rule is on the topic of despair and how to react in the face of it. Erasmus tells readers to not give up so easily in the face of sin, even if they have given up numerous times before; "Get on your feet, then, and return to the fight at once with a stout heart…"[171]

In the last several chapters Erasmus advises the reader on self-discipline. Here the author confronts such topics as lust, ambition, pride, and avarice. Erasmus reminds the fornicating priest that the mouth he uses to kiss the 'whore' is the same mouth that he receives Christ with. He also considers the advantage of wealth to be an illusion.[172] To guard against pride, Erasmus reminds the reader of his humble beginnings; "If you keep in mind how squalid was your conception and birth, how naked and defenseless, how animal-like,…"[173]

Within Erasmus' *Handbook* the reader will notice several themes, including self awareness, spiritual self improvement, the inclusion of ancient classical authors, the logical (if medically incorrect) partitioning of the body and soul, and finally Erasmus' desire to move

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[169]Ibid., 102.
[170]Ibid., 101-130.
[171]Ibid., 171.
[172]Ibid., 177-200.
[173]Ibid., 191.

beyond the ceremony of Christianity to its more demanding aspects. Erasmus is essentially calling attention to human free will and humanity's ability through that free will to achieve salvation by human cooperation with God's grace.

It is not difficult to view Erasmus' *Handbook* as a natural progression from the *Imitation of Christ*. In comparison, the *Imitation* has more of a mystical/spiritual feel while the *Enchiridion* is more practical in tone. Even as the two works differ in tone, emphasis and method they are similar in that the objective of both is to increase the reader's genuine devotion to Christ.

Chapter IV

Martin Luther: The Tipping Point to the Reformation

Any study of the devotional Christian literature of the late medieval / Reformation era would not be complete without the acknowledgement of Martin Luther's contribution in print and in philosophy. Martin Luther struggled with his Christian faith, both personally and publicly. It is well known that Luther was troubled by specific aspects of the late medieval / early Reformation Church. Privately, it is very likely that Luther reached a point in which he could no longer accept late medieval Christian theology.

The *via moderna* (nominalism) and its unsettling notion of predestination and the contradictory Facientibus Principle pervaded the culture of Christian Europe. The Facientibus Principle, which was considered a comfort to those who faced the uncertainty of the *via moderna* states that God would not deny grace to those who make the best use of their own spiritual potential. While this principle provided some measure of comfort to the masses that struggled with the theory of predestination, there was also a degree of uncertainty in the Facientibus Principle as well. How did people know if they had done everything they could to reach their highest spiritual potential?[174] The complex and seemingly contradictory nominalist theology helped to fuel the religious fanaticism of the late Middle Ages. Martin Luther personified this anxiety.

Martin was born in 1483 to Hans Luther, a copper-miner, and Margarete Ziegler, a woman from a family that had some degree of social standing. Although Martin was born in Eisleben, the family soon after made its way to the city of Mansfeld in Thuringia. Martin attended the Latin School of the Brethren of the Common Life in Magdeburg, and later, three or

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[174] Levi, 56.

four years at a school in Eisenach. Martin entered the University of Erfurt in 1501, receiving his

bachelor's degree in 1502, and his Master of Arts in 1505. Martin then went on to briefly study

law.[175]

A legal career was exactly what Hans wanted for his son, but his hopes were soon

dashed. On the way back to Erfurt from a visit to his family in July of 1505, Martin was nearly

killed in a violent thunderstorm. As he was knocked to the ground by a bolt of lighting he

prayed to St. Anne, the patron saint of miners. He vowed that if saved, he would become a

monk. About two weeks later, he entered an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.[176]

In his introduction to *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings*, the author John

Dillenberger states that Martin did not embrace the monastic life simply because of the

thunderstorm. By this time Martin was most likely plagued by religious questions, and was

already struggling with the concept of a God both righteous and condemnatory. Becoming a

monk may have seemed like a safe choice, for it was considered to be the ideal life in the eyes of

God, and it also promised some degree of status.[177]

As he entered the cloistered life, Martin brought his troubles with him. He agonized over

his own standing in relation to God, and confessed his sins frequently. The other monks who

served as his confessors grew annoyed at Luther, believing that what he confessed was trivial.

The others attempted to pacify Luther by telling him that his anxiety and obsessive behavior

were unnecessary, that God was not vengeful. This did little to calm Luther, who took very

seriously his own human predisposition to sin.[178] Luther's struggles suggest that Luther,

consciously or not, was influenced by both the conflicting philosophies of the *via moderna* and

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[175] John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), xiv.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., xv.
[178] Ibid., xvi.

(perhaps) the related Facientibus Principle. This influence is likely because Luther's theological

studies in Erfurt were based in the tradition of the *via moderna* or nominalist school of

thought.[179]

In spite of his difficulties, Luther was considered to be bright and promising. From the

monastery he was sent to the University of Wittenberg in 1508 to lecture on moral philosophy.

By 1509 Luther began working toward a doctoral degree in theology. In 1510, Martin was part

of a group that was sent to Rome to represent the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt in what had

become a dispute over jurisdiction. Sources relate that Martin was appalled at the level of moral

degradation that existed in Rome at the time of his visit.[180]

By 1512, Luther had received his doctorate in theology and was permanently installed at

Wittenberg University. His list of responsibilities grew, since he was now considered to be part

of the University's administration. He also supervised some of the local monasteries. This was

all in addition to his regular lecturing and preaching schedule.[181] While in the Augustinian

monastery at Wittenberg, Luther supposedly came to some sort of new understanding of the

Gospel. He also is credited with a new perspective on the relationship between God and man.

While the late medieval Church usually equated the righteousness of God with His demanding

justice, Luther would come to define God's righteousness by His mercy and grace. Luther stated

that the grace of God alone, imputed to man, is what redeems man.[182] "A man now stands before

God in the light of His grace alone, and that righteousness of life and man's activity, so

important in other contexts, are irrelevant here."[183]

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[179] Spitz, 79.
[180] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 145-150.
[181] Dillenberger, xvii.
[182] Dillenberger, xvii-xix.
[183] Ibid., xix.

Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of the Castle church of Wittenberg in 1517 in the hope of raising awareness of what he saw as problems within the Church, Luther was particularly troubled by the *selling* of indulgences. Luther's action was the culmination of a complicated background. Briefly, the Catholic belief in indulgences describes an act, prayer or other devotion completed after the Sacrament of Penance (forgiveness of sins) that reduces the temporal punishment of any particular sin. To put it another way, an indulgence is a spiritual payment that reduces the total debt owed to God after a sin is committed. In 1095 Pope Urban II offered a plenary indulgence (a full remission of punishment) to anyone who confessed their sins and participated in the first crusade. Indulgences could also be granted for going on religious pilgrimages, visiting specific churches, or for reciting certain prayers in the presence of holy relics.[184] By the mid fifteenth century it became widely accepted that indulgences could be applied to the faithful who had departed this life and were already in purgatory.[185]

One of the methods for receiving an indulgence would be in the veneration of holy relics. During the Late Middle Ages people went to great lengths to see, touch, or collect relics. An example of a relic would be the bones of a saint, or a piece of wood from the True Cross. By modern standards this heavy preoccupation with relics or other devotional practices may appear superstitious. By the sixteenth century the Church was generally preoccupied with secular affairs such as European politics and Renaissance art. True concern over the spiritual needs of the multitudes was obviously lacking. Because of this, the faithful turned to such things as relics, indulgences, or excessive ritual in order to fill a spiritual void.[186] The Elector Frederick of Saxony, one of the seven who elected the Holy Roman Emperor, had amassed a huge collection of relics in the Castle church of Wittenberg, everything from the complete remains of several

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[184] H. Daniel Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 276-278.
[185] Spitz, 67.
[186] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation*, 121-122.

saints to the actual swaddling-clothes of Jesus. H. Daniel Rops writes that Frederick's collection

of relics was equal to a total of 127,799 years remission from the pains of purgatory. Frederick

made a great deal of money from all the pilgrims who came (and paid) to see his famous

collection.[187] Relics and many devotional practices still have an important place within

Catholicism to this day, however some people like à Kempis and Erasmus were calling for a

better balance between relics and rituals and the more demanding work of personal reformation

and forging a closer relationship with Jesus.

By the Late Middle Ages abuse had crept into the indulgence system, especially when

money became part of the equation. Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, had been commissioned

by Albert, the Archbishop of Mainz, one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Emperor, to

sell indulgences in Germany, mostly to raise money for the building of the new St. Peter's

Basilica in Rome. Another portion of the indulgence proceeds went back to Albert in order to

help him pay off his debt to the wealthy Fugger Bank. The Fuggers had loaned Albert a large

sum of money to pay the chancellery dues and other fees associated with retaining more than one

archbishopric (Magdeburg and Mainz). The Elector Frederick the Wise forbade the sale of

indulgences in Saxony because it threatened the profits that he made with his large collection of

relics.[188]

To many historians, the name Johann Tetzel brings to mind the infamous sales pitch; "As

fast as the money rattles in the box, the soul leaps out of purgatory." Countless numbers of

ordinary faithful Christians were wrongly advised that simply dropping a coin into a box and

receiving an indulgence certificate was the quick and easy way to heaven, or the easy way to get

one's late relatives into heaven. The whole process of being truly repentant, confessing one's

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[187] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 276-278.
[188] Spitz, 67-68.

sins, and performing acts of penance was being temporarily pushed to the side by this lucrative 'express lane' approach to salvation. Like Tetzel, many misguided preachers of the early sixteenth century advised this very path. Whether the motivation was simply greed, or in coming up with a simple offer that catered to the uneducated masses, this bargain was not an accurate representation of true Catholic doctrine.[189]

Originally printed in Latin and posted on the doors of the Castle church of Wittenberg, the *Ninety-Five Theses* were also translated into German and subsequently spread throughout the Empire. Soon after, they were sent to the Pope, who initially gave no response.[190] As Luther and his ideas grew in popularity, the Pope began to take more notice of him. The Pope initially demanded that Luther appear in Rome; however pressure from the Elector Frederick of Saxony allowed Luther to remain in Germany while a papal legate was sent to give Luther a hearing. Soon after this, Luther was declared a heretic.[191]

The years 1519 and 1520 were very fruitful for Luther. It was during this time that he completed several works, including *The Papacy at Rome*, *The Pagan Servitude of the Church*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*. By this time, Dillenberger tells us that Luther's original problems with the Church had evolved into a more complete concept of what he believed the Church should be. For example, he did not agree with the growing notion of papal infallibility, and he also believed that councils were imperfect because of their inconsistencies. In the same year, a papal bull was released which condemned all of Luther's writings. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was asked to recant his beliefs. He refused. Immediately after, Frederick of Saxony hid Luther in Wartburg Castle to protect him from his papal enemies.[192]

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[189] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 277-278.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., xxi.
[192] Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

While in hiding at Wartburg Castle, Luther translated the New Testament from Greek to German. Back in Wittenberg, events were unfolding quickly. A new congregation was beginning to form under the direction of Gabriel Zwilling and Andreas Karlstadt, both former colleagues of Luther. This new congregation sought radical reform, so they went about destroying church property and relics in the pursuit of religious freedom. Luther got wind of the unrest and eventually made his way back to Wittenberg to restore the peace.[193]

One of Luther's most influential acquaintances was Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) the German theologian and humanist. By 1518 Melanchthon was in Wittenberg to teach Greek and Hebrew. Luther and Melanchthon came to an agreement in which Melanchthon would teach Luther Greek while Luther instructed Melanchthon in the ways of the Gospel of Christ. This agreement was not honored, as Melanchthon never actually instructed Luther in Greek, however it was evident that there was a mutual appreciation between the two men. The partnership was obvious when Luther openly praised Melanchthon's comprehensive organization of Lutheran doctrine, the *Loci communes* or *Common Places in Theology or Fundamental Doctrinal Themes* (1521). Melanchthon went on to write most of the Augsburg Confession, which was a formal explanation of the theological views of the Lutheran princes of the Holy Roman Empire. The Augsburg Confession was presented to Emperor Charles V during the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. The Diet of Augsburg was ultimately an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the Catholic and Lutheran factions of the empire.[194]

During the 1520s Luther's differences with another humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, came to a head. Erasmus believed that a person could contribute to his own salvation through good works. Luther disagreed. Luther also feuded with Huldrych Zwingli in 1529 over the true nature

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[193] Jensen, 66-67.
[194] Ibid., 67-68, 84.

of the Eucharist. Zwingli argued that the communion host was only symbolic of Christ while

Luther's beliefs were that Christ was spiritually present. Luther held to a sense of "real

presence," although he rejected transubstantiation as philosophical obfuscations.[195]

In 1525 Luther married a former nun, Katherine of Bora. Together the couple bore six

children. The family made a home in a former Augustinian monastery in Saxony. Luther still

had trouble making ends meet even though he was granted an annual salary in 1524. Luther

refused payment for any of his work, despite the high household expenses he faced. In addition

to his wife and children, Luther took in runaway nuns and monks, and hosted a constant stream

of guests.[196] Toward the end of his life Luther fell victim to a number of illnesses and pains. On

February 18, 1546, he died.[197]

One of Luther's most notable theological works, *Two Kinds of Righteousness*, was a

sermon most likely published in 1519. The topic here is how God's righteousness is linked to

the human Christian life through Christ. Luther tells the reader that because of God's mercy he

sent his only son to redeem humanity; therefore it is Christ and his actions which connect

humanity to the righteousness of God.[198]

Luther's concept of the two forms of righteousness resembles what is stated in his *On the

Freedom of a Christian*. The first form, which is identified as the 'alien righteousness,' is what

humanity has inherited from God through Christ. It directly opposes original sin and is acquired

through baptism.[199] It is only through God's mercy and grace, not good works, that humanity

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[195] Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation 1517-1559*, 59-144.
[196] Oberman, 277-281.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid., 87.
[199] Ibid., 86-7.

receives this virtue. Following baptism, this implanted righteousness takes hold and develops throughout a person's life. It is finally perfected in death.[200]

The second sort of righteousness, as Luther calls it, our 'proper righteousness,' emanates from the first. It involves a life spent doing good works for others. Luther compares the relationship of the two forms of righteousness to that of a bride and bridegroom: "Therefore through the first righteousness arises the voice of the bridegroom who says to the soul, "I am yours," but through the second comes the voice of the bride who answers, "I am yours.""[201]

Luther adds that since man is not meant to serve himself he should beware of self-righteousness. One should consider his neighbor's faults to be his own. Those whose faith is weak should be aided.[202] Luther also classifies individuals into three categories. The first is made up of people who seek retribution. These, Luther states, should change their ways. The second group consists of those who have no desire for vengeance, serve others, and follow the example of Christ. Luther describes the third group as the zealots, or those who could be part of the second group if not for their practice of correcting others. This third category is made up of those who are careful not to cross the fine line that separates zeal from wrath. Luther considers the second group to be the true disciples of the gospel.[203]

Within Christian devotional literature the topic of death is never far away. In many ways Christians spend their whole lives in preparation for death. Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* constantly warns readers of their inescapable death. Luther takes on the topic of the final preparation in *A Sermon on Preparing to Die*. Also published in 1519, this work considers the proper way to end a Christian life. Here, Luther presents the reader with twenty points or steps

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[200]Ibid., 88.
[201]Ibid., 89.
[202]Ibid., 91-2.
[203]Ibid., 94-5.

that are intended to better prepare a person for death. The first few points advise the reader to

get his temporal affairs in order, to partake of the sacraments of confession, communion, and

Extreme Unction, and to take the sacraments seriously. Another point Luther stresses is a

person's outlook on death and sin. A person should consider death more throughout one's

lifetime rather than immediately before death. Luther writes that it is the devil who reminds

people of their sins, making the prospect of salvation seem remote. Instead, a person should trust

in the saving power of Christ. Luther assures the reader that he is not alone at the point of death;

he is accompanied by Christ, as well as by the angels and saints.[204]

A great deal of the advice contained within this sermon seems to come from Luther's

own anxieties. Luther is telling the reader to trust in God and not to fixate on death. As a

younger man in the monastery however, it was quite obvious that Luther was more fearful than

trusting of God. There are also quite a few references to the Jews; Luther seems to make an

example of them as people who would be understandably anxious of Christ. Luther comes off as

frustrated when he writes about the Jews and their lack of belief in Christ's divinity, essentially

conceding that without faith in Christ the Jews are doomed.[205]

Luther's belief in the doctrine of sola fide (faith alone) is discussed in *The Freedom of a*

Christian. Published in 1520, *Freedom* was dedicated to Pope Leo X and was an attempt at

reconciliation with Rome. The treatise begins with a lengthy letter to the Pope, whom Luther

considers to be a sincere man who is surrounded by a corrupt curia: "Meanwhile you, Leo, sit as

a lamb in the midst of wolves…"[206] Luther appears to be sincerely reaching out to Pope Leo,

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[204] Timothy F. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*
(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989),
638-54.
[205] Ibid.
[206]Dillenberger, 46.

making the same point several times about the corruption that has made its way into the church, while being careful to not insult the pope himself.[207]

As Luther's treatise proceeds, the central theme is that a Christian is free from the need to perform good works in order to redeem himself. At the same time it is the duty of a Christian to serve others. Luther also writes on what he calls the "twofold nature"[208] of man; the spiritual and bodily. These two parts of a man contradict each other. While the physical nature is in the midst of carnality, and is slowly dying, the spiritual part is eternal and is renewed by the Word of God.[209]

Faith is all that is required of Christians. As Luther puts it, "Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God…"[210] Luther also tells us that this Faith only has dominion over the inner or spiritual nature of man; therefore any action undertaken by the outer man has no effect on the salvation of the spiritual man.[211] While good works do not justify a man, they are a part of the Christian life. Luther states that a person who has a strong foundation of Faith will naturally perform good works.[212]

Luther specifically addresses those who may take advantage of their Christian freedom, those who might "…turn it into an occasion for the flesh and think that now all things are allowed them."[213] For this he cites St. Paul, who advises Christians to follow the middle way, meaning that Christians should not go out of their way to sin, even with the knowledge that they

[207]Ibid., 52.
[208]Ibid., 53.
[209] Ibid.
[210]Ibid., 55.
[211]Ibid., 56.
[212]Ibid., 69.
[213]Ibid., 80.

are not judged by their actions. Luther also advises against judging those who may believe that taking part in pious rituals or performing good works is redeemable in the eyes of God.[214]

When discussing rituals such as fasting, Luther compares those things to a builder's plan. Christians should consider rituals and ceremonies as examples or models for their lives, but they should not remain confined by the rituals themselves.[215] For example, the common act of abstaining from meat on Fridays should not be practiced simply for the ritual of fasting. It should translate into a practice which a Christian should expand upon, recognizing that food only sustains the outer man while the Word of God nourishes the inner man. Luther agrees with fasting and other rituals, but the emphasis of such practices should not be on the mere act itself. In other words a person should not expect salvation merely by abstaining from meat for a day.

While their differences are more extensive than their respective titles, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) obviously contrasts with Luther's *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525). *The Freedom of a Christian* explains that Christians are free from the need to do good works in order to achieve salvation. *The Bondage of the Will* is Luther's response to Erasmus' claim that humanity has the capacity of free will. In *Bondage of the Will* Luther argues that only God has free will and that God alone has the ability to grant or refuse grace and thus salvation. This is the doctrine of predestination.[216]

Luther's influences include the Christocentric *devotio moderna* and its related Northern European mysticism. The *devotio moderna* and its followers the Brethren of the Common Life were the administrators of Luther's Latin school in Magdeburg. Later in life, during his theological studies in Erfurt, Luther was schooled in the tradition of the Ockhamist *via moderna*.

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[214]Ibid., 81.
[215]Ibid., 84.
[216] H. Daniel Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 328-332.

It is the theology of the *via moderna* (nominalism) which Luther apparently could not reconcile with.

It was a combination of "byzantine" German politics, a disgust with the Church's ostentatious wealth, a general distaste that Germans had for Rome and its hierarchy, as well as a deep spiritual unease which propelled Luther out of the Roman Church. After the Diet of Worms in 1521 when Luther confirmed his decision, his mind would fill with doubt over his bold and dangerous choice. He would channel this doubt into a flurry of new writings even while claiming to be plagued by the devil.

Luther took even greater solace in the development of his new theology (with Melanchthon's help), which no longer contained the Catholic stance on salvation and its insistence on a mysterious combination of both faith and works. The underlying current of the *via moderna* and predestination which flowed just below the surface of orthodox Christianity was also disconcerting for Luther. How could he know that he was saved? The weak Facientibus Principle was inadequate. How could he know that he had done enough to be saved? To Luther, mystery only invited the agonizing doubt which had plagued him for so long.

Luther determined that faith in Christ as the redeemer was all that was necessary; everything else flowed from that understanding. Like Thomas à Kempis and his focus on Christ, Luther also emphasizes Christ and His promise of salvation. To Luther, God the Father was an angry, judgmental figure. It was Christ who represented the full expression of God's mercy and the only hope of man's salvation.

Even while the two are diametrically opposed to each other, Luther shares with Erasmus a desire to downplay empty ritual and ceremony. Besides that, Luther's approach to Christianity is markedly different. Erasmus as a humanist believed in man's free will to either draw nearer or

farther away from God's grace. Luther only believed in God's will. Man had no meaningful say

in his own salvation, except for an individual acceptance or rejection of faith in Christ.

Chapter V

John Calvin and the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Martin Luther, who earlier in life would be considered a devout Catholic, struggled with his faith and subsequently could not remain within the Roman Church. Like Luther, John Calvin also struggled with his Christian faith and finally found himself outside of the Church. That struggle made John Calvin the author of one of the most significant works of the early sixteenth century: the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. While it is well known for its detailed theology, the third book of the *Institutes* is concerned with acquiring grace and has a devotional quality, which makes it relevant to this study of devotional works.

In 1509 John Calvin was born in Picardy region of France, in the cathedral town of Noyon, which is about sixty miles north of Paris. His parents, Girard and Jeanne Le Franc Cauvin (John would later use the latinized Calvin), were considered bourgeois. Girard was an ambitious and hard-working man who succeeded in obtaining the patronage of the Bishop of Noyon. John had three siblings; an elder brother, Charles, who entered the priesthood, before leaving the Church altogether, and two younger brothers: Francois and Antoine. Francois died at an early age, and Antoine would become John's business manager.[217]

John's father, Girard, owed his career to the local Church where he held several influential positions including procurator to the cathedral chapter. At twelve years of age, in order to support his education, John actually possessed an ecclesiastical benefice: barrels of wheat from La Gesine, which was one of the altars of the cathedral. This arrangement, which

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[217] Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 4.

was rather common for the time, allowed John to receive an income without performing any religious duties.[218]

While the Calvin family was supported by the aristocratic order of the time, John developed conflicting views of the socially privileged. He agreed that their elevated status was deserved, but he was not fond of their immorality and materialism.

In 1523 Calvin left Noyon to study in Paris at the Collège de la Marche. John's father had originally planned for his son to study theology in preparation for the priesthood. By the end of 1523, Calvin transferred to the more prestigious Collège de Montaigu, which was known for its conservative scholarship and religious studies. The setting within the Collège de Montaigu was particularly austere and rigorous. A typical day in the school began at four in the morning, and after a meager breakfast the students would spend the day in study, instruction, debate and prayer. For the rest of his life, Calvin would keep this schedule, usually rising at four to begin a long work day, pausing only for prayer and meals.[219]

The exact curriculum that Calvin studied at Montaigu is unknown. Most likely, Calvin was engaged in the traditional studies of the trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy). If Calvin were to continue on the course that his father had intended it is assumed that these traditional studies were meant as a base to prepare Calvin for the higher study of theology.

The France of the early sixteenth century that Calvin would emerge from was dynamic and treacherous. Much of the landscape had endured great damage during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), damage that was still very evident in the ruined monasteries and parish churches more than a half-century later.

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[218]Ibid., 4-5.
[219]Ibib., 5-8.

As in other parts of Europe, the French church had its share of problems: positions within the Church hierarchy were usually held by the irreligious sons of the nobility, average parish priests were barely literate, and jurisdictional issues abounded among parishes, dioceses and monastic houses.

The nation also felt the effects of the ongoing power struggle between the French monarchy and the papacy. Through the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438 the French Church had gained much more independence from Rome. When the Concordat of Bologna was signed in 1516 the French king expanded on this advantage over Rome and gained the right to appoint all bishops and abbots within his realm.[220]

France of the early sixteenth century reflected a Northern Renaissance culture, with renewed interest in the classics and an embrace of humanism. In his quest to become a true Renaissance monarch, King Francis I (r.1515-1547) had plans for Paris to become the preeminent center for humanist studies complete with a humanist college. Francis even tried to lure Erasmus to Paris, but Erasmus declined.[221]

Like other parts of Europe, France also experienced the growth of devotional activities and literature in the late medieval period. There were many preachers who roamed the countryside urging people to reform their lives, and many people embarked on pilgrimages to secure indulgences. The laity also took on a greater role in the workings of their parishes while they also grew more concerned over their own salvation.[222]

While the Luther controversy was known in France by 1518, the situation did not attract as much attention as it did in Germany. In France, Luther was known less for his attacks against the papacy and more for his devotional material. It was Jacques Lefèvre, a native Frenchman,

[220]Ibid., 8-9.
[221]Ibid., 10-11.
[222] Ibid.

who posed a greater threat to the French Church. Lefèvre wrote a commentary on the Pauline epistles, which suggested that individual spirituality was more important than the Church and its sacraments. In 1516 Lefèvre challenged Erasmus on several points of his New Testament translation. This was a well-known dispute that garnered much French support for the native Lefèvre against the Dutch Erasmus.[223]

Evidence of the growing popularity of devotional activities was apparent in the interests of Guillaume Briçonnet, the Bishop of Meaux. Meaux, a diocese located about twenty-five miles north-east of Paris, held an elevated status in the French Church. After his appointment in 1516, Briçonnet was primarily concerned with the restoration of personal spirituality and morality. Accordingly he invited several humanist reformers to Meaux, including Jacques Lefèvre. This group would be known as the Meaux Circle.[224]

By 1528 Calvin had departed Paris in order to study law in Orléans. Historians disagree on the cause for this shift from theology to law. One of the more specific theories suggest that Calvin did it out of reverence for his father. Another states that he was fed up with the corrupt state of theology. In 1531, Calvin was back in Paris with the hope of studying under the lecturers of the Collège Royal.[225]

By 1533, Calvin had undergone a spiritual crisis and conversion. Two accounts of this conversion exist. The first emerges from a 1539 letter to Cardinal Sadoleto in which Calvin describes his conversion as a gradual shift in loyalty from the Church of Rome to the word of God. Calvin adds that he was motivated by a fear of God's judgment and a heavy conscience. In a way similar to Martin Luther, Calvin described the spiritual and psychological torment of leaving the Roman faith behind. Another similarity to Luther was Calvin's deep fear of God.

[223]Ibid., 12-13.
[224]Ibid., 14-15.
[225]Ibid., 17-18.

Fear would play an important part in Calvin's forthcoming theology. This fear most likely had

its roots in the *via moderna*'s emphasis on God's omnipotence and the inescapable threat of

predestination.

Calvin recalls his conversion experience again in the preface to the *Psalms Commentary*

(1557). This second account differs from the first in that his conversion is now described as a

singular event rather than a gradual process. More than twenty years removed from his

conversion Calvin now recalls the experience in a more positive light, less focused on the fear

and anguish and more focused on his identity as a prophet akin to Moses and the like.[226]

Late in 1534 Protestants in France suddenly became less tolerated and by 1535 many

Protestants faced banishments, executions and or confiscations. In light of these conditions

Calvin fled to Basle, a city in the Swiss Confederation. Basle had a vibrant printing industry and

was also home to an elderly Erasmus. While in Basle, Calvin grew more aware of the growing

conflict within Protestantism over the Sacrament of the Eucharist.[227]

This dispute over the true meaning and form of the Lord's Supper is what kept the

Protestant world from unification. Both Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli did not subscribe

to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation which states that bread and wine are fully

transformed into the real presence of Christ during Mass. Luther's beliefs came closer to a

process known as consubstantiation whereby the presence of Christ coexists with the substance

of the bread and wine. Zwingli maintained that the Eucharistic bread merely symbolized the

body and blood of Christ.

The disunity over the body and blood hampered the Schmalkaldic League of Protestant

princes and cities that opposed the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in the mid-

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[226]Ibid., 33-35.
[227]Ibid., 40-50.

sixteenth century. Martin Bucer, the reformer of Strasbourg, attempted to bring the Zwinglians and the Lutherans closer together, but, this was not to be. But Martin Bucer was successful in another respect. As a theologian and a mediator he would become one of John Calvin's biggest influences.[228]

While in Basle, Calvin completed several treatises. One was the revision to his *Psychopannychia*, which details Calvin's beliefs on death. Another was a preface to the New Testament, which was written in both French and Latin. Lastly, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was completed in the fall of 1535. The *Psychopannychia*, which meant soul sleep, focuses on the Christian life as a path toward death and the afterlife. Humans who recognize the existence of God endure pain and suffering as they subsequently fear God's divine judgement. Death should be prepared for and it should be viewed as a release from the pain and suffering of this world.[229]

The preface to the New Testament reveals a desire for true piety. A central theme of the preface, which is also true of the *Institutes,* is that God has not abandoned humanity even though humanity had chosen sin. The proof of God's presence can be seen in various signs throughout his worldly creation, which echoes the theology of Aquinas. Together the *Psychopannychia* and the preface to the New Testament demonstrate that Calvin is well versed in Christian theology. They also present Calvin's specific details on the nature of God; that he is not a distant God, but one that remains in the presence of the faithful.[230]

Bruce Gordon writes that the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was not meant to be a devotional work; it was, however, meant to explain and clarify the reformed faith of France. It is evident through *The Institutes* that Calvin subscribed to the notion of humanity as weak and

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[228]Ibid., 52-54.
[229]Ibid., 43-44.
[230]Ibid., 54-56.

sinful, therefore requiring order and structure. For Calvin this served as the justification for a reformed church separate from Rome as well as a strict temporal government. the *Institutes* also served as a catechism meant to instruct all Christians in the essentials of Protestant piety and to encourage devotion. In structure, Calvin's *Institutes* took inspiration from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* of 1522 and *Large Catechism* of 1529. Another part of Calvin's motivation in writing the *Institutes* was his desire to defend evangelicals and distinguish them from the Anabaptists and other seditious groups that threatened civil order.[231]

As soon as the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was complete in 1536, Calvin began revising the work. Since then, several later editions have been published, the last and longest in 1559. While the original version was meant as a catechism for any literate Christian, the 1539 edition was intended to instruct Christian ministers. Several new topics were introduced in the 1539 edition, including the differences between true and false religion, free choice, election and predestination, church offices and the civil magistry. Much of the inspiration behind the 1539 revision came from Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) the Lutheran theologian from Germany. Melanchthon was the author of the *Loci Communes* (1521) which was regarded as the quintessential work of Lutheran doctrine.

The original 1536 publication of the *Institutes*, as well as all subsequent editions, begin with a dedication to King Francis I of France. Within this dedication Calvin examines his motivation to write the following work, including his attempt to defend the true evangelical movement. The dedication is a product of Calvin's spiritual and legal background.[232]

After the prefatory address to the king, the final edition of 1559 continues with an Epistle to the Reader, which was added to the second edition in 1539. In the letter, Calvin acknowledges

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[231]Ibid., 57-59.
[232]Ibid., 59-93.

the popularity of the first edition and briefly states how the work was originally intended for theology students. *A Subject of the Present Work*, which was added to the 1545 edition, follows the epistle. Here the reader may perceive a hint of Calvin's vanity: "Hence it is the duty of those who have received from God more light than others to assist the simple in this matter, and, as it were, lend them their hand to guide and assist them in finding the sum of what God has been pleased to teach us in his word."[233]

A Subject of the Present Work is then followed by another Epistle to the Reader added to the final edition of 1559. In this letter, Calvin states that every new edition of the Institutes has improved upon the preceding version, but he has not been satisfied until now with the completion of the final edition. The main body of the *Institutes* is divided into four books, with the order of the books reflecting the order of the Apostles' Creed. The first book is concerned with the knowledge of God the Father, this knowledge being considered the "true wisdom of man." The second book deals with the Son, Jesus Christ, and his role as the redeemer of humankind from a fallen state.[234]

The Third book of the *Institutes*, which is the focus of this chapter, details Christian faith and grace. Calvin maintains the doctrine of a triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). He asserts that the Holy Spirit is the conduit through which mankind is able to receive the benefits of the Son (Christ).[235]

The gift of faith, offered by way of the Gospel, and delivered by the Holy Spirit, is required for one to be able to receive the benefits of Christ. Faith is described as believing in the truth of God, including his mercy and grace, and that the will of God is present in Christ. The

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[233] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2012), 31.
[234]Ibid., 1196-1200.
[235]Ibid., 1200.

effects of faith include repentance, a Christian life, justification, and prayer. True repentance includes two parts: mortification, which stems from the acknowledgement of sin and its consequences, as well as the quickening of the spirit, which allows for piety, charity, holiness, and the hope of eternal life. Calvin contrasts true repentance with false repentance or popish repentance; the false repentance involves ecclesiastical satisfaction, such as the buying of indulgences.[236]

Next, Calvin explains the second effect of faith, which is a Christian life. This consists of two parts. The first is a love of righteousness so that we might be holy and draw closer to the holiness of God. The second is our adherence to the station that God has given us for this life; in other words, a person should recognize his place in life. The goal of the Christian life is the denial of one's self so that a person may better devote one's self to God and to one's neighbor.[237]

The third effect of faith is justification. Men are justified by faith alone since there can be no justification based on works. The justified are the elect. We can take consolation in the fact that we have a merciful father and not a severe judge. Calvin then writes on Christian liberty: True believers can rise above the Law and cheerfully follow God's will. One must be careful however, to not abuse the gifts of God and to avoid giving and taking offence.[238]

Finally, the fourth effect of faith is prayer, which humbles a person and brings him closer to God and his benefits, and farther from one's animal desires. Through prayer a person would also grow in hope because of the recognition that he relies on the eternal promise of God. Calvin attempts to correct those who call on the saints for help. To do so, he explains, is foolhardy because God alone has promised to dwell among us and is therefore receptive to our prayers.[239]

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[236]Ibid., 1200-1201.
[237]Ibid., 1201.
[238] Ibid.
[239]Ibid., 1201-1202.

While treating the topic of prayer, Calvin examines the Lord's Prayer in detail. The relationship between God the father and humanity is the equivalent to a relationship between a father and his children. This is why we address God as "our father." While God holds the reigns to the universe, he is also within our presence, but is beyond the earthly things such as corruption and linear time. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" relates to humanity's perception of God: one should only speak or think of God in the most respectful and reverent manner.[240]

The four effects of faith lead to the topic of predestination, which is arguably the most outstanding feature of Calvinism. Calvin tells us that eternal life is only meant for a limited number of souls, while eternal damnation is meant for the rest. Up until this point in this thesis it is likely that the reader may only associate the notion of predestination with Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and the *via moderna*, which dominated the late medieval period. In reality however, the concept of predestination whether it has been is rejected, modified or embraced, has been a part of Christian theology since the beginning.[241] The variations of emphasis and nuance have always been the decisive differences among understandings of the doctrine.

Lewis Spitz claims that the doctrine originates in the Old Testament, specifically within the Book of Deuteronomy where the nation of Israel is elected as God's chosen people. From then on there is evidence of the doctrine or a variation thereof in the writings of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham among others. Calvin cites examples from scripture, which prove the concept of predestination, and that the reprobate are destroyed to glorify the name of God. He also warns that it is of no use to question the ways of God, even if humanity perceives God's will to be unjust, for God is justice.[242]

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[240]Ibid., 1202.
[241]Ibid., 1202-1203.
[242] Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation: 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 224-5.

In opposition to Erasmus and his belief in humanity's free will to ultimately choose

salvation or damnation, Calvinism, like Lutheranism before it, acknowledges the concept of

predestination. The difference lies in the emphasis that each belief system places on the

doctrine. Presently, Lutheranism recognizes the doctrine of *single* predestination: that God

before all ages has chosen a certain segment of humanity to enter the gates of heaven, but at the

same time God wishes that no one should be damned. Authentic Calvinism on the other hand

boldly proclaims the system of *double* predestination: that by God's absolute power some are

deliberately saved and others are intentionally damned.[243]

Brian G. Mattson argues that Luther actually did agree with *double* predestination, at

least initially, despite what Lutheranism professes now. Mattson bases this argument on the

writings of St. Augustine which Mattson believes recognizes *double* predestination, Luther's

monastic life in the Augustinian Order, and finally on Johannes von Staupitz, Luther's most

beloved mentor and confessor while in the monastery.[244] Mattson also makes the case that even

if Luther's original theological training in Erfurt was influenced by the Ockham or the *via*

moderna as Lewis Spitz maintains, there is evidence that under the guidance of Staupitz, Luther

ultimately rejected the scholastics and embraced the authentic Augustinian tradition. When

addressing predestination however, both the *via moderna* and the Augustinian tradition

subscribed to *double* predestination.[245]

As Luther's theology took shape the doctrine of predestination was downplayed. The

Confession of Augsburg, which formally outlined Lutheran theology includes no mention of

predestination. It is likely that even as Luther believed in the doctrine of predestination he was

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[243] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 406-7.
[244] Brian G. Mattson, *Double or Nothing: Martin Luther's Doctrine of Predestination* (1997).
[245] Ibid.

too disturbed by its implications to formally acknowledge it.[246] Of key importance to Calvin was God's omnipotence and sovereignty: The doctrine of predestination was an uncomfortable but fitting accessory of an all powerful God. In this way Calvin continued down the trail away from the humanist perspective that Martin Luther had blazed. Unlike Luther however, Calvin took the concepts to their logical conclusions. God was everything and man was insignificant. This viewpoint placed Calvin on the other end of the spectrum from Erasmus, who believed in human free will and the human capacity for good works. For Calvin, good works only proved a person's standing among the elect. They did not gain salvation. While Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ* focused on man's ability to become more Christ-like, Calvin accentuated the sovereignty and omniscience of God the father.

Like Martin Luther before him, John Calvin was plagued by an inner turmoil, torn between his conscience and his loyalty to the Roman Church. Both ultimately chose the former. Because of its clarity and precision John Calvin's *Institutes* as H. Daniel-Rops observes, was a considerable threat towards Catholicism. Rops also regards Calvin's overall religious achievements to be the final decisive blow to the Roman Catholic Church's position as Western Europe's single ecclesiastical authority.[247]

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[246] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 406-7.
[247] Ibid., 401, 441.

Chapter VI

Ignatius of Loyola and *The Spiritual Exercises*

John Calvin and his Institutes of the Christian Religion arguably represent the crest in the wave which was the Protestant Reformation. Stemming from a variety of factors whether it be the fervor for theological truth or political gain, the light of the Roman Church or Catholicism was apparently rapidly dimming by the midpoint of the sixteenth century. At this point the Church faced multiple threats: Lutheranism in Germany, Huldrych Zwingli in the Swiss Confederation, John Calvin in France, King Henry VIII of England, as well as the continued decline of the papacy's political power. Even on a physical plane, the very heart of the Church was attacked when the forces of Emperor Charles V invaded Italy and sacked Rome in 1527.

In 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the Wittenberg Castle church door he ignited the spark which set the Reformation in motion. The roaring fire of Lutheranism spread rapidly, thanks in part to Gutenberg's printing press and German merchants who carried pamphlets and letters. Within ten years of the posting of Luther's *Theses*, large swaths of Germany were being converted to Lutheranism. By 1526 many German rulers such as Albert of Brandenburg, who controlled territory in East Prussia and Landgrave Philipp of Hesse, guided their dominions into Lutheranism. The motivation to 'reform' one's territory usually involved a mix of genuine religious fervor, a sneering dislike of the existing Catholic hierarchy, and ambitions for confiscating Church property.[248]

As for Martin Luther himself, after the Diet of Worms in 1521 he was hidden away within the Wartburg Castle at the behest of Frederick III, Elector of Saxony. The Edict of Worms (1521) called for Luther's capture and imprisonment; however with the Emperor Charles

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[248] Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation: 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 109.

V out of Germany and busy with his military engagements in Italy, Luther was not always a priority. Most of the other nobles either did not take the Edict seriously or they supported the Lutheran cause. Eventually Luther was allowed to return to public life. By 1525 Luther was married and called a former Augustinian cloister his home.[249]

Huldrych Zwingli of the Swiss Confederation was a relatively conventional priest with a gifted mind. Born in 1484 to a relatively successful peasant family, he attended the University at Vienna. He became well versed in the *via antiqua* (Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus), and was also exposed to humanist poetry and letters. Later as a cleric in Einsiedeln, he studied and was influenced by the works and philosophy of Erasmus. In 1519, Zwingli was struck down with the plague which was making its way through Zurich at the time. Ultimately Zwingli recovered from the plague, he later adopted a Calvinist outlook on life and pointed to his recovery from the plague as proof that God had reserved his place among the elect.[250]

In 1522 Zwingli openly challenged the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in Einsiedeln when he joined a group of his peers in eating sausage on Ash Wednesday, which defied traditional Church regulations. In 1524 Zwingli presented his *Sixty-Seven Articles* which summarized his reformed theology to the Zurich City Council. This is where the Erasmian philosophy of correcting the empty ceremonialism of the faith was taken to the extreme. The council was persuaded by Zwingli's ideas on theology and now insisted that all religious teaching was to be based solely on the bible. From that point on, the City of Zurich began dismantling its Catholic identity; the monasteries were closed, relics and images were removed,

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[249]Ibid., 111-112.
[250]Ibid., 150-155.

and choirs and organs were silenced. If any doubt remained as to what was in Zwingli's heart, in 1524 he married a young widow in Zurich while remaining a cleric.[251]

From that point until his death in 1531 Zwingli defended and attempted to extend his reformation beyond Zurich to other districts in the Swiss Confederation. With the city council's blessing Zwingli had effectively brought to life the first example of a State Church. Zwingli died alongside twenty-four of his fellow pastors at the hands of Catholic forces on the offensive to avenge the abbot of Saint-Gall, who had been expelled by the Zwinglians.

Martin Bucer, the former Dominican monk who attempted to bring the Lutheran and Zwinglian factions closer together through a common stance on the Eucharist, achieved a similar degree of influence as a reformer in Strasbourg. This occurred at roughly the same time period as Zwingli's rise to predominance. Later in the 1550s John Calvin accomplished a similar feat: organizing a State Church in Geneva. In comparison with Zwingli and Bucer, however, Calvin's position in Geneva approached absolute authority by the late 1550s. From about 1554 until Calvin's death ten years later, Geneva was a tightly controlled theocracy where citizens could be imprisoned for even the slightest indulgences such as dancing or playing cards.

The Emperor Charles V returned to Germany in 1530 and presided over the Diet of Augsburg, which was held in order to settle the 'religious question' once and for all. At the Diet it was resolved that the evangelicals or Lutherans were in error and that the Edict of Worms remained in effect. While Charles was loyal to the Catholic cause and believed in the ideal of a single universal church, his duties in Spain, the wars with France, dynastic politics, and the Turkish threat kept him from pursuing the religious matter further. In 1531, the Lutheran princes of the empire took a defensive posture and organized themselves into the Schmalkaldic League.

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[251]Ibid., 155-157.

Two years later the Catholic states reacted and formed the Halle League. The threat of war was imminent.[252]

Pope Paul III attempted to summon a council with the intention of reform in 1537, but without substantial support and the continued distraction of the Italian Wars, the council was postponed indefinitely. Finally in 1545, Charles V ended his military engagements with the French and returned to Germany; at this time both pope and emperor agreed upon a new place and date for a Church council: March 25, 1545 at Trent, which was both within the empire and in Italy.[253]

Within England during the early part of the sixteenth century a sequence of events would eventually bring the country into direct opposition to the Catholic Church. By 1509 England was ruled by King Henry VIII of the Tudor dynasty. After his older brother Arthur died at the age of fifteen, Henry assumed the throne and married his late brother's widow; Catherine of Aragon, the aunt of Emperor Charles V. Henry's growing concern over a legitimate male heir was apparent as early as 1514. While Catherine had given birth to five children, only a daughter (Mary) survived. For the Tudor dynasty which rose to the English throne by force, the succession of a woman, while not explicitly outlawed, could create many complications.[254]

Not only did Henry fear the possibility of not producing a male heir; he also grew attracted to another woman; Anne Boleyn, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine. Henry now desired an annulment from his marriage to Catherine so that he could marry Anne. He charged his chief adviser, Lord Chancellor and papal legate Cardinal Wolsey, with securing the annulment from Pope Clement VII. This tactic ultimately failed. For a while, Clement had entrusted Wolsey and an Italian, Cardinal Campeggio, with examining the King's case. In time

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[252]Ibid., 117-119.
[253]Ibid., 299.
[254] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation,* 460-470.

the pope changed his mind and decided that he would make the final decision. After the pope's

intervention, Wolsey, who had been Henry's longtime mentor and trusted advisor, fell out of

favor with the king. Wolsey was subsequently relieved from his position as Lord Chancellor in

1529.[255]

Henry was steadfast in his pursuit of the annulment. He threatened Pope Clement VII

with an English schism. The pope faced a difficult decision: he had to consider Church law,

Queen Catherine and her Hapsburg family. Clement's concern over the Hapsburgs was not

unfounded. Catherine's nephew Emperor Charles V was ultimately responsible for the sack of

Rome in 1527, during the course of which Pope Clement was held prisoner within the Castel

Sant'Angelo. On the other hand, Clement also had to consider England severing ties with Rome

at a time when the Catholic Church seemed to be rapidly losing its hold on Christendom.

Clement delayed making a final decision, deliberately procrastinating in the hope that Henry's

romantic passion would cool.[256]

By 1538 Pope Clement VII had excommunicated Henry, effectively separating the

English Church from Rome. It was Henry's wish that he would never again have to answer to a

pope and that he would reign supreme in both the temporal and the sacerdotal realms of his

kingdom. Numerous people stood in the way of the king's vision and were subsequently

executed, including Bishop John Fisher of Rochester, and Thomas More; the king's former Lord

Chancellor. Both Fisher and More were later canonized by the Catholic Church for defending

the faith against Henry. Interestingly enough, Henry's new English Church remained largely

Catholic in appearance.[257]

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[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid., 469-478.

It is ironic that during a time in which many consider to be the Catholic Church's darkest, one of its brightest members emerged. Ignatius of Loyola was most likely born in 1491 as the youngest son of a noble Basque family. He was trained as a page, and later served in the court of King Ferdinand in Toledo as treasurer. Until the age of twenty-six he was considered to be a worldly man, concerned with honor and arms. As a Spanish knight he fought against the French in the Battle of Pamplona and was badly injured. One of his legs was completely shattered and the other was badly wounded.[258]

Throughout his recovery he was forced to remain in bed and took to reading about the life of Christ as well as the lives of saints. As he continued to read he began to reflect on his life, comparing it to those of the saints. One night while awake he saw a vision of the Virgin Mary with Jesus as a child. With this he became disgusted with his past life and never again engaged in the pleasures of the flesh.[259]

Loyola spent a year reflecting in Manresa where he lived in extreme asceticism. Many of his waking hours were devoted to God in prayer and meditation. During this year long retreat, Loyola read *The Imitation of Christ*. He also began writing notes on his spiritual voyage which would serve to inspire the *Spiritual Exercises*.[260] In 1523 he embarked on a journey to Jerusalem. Along the way Loyola stopped in Rome and received the blessing from Pope Adrian VI. Once in Jerusalem, Loyola intended to remain forever, visiting holy sites and helping others.[261] At the urging of the Franciscans who were charged with maintaining the shrines of the Holy Land, Ignatius departed Jerusalem. They explained that if he was taken prisoner it would be difficult to arrange for ransoms. Loyola made his way back to Spain with the desire to further

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[258] Ignatius Loyola, *Personal Writings*, with an introduction by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 13.
[259] Ibid., 14-17.
[260] Ibid., 18-28.
[261] Ibid., 29-38.

his education. He studied Latin, physics, and logic while at the same time preaching and explaining Christian doctrine to others. He also spent time in prison for what the authorities believed was suspicious activity.[262]

By 1528 Loyola ventured to Paris to continue his education. After completing his Master's degree, he returned to his native country. While there he continued preaching as well as effectively ending all things that he saw as sinful behavior, such as gambling. Loyola made his way back to Rome along with several companions who also were preaching.[263] In Rome he was ordained to the priesthood. Here also discussions of establishing a new order took place. In 1540 a Papal Bull established the Society of Jesus with Loyola as superior general.[264] Through a series of letters, Loyola continued to coordinate the growth of the Jesuits.

Published around 1550, Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* was his only work published during his lifetime. The *Spiritual Exercises* was not meant to be a piece of literature to be read from beginning to end. Its real function was that of a "program" to enhance a person's spiritual life and relationship with God. The proper implementation of the *Exercises* was to be through the spoken word. Ideally there would be an instructor and a exercitant or participant. The *Exercises* were intended for the instructor. The goal of the *Exercises* is to draw the participant into a state in which they can communicate with God while simultaneously examining their relationship with God. Gradually the work focuses more on Jesus Christ and his teachings. This process would most likely arouse a great deal of emotion, doubt, and even pain in the participant. The instructor or spiritual director would be present to help the participant through these trials and to complete the *Exercises*. [265]

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[262]Ibid., 39-48.
[263]Ibid., 49-64.
[264]Ibid., xiii-xiv.
[265]Ibid., 281-282.

The *Exercises* can be divided into four sections; the 'Annotations,' the 'Exercises' and the 'Meditations.' The final part is a set of rules that clarifies and further supports the material which precedes it. The 'Annotations' are meant to prepare both the spiritual director and the participant. In the fourth annotation, Ignatius tells the reader that the 'Exercises' have been broken down into four parts, with each part requiring about one week to complete. In the first week the participant is encouraged to recall his sins and consider the pains of hell. In the second week the participant meditates on the life of Christ up to and including Palm Sunday. In the third the participant meditates on Christ's Passion. Finally, in the fourth the participant meditates on Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. Ignatius adds that the entire program should be complete in about thirty days.[266]

As the reader comes to the first week of the *Exercises* he encounters an explanation of their purpose. Here Ignatius spells it out clearly: "Spiritual Exercises having as their purpose the overcoming of self and the ordering of one's life on the basis of a decision made in freedom from any ill-ordered attachment." Ignatius continues in great detail how the reader is to spiritually examine himself on a daily basis. In the morning immediately upon rising, the reader should resolve to correct a particular sin. At the mid-day meal the reader should pray to God and consider how many times one has been taken by that particular sin that is being given special attention that day. Also at mid-day, the exercitant would recount up until this point from rising that morning how he has fared in resisting that particular sin.[267]

Because the *Exercises* were written in the mid 16th Century they are associated with the Catholic Reformation. However, Ignatian spirituality and the *Exercises* go against the modern perception that the Catholic Reformation was simply a mass counter-offensive against the forces

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[266]Ibid., 283-284.
[267]Ibid., 289.

of Protestantism. The true intention behind the *Spiritual Exercises* was to help people deepen their personal relationship with God. It was not meant specifically to bring Protestants back into the Catholic fold. H. Daniel-Rops comments that the work itself is dry and formulaic unless the reader brings to it an ample amount of passion and dedication.[268]

Coming from a soldier's background, Loyola approaches the struggle between good and evil in a militaristic fashion. This is evident in the *Exercises* with the meditation on the 'Two Standards,' where Loyola has the reader picture two armies: one of Christ's from Jerusalem and the other being Lucifer's from Babylon. The twice daily examination of conscience is considered to be an offensive weapon whereby the exercitant's vices are eliminated. The theme of an offensive campaign against sin runs counter to Protestantism, especially Calvinism, where all of mankind's own efforts to conquer sin are in vain. Rops is careful to remind the reader that Loyola's military campaign is directed against the evil that is found working within human nature and not against the forces of Protestantism.[269]

The militaristic theme that Ignatius inserts within the *Exercises* recalls Erasmus and his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* or the *Handbook of the Christian Knight*. In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus attempts to guide and equip a soldier of Christ. Erasmus stresses self-awareness and the importance of the most difficult conflict the soldier must face; the battle within oneself against sin. Ignatius Loyola, who was an actual soldier, went through a spiritual renewal, and now calls people to wage war against sin. He could be the living version of Erasmus' ideal Christian knight. Like Erasmus, Loyola believed in human free will and the ability of human effort to cooperate with God's grace in order to renew the soul and perfect one's standing with God.

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[268] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 30-40.
[269] Ibid.

The *Exercises* would by most standards be considered christocentric, similar to *The Imitation of Christ*. The entire life of Christ is interwoven throughout the four weeks of the *Exercises*. While the first week is focused on human sin, the second through the fourth weeks are focused on the life of Christ; the second week is centered on Christ's life on earth, the third on Christ's death on the cross, and the fourth on the resurrected Christ. Immediately following the fourth week of the *Exercises* the reader is faced with a complete outline of all the Mysteries of the Life of Christ, including the Annunciation, the Visitation to Elizabeth, The Birth of the Lord and so on from there.[270]

Robert E. McNally, S.J. comments that Loyola's meditation on Christ the King is central to the spirituality of the Catholic Reformation. McNally refers specifically to a section in the second week of the *Exercises* entitled "The Call of the Temporal King," in which Loyola describes the qualities of a good earthly sovereign that has been directly appointed by the Lord Himself to the qualities of Christ the King. Loyola's point here is that even the most just king is still lesser than Christ the King.[271]

McNally also comments that the spiritual doctrine of the *Exercises* which emanates from the era of the Renaissance is both "optimistic and humanistic." It is optimistic because it is based on the assumption that humanity, the world, and God are all basically good. It is also humanistic because it assumes that the earth and all its contents were intended for humankind. This outlook is far from the general Lutheran and Calvinist perspective that humankind is totally depraved. McNally reminds the reader that in Christ, God humbled himself and became man. Linked to this humanistic theme is the sense of "personalism (but not individualism)," which is found within the *Exercises*. The key phrase of personalism is *"for me,"* which emphasizes the

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[270] Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 23-129.
[271] R.E. McNally, S.J., *The Council of Trent, The Spiritual Exercises and the Catholic Reform*, 39.

individual, God became man for *me,* not us. This emphasis on the individual can be seen

throughout the works that have been previously studied in this thesis.[272]

The discipline and dedication that Loyola pursues in his task of reforming a person's

interior life with the *Spiritual Exercises* is in full display on a larger scale with the formation of

the Jesuit Order in 1540. H. Daniel Rops describes the Jesuits as "Created by a soldier for the

purpose of spiritual warfare."[273] Highly associated with the Catholic Reformation, The Jesuits or

the Society of Jesus are the personification of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian spirituality;

they emerge as an organic and natural development following the writing of the *Spiritual*

Exercises.[274] When Pope Paul III officially approved the Jesuit Order in 1540 with the Papal

Bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* (*To the Government of the Church Militant*), the *Spiritual*

Exercises is cited as an inspiration for the formation of the Jesuit Order. To this day, the

Exercises remain an important part of the formation of Jesuit priests. The giving of the *Exercises*

are considered to be one of the Jesuits' most important functions.[275]

Just like the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves, the Jesuits were not formed as a direct

counter-offensive to Protestantism even while they became central to that effort. Since their

inception the Jesuits have spread to all parts of the globe engaged in all manner of good works:

evangelization, missionary work, education and scientific research. The order as it was

conceived by Loyola was meant to be flexible, to respond to any call or need. This flexibility

makes obedience very important as a Jesuit is expected to drop everything immediately and

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[272]Ibid., 40-41.
[273] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 48-49.
[274]Ibid., 43-45.
[275] Ibid.

move on to a different task if he is ordered to do so. The Jesuits have also traditionally put themselves in the direct service of the pope. [276]

The Jesuits are distinguishable from other Catholic orders by several points. They have no distinctive religious garb, unlike the Dominicans and Franciscans. The Jesuits are also not subjected to undue austerity like the Trappists who adhere to a very strict set of rules regarding eating, sleeping, praying and working (Rule of Saint Benedict). Ignatius believed that excessive asceticism would weaken a person's physical and spiritual fervor.[277]

Loyola did share John Calvin's majestic conception of God the Father. However, the cold and uncompromising elements which Calvin and even Luther associated with God the Father are not present in Loyola's vision. Unlike Luther and Calvin whose respective efforts of Church reform eventually led them beyond the spiritual boundaries of the Catholic Church, Ignatius Loyola and his *Spiritual Exercises* endeavored to reform human hearts and souls within the Church. The *Exercises* and the formation of the Society of Jesus were visible evidence of a slower, underlying reform that had quietly been in motion since before the *Imitation of Christ* was published in 1427.

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[276]Ibid., 49-50.
[277] Ibid.

Chapter VII

St. John of the Cross and *The Dark Night*

The so called 'counter-reformation' of the Catholic Church is more complex than the name commonly assumes. By the time Martin Luther appeared on the scene in the early sixteenth century many voices had been calling for Church reform for quite some time. It can even be argued that some of the more underlying forces which brought about the Church's recovery had already been in motion for at least a century prior to the arrival of Lutheranism.

The underlying desire to reform was finally revealing itself in a more tangible way. Pope Paul III, the same pope who sanctioned the Jesuit Order in 1540, had attempted to convene a Church council in 1537, but without substantial support and the continued distraction of the Italian Wars, the council was postponed indefinitely. Finally in December of 1545 after numerous difficulties, Paul III convened the first session of the Council of Trent. In attendance at the first session were four cardinals, four archbishops, twenty-one bishops, five generals of orders, and about fifty theologians and canonists. This was a relatively small representation of the Church as a whole, but the numbers would increase as the council continued. Numerous political factors and other problems slowed the council's progress. The council officially concluded in 1563, after eighteen years, several interruptions and severe political difficulties.[278]

Those assembled for the council addressed the major religious issues of the era. They composed dogmatic decrees to clarify the Church's official teaching on such controversial topics as the Eucharist, the Mass, the cult of saints, and purgatory. The council also finally confronted the problems of episcopal absenteeism, clerical immorality, the selling of indulgences, Martin Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, and many other serious troubles. By most

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[278] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 65-92.

accounts the Council of Trent was considered essential to the Catholic Church's reform, even

crucial for the Church's continued existence. H. Daniel Rops writes that the emergence of the

Protestant threat (Lutheranism and Calvinism) forced the Church, through the Council of Trent,

to more clearly define and reinforce its own doctrine. The Church, especially the papacy,

following the Council of Trent, had emerged strengthened and renewed.[279]

This is not to say that the Catholic Church in 1563 was now in a state of perfection. The

reforms initiated at the council required time to make their way from paper to reality. Several

individuals emerged during this era which directly or indirectly contributed to the cause of

Church reform, including St. Pius V. As pope, Pius bore the task of implementing the decisions

of the Council of Trent. Pius lived ascetically, often spending hours in prayer and meditation.

He put an end to a great deal of the immorality and extravagance that existed in Rome. He

insisted that bishops remain in their respective dioceses. Pius also published the Roman

Catechism, the Roman Missal, and the Breviary, all within four years. Pius V was the first pope

in almost three hundred years to be canonized. After Pius, there would not be another canonized

pope until the 20th Century.[280]

St. Pius V's immediate predecessor, Pius IV, created three new cardinals in January of

1560. One of them was St. Charles Borromeo. In what appeared to be just another case of

ecclesiastical nepotism, Borromeo, the nephew of Pius IV, was given the red hat and then

showered with titles by his uncle, including Secretary of State and Archbishop of Milan. To

contrast with the stereotypical cardinal nephew however, Borromeo lived ascetically, eventually

selling all of his personal possessions. He spent much time in prayer and meditation, particularly

on Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Like St. Pius V, Borromeo actively carried out the reforms of

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[279] Ibid.
[280]Ibid., 104-110.

the Council of Trent. When Borromeo was appointed the Archbishop of Milan in 1564 he set an example by actually leaving Rome to reside in Milan.

The Milan Archdiocese was relatively large and by 1565 was in dire need of spiritual leadership. Under Borromeo's guidance, clerical discipline was restored, priests, monks and nuns were made to amend their lax and sinful ways, and seminaries were constructed in order to better train priests. Borromeo also made sure to preserve all his letters and mandates concerning the reform of the archdiocese. This material was later published with the intent of showing other bishops how to carry out the Tridentine reforms. Many bishops and even the laity throughout the world could now look to St. Charles Borromeo as a great role model.[281]

As St. Charles Borromeo formed part of a reenergized Church episcopate in the late 16th century, so too did the Catholic Church's religious orders experience a renewal of faith. One ancient order, the Carmelites, was particularly fruitful during the late 16th century. St. Teresa of Ávila was born into a minor noble family in 1515 in the Province of Ávila, Spain. Her father instilled in her a strict and rigorous adherence to the Catholic faith. She entered the Carmelite convent at the age of twenty. Within a few years she found herself growing tired of life in the convent. Lacking sincerity, she was just going through the motions, but deep inside she knew there was a better way. For many years she continued in this manner, spiritually discontent and lukewarm. Everything changed one day in 1553 when she came upon a bust of Christ that was covered with wounds. At this sight she became overwhelmed with emotion, fell to her knees and begged the Lord for strength. After Teresa collected herself from this episode she resolved to build a stronger relationship with God. Her determination to grow in faith was fertile ground for the seeds of grace.[282]

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[281]Ibid., 110-115.
[282]Ibid., 115-120.

Since her episode in front of the bust of Christ, Teresa became the focus of unexplained phenomena. She experienced spiritual ecstasy to the point of becoming speechless. Teresa was even observed on more than one occasion levitating above the ground. It was obvious that on these occasions Teresa's mind and soul were no longer fully part of this world.[283] Bernini's famous sculpture the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome portrays a blissful Teresa on a cloud being pierced by a spear held by an angel. The sculpture is said to be inspired by one of Teresa's spiritual trances.[284] Teresa was soon convinced that the Carmelite Order needed reform. Along with St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa founded a new reformed order, known as the Discalced Carmelites.[285]

St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the Cross are generally grouped together and labeled as the 'Spanish Mystics.' All of these individuals had led extremely rich interior or spiritual lives, striving to deepen their relationship with God, even to the point of experiencing a mystical communion with the divine. In one of her most prominent works, *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa guides the reader on a journey of faith through seven stages or mansions of the soul to the ultimate goal of unity with God. The devotional works of St. John of the Cross feature similar themes[286]

St. John of the Cross was born as Juan de Yepes at Fontiveros near Ávila. Due to the destruction of parish records the only evidence of his date of birth is an inscription on the font of the church at Fontiveros, which is dated June 24th 1542 (St. John the Baptist's day). Juan was born into a once successful, Jewish converso family. When his father Gonzalo married Catalina in 1529, a girl of humble birth, he was rejected by his family, thereby forfeiting the family's

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[283] Ibid.

[284] St. Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus, of the Order of Our Lady of Carmel*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2012), 218-219.

[285] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 115-120.

[286] Ibid., 120-121.

comfortable life. Gonzalo died when Juan was only seven years old, making life even more difficult for Catalina and her three infant boys. Through a combination of sacrifice, hard work and gifted intelligence Juan entered the Jesuit college in Medina in 1559. At this point, Juan supported himself by working as a hospital attendant.[287] Later he became a Carmelite at St. Anne's, Medina de Campo. By 1564, Juan was attending the University of Salamanca studying theology and philosophy.[288]

In 1567 he was ordained into the priesthood. Around the same time he considered joining the Carthusians, but, St. Teresa of Ávila persuaded him to remain a Carmelite, and together the two would form the Discalced Carmelites, a reformed Carmelite Order that aspired to return to an older and more disciplined rule before it was relaxed more than two centuries later. By 1568 Juan took the vows of the Discalced order, taking the name of St. John of the Cross. At this time there existed two Carmelite Orders, one mitigated and one reformed. The Calced or mitigated Order was furious and fervently opposed a reformed branch. To show their displeasure Juan was kidnapped and imprisoned at Medina del Campo in 1576 by the non-reformed branch of the Carmelites. He was released by a Papal nuncio.[289]

Juan was again kidnapped in 1577 by the mitigated Carmelites and imprisoned in the non-reformed priory at Toledo. While in prison, Juan began writing the *Spiritual Canticle*, a poem that describes a soul's search for God. By 1578 he escaped to the Carmelite Convent in Toledo and was later taken to the Canon of Toledo. Picking up where he left off, Juan spent much of his remaining years setting up and organizing Discalced Carmelite communities. In between all his various duties, which included preaching, confessing and establishing the new

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[287]Ibid., 121-122.
[288] E. Allison Peers, ed., *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1964) , xvii-xviii.
[289]Ibid., xviii.

Discalced Order were short periods of writing. The *Ascent of Mount Carmel* was written between the late 1570s and early 1580s. Like Saint Teresa of Ávila before him, Juan was known to fall into deep spiritual trances. He was observed on two separate occasions levitating above the ground while preaching to a group of nuns.[290]

In 1591 because of a disagreement over details of the Discalced Order, Juan was stripped of several titles and was sent to the remote monastery of La Peñuela, where he succumbed to illness. In September of 1591, he travels to Úbeda to seek treatment. He died in December of the same year. He was Canonized by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726, and later declared a Doctor of the Church by Pius XI in 1926.[291]

A man who had dedicated his life to God and to serving others St. John of the Cross also made great contributions to the literary world and to the area of personal spiritual development. One of his most famous works, the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the related *Dark Night of the Soul*, are both considered to be Christian devotional masterpieces. E. Allison Peers praises the saint's work: "When we study his treatises-principally that great composite work known as the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night*-we have the impression of a master-mind that has scaled the heights of mystical science and from their summit looks down upon and dominates the plain below and the paths leading upward."[292]

Both St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the Cross were drawn to a deeper relationship with God and in the writing of their respective devotional works wished to see others strengthen their relationship with the divine. To both of these saints, prayer was of utmost importance because it served as a channel through which grace flowed from God. Basic prayer was the

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[290] Ibid,
[291] Ibid., xx.
[292] Ibid., xxviii.

beginning of a person's relationship with God. Because of the *Ascent's* relative difficulty, St. John assumed that the reader is familiar with the basic elements of the faith

To put it simply, the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* are essentially guides on how to grow closer to God. However, the material that is found within those two books moves beyond the aims of a common prayer book or a devotional exercise and progresses on with the specific intention of achieving a mystical bond with God while still remaining in this earthly life. It is important to remember that both the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* are based on the stanzas of a poem entitled *Dark Night of the Soul*. Written by St. John, the poem describes the hardships that a person must undergo before his soul is prepared to unite with God. St. John's belief in the power of this work and his painstaking efforts are evident in his attention to detail and his deep exploration of the long and arduous process of a soul entering a mystical union with God.

Peers explains that the *Ascent* and *Dark Night* are two parts of a single work.[293] The *Ascent* is the longer of the two and is made up of three books. *Dark Night* is made up of two. St. John believed that the soul contained interior and exterior senses. In order to achieve a divine union, both parts of the soul must be pure. The process of cleansing the soul requires both one's own labors with the aid of grace, and God alone. The *Ascent* and *Dark Night* together represent those two requirements; specifically *Ascent* represents the active night (one's own efforts), while *Dark Night* represents the passive night (God alone). Peers, however, mentions that St. John was never able to complete the entire treatise. The last chapter of *Dark Night* only begins to address the third stanza of the poem while five stanzas remain.[294]

Many readers may find the whole metaphysical concept of the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* to be intimidating. It may prove helpful to consult a drawing created by the saint entitled 'Mount

[293]Ibid., xlv.
[294]Ibid., 1-2.

of Perfection,' which offers a visual representation of the soul's mystical path up the mountain. The drawing features three paths up a mountain, with the center path being the only straight and narrow one. The center path which renounces all earthly things is the perfect route to God while the other two are longer and filled with obstructions.[295]

The *Ascent* begins with all eight stanzas of the poem entitled *Dark Night of the Soul*. A prologue follows, in which St. John warns the participant (reader) of what is to come, and asks that the participant put his trust in God. St. John also makes clear that the following program of spiritual development is meant especially for his fellow Discalced Carmelite brothers and sisters, and will not be suitable to everybody.[296] The first thirteen chapters of the *Ascent* are a commentary on the first line of the first stanza of the poem. The remaining two chapters of book one briefly address the remaining lines of the first stanza. The whole of book one represents the active night of the senses. Book two brings the reader to the second stanza, with the subject being the active night of the spirit or faith, and how it leads one closer to God. In book three St. John describes how one's will and memory can obstruct the path to a divine union

Chapter one begins with the first stanza ("On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings—oh, happy chance!—I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.") and explains that a person who desires divine union must pass through two figurative dark nights, one of the senses and one of the spirit. The night of the senses is to be the first and is meant for beginners. The night of the spirit is more difficult and is meant only for those who are ready to enter into a divine union. The first chapter also includes a brief exposition of the whole

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[295]Ibid., 20.
[296]Ibid., 10-15.

stanza where St. John explains that God leads the soul through a dark night, which represents the cleansing of the soul.[297]

Chapters two through five explain the concept of the dark night of the senses. The symbolic night has three parts, twilight, complete darkness, and the approaching of day. The first is the withdrawal of the senses from this world, the second is remaining on the path to divine union using only one's faith, and the third is a blessing from God. St. John proves the necessity of the night of sense using examples from the Books of Exodus and the First Book of Kings.[298] The remaining part of Book one addresses the difficult concept of rejecting all worldly desires. St. John makes it very clear that the participant will never achieve a divine union with God if he cannot withdraw from the things of this world. Chapter fourteen is the first to consider the second line of the stanza, where St. John writes on the effects of the night of sense.[299]

The second book of the *Ascent* concerns the active night of spirit and is more in-depth compared to the first. The first chapter begins with the second stanza of the poem, in which the spirit delights in the thought of releasing itself from imperfections. Since the participant has spiritually detached himself from the physical things of this world, the upcoming night of the spirit is concealed from the devil and is the darkest or the most difficult part of the figurative night of the sense. Faith is the only remaining guide through this part of the night.[300] Chapter five attempts to illustrate what a divine union would be like so that the participant may be more able to direct his efforts to that ultimate goal. Chapter six is on the topic of the three theological

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[297]Ibid., 17-19.
[298]Ibid., 21-33.
[299]Ibid., 34-62.
[300]Ibid., 65.

virtues (faith, hope, charity) and how they refine the three faculties of the soul (understanding, memory, will). It is these three virtues that cause 'darkness' and unite the soul with God.[301]

Also within the second book, St. John describes how the true path to God is narrow, and that human understanding and imagination will not guide the soul to union. St. John explains to the participant that God will most likely speak to him internally or through the interior life. In chapters thirteen and fourteen St. John writes on the five signs, which enable the participant to know when to move from meditation to contemplation. When writing about the second book, Peers comments on how definitive and clear St. John's writing is.[302]

In the third book of the *Ascent* the focus is how the memory and will negatively affect one's path to a divine union. Chapters two through fifteen address how the memory itself must endure a dark night. Chapters sixteen through forty five are concerned with the struggle of the will through the dark night. St. John describes how four passions (joy, hope, sorrow, fear) afflict the will and may without proper care bring about the soul's demise. In several chapters, the Saint comments on the exterior portion of the Christian faith, the portion that enters through the human senses, such as portraits of saints, the decorative interiors of churches and the use of suspicious ceremonies. He warns that an image or sculpture of a saint may help move a person to devotion but that the person should not attribute more value to the physical object than to what the object represents.[303]

The concern over the exterior elements of the faith may bring to mind Erasmus and his desire to correct the excessive, empty ritual that he saw within the faith. Erasmus addressed this matter in his *Enchiridion*, commenting that obsessive behavior such as traveling great distances to touch holy relics or attending mass twice daily is not necessary. Rather, more emphasis

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[301]Ibid., 70-82.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.

should be placed on living like Christ.[304] St. John's belief that the reader should eventually

lessen his dependence on the more external elements of the faith in the *Ascent* represents a more

mature or developed side of the faith. It may even seem like a contradiction to a rebounding

Catholicism, which by the late sixteenth century emphasized the evangelical value of the arts and

architectural splendor with a renewed fervor.[305]

Allison Peers comments on the sudden conclusion of the *Ascent* and what may have been

had the Saint continued on with the treatise. From this point on however, the reader who wishes

to go further would move on to the *Dark Night of the Soul*. Out of tradition the *Ascent* and the

Dark Night are printed separately. St. John believed that the process of cleansing the soul

requires both one's own labors with the aid of grace, and God alone. The *Ascent* and *Dark Night*

together represent those two requirements, specifically *Ascent* represents the active night (one's

own efforts), while *Dark Night* represents the passive night (God alone). Peers explains how the

two works relate to the goal of achieving a union with God. In the *Ascent*, St. John instructs the

reader on how to deny and purify himself with the help of God's grace, so that his senses and

faculties are prepared for a divine union. In the *Dark Night*, the same senses and faculties are

cleansed and purified by God alone so that the participant is increasingly more ready to reach a

divine union, just as in the *Ascent* the *Dark Night* is based on the stanzas of the same poem (*Dark

Night of the Soul*).[306]

Book one of the *Dark Night* focuses on the passive night of the senses. Chapters two

through eight address the seven deadly sins but strictly in an interior sense. For example, St.

John describes spiritual avarice, beginners who are attached to such things as rosaries and

crosses when they should be looking inward. Chapter four considers spiritual luxury, those that

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[304] Raymond Himelick, ed., *The Enchiridion of Erasmus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 101-130.
[305] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 138-139.
[306] Allison Peers, ed., *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross*, 82-320.

take sensual pleasure in spiritual exercises. Peers notes that both chapter eight and nine are particularly effective in how they convey St. John's personal mystical experience. By the end of the first book the soul has been cleansed of the aforementioned seven deadly sins.[307]

Book two represents the passive night of the spirit, through which very few people enter. Chapter five considers the first line of the stanza ("On a dark night.") St. John explains why the intervention of God upon the soul is considered a dark night. This is because the divine light of God is beyond the soul's grasp, and because it causes the soul to endure great pain. Peers remarks on the particular brilliance of chapters four through eight of this book, indicating that it looks as though the participant is nearing the height of his mystical experience.   Chapter ten compares this dark night to such things as a log being consumed by fire: The wood is eventually converted into the essence of the fire, just as the soul is gradually transformed by God and begins to take on some divine properties.[308]   Chapter eleven moves on to the second line of the first stanza ("Kindled in love with yearnings.") St. John here explains divine love and how it affects the soul. Chapters fifteen and sixteen address the first line of the second stanza ("In darkness and secure"). St. John explains that since the soul is now devoid of any desires, understanding, etc., it cannot be led astray by the things of this world or the snares of the devil.[309]

By chapter twenty-four, which considers the last line of the second stanza ("My house being now at rest"), the participant is now prepared for divine union. Peers again identifies a sense of loss over what may have been excluded from St. John's treatise. Because St. John concludes the *Dark Night* with a brief exposition on the third stanza, five stanzas of the poem remain untouched. Supposedly, the five remaining stanzas were meant to describe an actual mystical divine union. Peers recommends that the reader cite St. John's other works such as the

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[307]Ibid., 320-342.
[308]Ibid., 342-406.
[309]Ibid., 406-420.

Spiritual Canticle or the *Living Flame of Love* in order to help make up for what seems to be incomplete.[310]

The *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* place easily alongside many of the other devotional works that have been studied in this thesis so far. Certain themes found in earlier devotional works recur in the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night*, particularly Erasmus' desire to downplay the more ornate or exterior parts of the faith and his call to self-awareness. Without Erasmus' introspection and belief in free will there would be little chance of taking the first step up Mount Carmel. St. John's double treatise is a natural complement to St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. Both of these 'Spanish Mystics' focused on the interior life and avoided such things as comfort, glory or power. The goal of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to draw the reader into a state in which he can communicate with God while simultaneously examining his relationship with God. The *Ascent* and *Dark Night* continue on with this theme and advance a step further. In contrast, St. John's double treatise has a more literary-mystical quality while the *Exercises* have the more practical feel of a handbook.

The primary goal of most of the works that have been studied thus far has been to bring the reader or participant closer to God. St. John of the Cross in his brilliance and with a deep love of God, takes a step beyond the other works of devotion and dares to claim that it is possible to enter into a mystical union with God while still remaining in this earthly life. Choosing to enter into a deeper relationship with God implies a deliberate act of free will. The *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Ascent* and *Dark Night* stand directly opposed to the Protestant philosophy of Luther and Calvin. If man has no free will and lives by faith alone as they claim, then he certainly has no ability to develop his relationship with God much less enter into a divine union.

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[310] Ibid.

Chapter VIII

Francis De Sales and *The Devout Life*

Following the Council of Trent, which concluded in 1563, the Catholic Church slowly

began to exhibit outward signs of renewal. Though Catholicism never regained the level of

hegemony over Europe that it once enjoyed during the High and Late Middle Ages, (1000-1500)

the swift spread of Protestantism had been checked. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth

centuries were also characterized by religious fanaticism, political maneuvering and warfare

among the developing nation states of Europe.

Daniel-Rops makes the case that the influence of the Council of Trent could be seen in

the architecture, liturgical practices, musical forms, and devotional works of the Church in the

late sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries. Daniel-Rops also details three specific features of

this revitalized Tridentine Church. The first was that Church dogma was more clearly defined

and thus, at least for the Roman Catholic Church, was not open to discussion. A second feature

was a generally higher regard for sanctity. The overall condition of the clergy, which had come

under harsh criticism during the first half of the sixteenth century, was being addressed. The

Council demanded that clerics serve as better role models, and seminaries ensured that priests

received better training. A new level of mysticism, brought about by the likes of St. Ignatius and

St. John of the Cross, was now an essential element of the faith. Mysticism allowed the faith to

penetrate deeper into people's hearts. The last feature of this Tridentine Church was the gradual

reemergence of papal prestige. In general the men who advanced to the throne of St. Peter

following the Council of Trent seemed less focused on political ambitions and selfish pleasures than their late fifteenth / early sixteenth century counterparts.[311]

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the quest for spiritual fulfillment accompanied widespread religious fanaticism seen in the upper echelons of European politics. Sometimes this fanaticism was pursued out of true religious zeal and other times to buttress the status of a particular ruler or government. The Habsburg Philip II, son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, led an increasingly powerful yet underdeveloped Spain. During Philip's reign Spain became the dominant colonial power of Europe and acquired vast amounts of silver from its possessions in the Americas. Following the wishes of his father, Philip wished to see all of Europe maintain or return to Catholic orthodoxy. Philip used the Inquisition to not only rid Spain of Protestant heretics and Muslims but also to promote national interests.[312]

Philip also inherited land in the Low Countries (Belgium, Luxembourg). He installed his half-sister, Margaret of Parma, as governor of the Netherlands in 1555. Margaret was charged with suppressing the Protestants, which made up a large portion of the population in this part of Europe. Margaret subsequently set up an inquisition and it was not long before Protestants were being executed. In 1566 a group of Calvinists reacted to the Protestant crackdown and began terrorizing Catholics and destroying churches.[313] Phillip responded to the Calvinist rampage by sending the Duke of Alva and 10,000 Spanish soldiers to the Netherlands to restore order in 1567. The Duke established a military dictatorship and a special tribunal to deal with treason and heresy.[314]

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[311] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,* 131-135.
[312] Palmira Brummett and others, *Civilization Past & Present* (New York: Longman, 2003), 436-437.
[313] Ibid., 438.
[314] Ibid.

During the Duke's regime which lasted until 1573, more than 8,000 people were executed. In reaction to the Duke's oppressive management, William of Orange (1533-1584) led a revolt that slowed the Spanish army's progress in the Low Countries. A unified front set against the Spanish army was fractured by the religious differences in the Netherlands. The commander of the Spanish forces, Alexander Farnese, took advantage of these differences by restoring the privileges and lands of the southern Catholic nobles. This enabled Farnese to gain the favor of the Catholic south and end its resistance to the Spanish armies. The northern or Dutch faction continued to resist the Spanish forces, with the Dutch declaring independence from Spain in 1581. There was no peace until the northern Calvinists and the Spanish forces negotiated a truce in 1609.[315]

In France, the Catholic King Henry II continued his father's (Francis I) quest to suppress the Protestants. Francis I had begun a harsh crackdown on the Protestants when the Affair of the Placards occurred in 1534. In October of that year placards were posted throughout Paris that rejected the Catholic belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (Transubstantiation). This stirred the anger of King Francis I, who up until this point had been relatively tolerant of the Protestants. The placards solidified the Protestants as heretics and heretics began to be burned at the stake.[316]

John Calvin escaped the Protestant persecutions that were taking place in his homeland of France by making his way to Basle. It was in Basle where Calvin wrote *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin relocated to Geneva, and by 1555 he had gained control of the city government and its church by imposing a strict Calvinist theocracy.[317]

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[315]Ibid., 438-439.
[316] Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 40-43.
[317] Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation: 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 117-119.

The latter part of the sixteenth century was a difficult period for France. After the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, France relinquished its claims in the Netherlands and Italy to the Habsburgs. Accompanying this decline in prestige was a bankrupt government and widespread social unrest. The lower classes made their discontent known to the nobility and tax collectors over the high cost of living. By the 1560s Calvinism became popular as a respite for the urban lower middle class. As many as half of the French nobility also converted to Calvinism, motivated by true religious reasons or political gain, While still a minority, together the Calvinists in France were known as Huguenots. In the 1550s the creation of the centralized Calvinist Church in Geneva provided guidance to the Huguenots scattered across France.[318]

In 1559 King Henry II passed down the crown to his son Francis II, who was of fragile health. Francis died the next year and the throne was inherited by Francis' brother Charles. Charles' mother, Catherine de Medici, served as Charles' regent to the throne. Catherine made every effort to ensure that one of her three sons inherited the crown. In 1562 religious differences came to a head in France. For the remainder of the sixteenth century, France was embroiled in civil war between the Calvinist Huguenots and the Catholic House of Guise and later the Bourbons. The war was supported on both sides by foreign powers such as Philip II of Spain (Catholic) and Elizabeth I of England (Protestant)

While both Spain and France were consumed with religious conflict during this era so too was England. After the death of Henry VIII in 1547, the English throne was passed to Henry's nine-year-old son Edward. His mother was Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour. Because of Edward's age, England was ruled by a regency council. The council was dominated by politically ambitious men who favored radical reform of the Anglican Church.[319] In religious

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[318] Palmira Brummett and others, *Civilization Past & Present*, 439.
[319] Palmira Brummett and others, *Civilization Past & Present*, 430-431.

stance the young Edward was heavily influenced by Thomas Cranmer who was appointed

Archbishop of Canterbury by Henry VIII, and John Knox, who was appointed Edward's

chaplain. Both Cranmer and Knox were sympathetic to the radical Protestant cause. Knox

became a devoted follower of John Calvin and founded the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.[320]

During the reign of Edward VI the Church of England became much more rooted in the

philosophy of John Calvin. To build their power base King Edward's regency council attempted

to gain the support of England's radical Protestant faction. By the time Edward ascended the

throne a great deal of Church property had been seized and divvied up among the English

nobility. In order to maintain the loyalty of the nobility, the regency council would have to

ensure England's continued independence from the papacy, lest the nobility risk losing its newly

acquired lands. The council subsequently repealed the Six Articles of the Anglican Church,

which maintained the largely Catholic appearance of the Church of England. Priests would now

be allowed to marry, the Latin mass was replaced by an English thanksgiving service, and

churches were stripped of their sculptures, paintings, and altars.[321]

When Edward grew terminally ill in 1553 attempts were made by him and his regency

council to place Edward's cousin, the Lady Jane Grey next in line of succession. The Lady Jane

was considered to be supportive of the Protestant reforms in England. If the line of succession

was not altered, Edward's half-sister Mary Tudor would succeed him. Mary Tudor was the only

surviving issue of King Henry VIII's first marriage to Catherine of Aragon and was steadfastly

Roman Catholic. There was no doubt that if Mary became queen she would attempt to reverse

England's Protestant reforms and restore the country's relationship with Rome.[322]

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[320]H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,*194-195.
[321]H. Daniel-Rops, *TheProtestant Reformation,*492-515.
[322] Ibid.

When Edward VI died on July 6 1553, the Lady Jane ascended the throne for nine days until she was deposed by Mary Tudor after a successful coup that was widely embraced by the English people. It quickly became clear that Mary planned to restore the Catholic religion. She sent Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Tower of London as a prisoner, attended a Catholic requiem mass for her deceased half-brother Edward, and revived the tradition of asking the pope for permission to be crowned at Westminster Abbey. By the end of the year Parliament reversed all the Protestant reforms that were put in place while her brother Edward was king. Mary's uncle, the Emperor Charles V, wished to see England aligned with his Hapsburg family. This was achieved when Prince Phillip II of Spain of the Hapsburg dynasty was married to Queen Mary of England in July of 1554. During Queen Mary's reign around 280 people were burned at the stake for their Protestant sympathies. Thomas Cranmer and two other bishops were among those who were executed. This is how Queen Mary earned the name 'Bloody Mary.'[323]

Mary Tudor died in November of 1558. The end of her life was rather unhappy. Her beloved husband Phillip II spent most of his time outside of England, and she was never able to produce an heir. The English throne was passed to Mary's twenty five year old half-sister Elizabeth. Queen Elizabeth I was the daughter of Henry VIII and Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn. Under Elizabeth, the restoration of Roman Catholicism that occurred during Mary's reign was halted. Elizabeth saw the English Church mostly as a branch of the government, a means to maintain control over her subjects.[324]

One of Elizabeth's threats was Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots) who was a direct descendent of Henry VII, the founder of England's Tudor Dynasty, and a Roman Catholic. For the brief

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[323]Ibid., 514-520.
[324]H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,*194-209.

time Mary Stuart was both Queen of Scotland and Queen consort of France, she also claimed the English throne through her ancestry. Since Mary had substantial support in the form of French troops stationed in Scotland, many English Catholics hoped that Mary could depose Elizabeth and reestablish the Catholic faith. This hope went unfulfilled when Scotland broke ties with Rome through the efforts of the Calvinist John Knox. Knox led a revolt of the Scottish nobility, established the Presbyterian (Calvinist) state church, and with Queen Elizabeth's help, expelled the French forces in Scotland. After making her way south into England, Mary remained there as a virtual prisoner for the remainder by her life. Mary was later found guilty for taking part in plots to assassinate Elizabeth and executed in 1587.[325]

When King Phillip II of Spain was able to win a major naval victory over the Ottoman Turks at Lepanto near Greece in 1571, he only added to his country's prestige. With the death of Mary Stuart however, Phillip lost a major ally in his efforts to reinstate Catholicism in England. Because of the earlier urgings of his late father Charles V, Phillip believed it to be his duty to restore the Catholic religion to all of Europe. Without Mary Stuart, Phillip now looked to take military action against England. In 1588 Phillip organized a major military offensive against England that received the blessing of the pope. A large Spanish fleet would sail to the Habsburg-controlled southern Netherlands, pick up a large army and then land it in England with the intention of a large scale invasion. The invasion never occurred due to a number of setbacks. The Spanish ships never made it to their Netherland destination because they were blocked by Dutch ships. Smaller and more maneuverable English ships then defeated the large Spanish galleons in the English Channel. To make things worse, a severe storm forced the fleet to retreat to Spain.[326]

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[325]Palmira Brummett and others, *Civilization Past & Present*, 440-441.
[326]Ibid.,

Widespread warfare continued in Europe through the Thirty Years War (1618-48) until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. While the peace at this juncture was not completely ubiquitous throughout Europe it did mark the beginning of the end of an era of warfare that was motivated by religious differences. During this period of turmoil a key figure of the Catholic counter-reformation introduced a philosophy which proposed something besides hostility and division. Francis de Sales was born in the Duchy of Savoy in what is present day south-eastern France on August 21st 1567. His parents, François de Sales de Boisy and Françoise de Sionnaz, were a part of the Savoy nobility.[327]

De Sales attended both the Jesuit College of Clermont in Paris, and the University of Padua. De Sionnaz desired a legal career for his son, but Francis had an interest in theology.[328] Sometime during his higher education, de Sales was struck with a bout of depression caused by his fears of a Calvinist sort of predestination, a result of the saturation of Calvinistic beliefs in the Savoy/Geneva area. His misery was alleviated when an image of the Virgin Mary appeared to him; he made a vow of chastity and dedicated himself to Mary.

At the age of twenty-four, de Sales was honored with a doctorate in civil and canon law from Padua. Upon returning home from Italy, he was offered the position of senator by the Duke of Savoy. At the same time, his father had arranged for a profitable marriage. De Sales, however, had other plans for his future. While he had been studying law, he also studied theology, and ultimately ended up serving the Church.[329] By 1593, Francis, through the Bishop

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[327] Wendy M. Wright, ed., *Francis De Sales: Introduction to the Devout Life and Treatise on the Love of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 30.
[328] John K. Ryan, ed., *Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis De Sales* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), viii.
[329] Ryan, viii.

of Geneva, had taken up the position of Provost of the Chapter of Geneva, and had been made a priest. His parents were not pleased with their son's ambitions.[330]

De Sales rose relatively quickly in the Church, becoming a deacon and then a priest in less than a year. After his ordination, de Sales went headfirst into his ministry; visiting the sick, confessing the penitent, aiding the poor and rousing the faithful with his preaching. When the Bishop of Annecy (Geneva) asked for volunteers to help in the quest to convert the Chablais country near Geneva, de Sales was one of the first to answer the call. The Chablais region had been seized by the French and had been converted to Calvinism. By the 1550s Duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy reclaimed the land as part of the Duchy of Savoy and desired that it revert to its Roman Catholic heritage.[331]

During his later years (1555-1564) John Calvin implemented a strict theocracy in Geneva, turning Geneva into a sort of Calvinist headquarters. When de Sales volunteered to assist in the conversion of the Chablais region which bordered Geneva, he was heading straight into adversity. In the 1590s while in the Chablais region de Sales continued on in his priestly ministry with even more fervor, risking his own life on several occasions. By 1600 the bishop who recruited de Sales observed that most of Chablais had returned to Catholicism.[332] Francis was sincerely concerned with the spiritual well-being of the people. He measured the value of a sermon not by how much the people agreed with it, but by how well it inspired positive action.[333]

By the end of 1602 de Sales was appointed Bishop of Geneva and began to receive some recognition beyond Savoy. King Henry IV offered de Sales the co-adjutorship of Paris. De Sales refused, stating: "I am already married, Sire, to a poor woman; I cannot leave her for one

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[330] Ibid.
[331] H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,*378-381.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ryan., x.

more rich." This quote brings to mind St. Charles Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan who faithfully ministered to his charge and refused to pursue Italian politics or self-aggrandizement. While working tirelessly for the needs of his faithful, he always seemed to find time for those who requested it. He also found time for writing, a great deal of which included letters to people requesting spiritual guidance. The correspondence exchanged between de Sales and Mme. de Charmoisy was eventually reworked into the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609). De Sales also published the *Treatise of Divine Love* (1616) which progresses further into a more mystical direction.[334]

De Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*, published in 1609, had its origins in his correspondence. Douglas Steere comments that a woman named Madame Louise Charmoisy, who desired to be closer to God, sought spiritual advice from Francis. The two exchanged letters, with de Sales giving her spiritual advice. These letters found their way into the hands of Father Fourier who was once de Sales' spiritual advisor and head of the Jesuit College in Chambery. Even Henry IV got wind of the correspondence. Fourier, the other Fathers of the College, and Henry would all urge de Sales to publish these letters with the belief that the advice contained within them could be of use to many more people.[335] Ultimately, Francis committed to this task. He returned to Madame Charmoisy and recovered his letters. By 1609 the manuscript was completed and published in Lyons. From the first publication, the work was revised four times before de Sales' death.[336]

Steere writes that the *Devout Life* is not new in its approach. Much of the guidance that is found within it can be equated to Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* or Teresa of Ávila's *Way of Perfection*. The *Devout Life*, however, was written with the layman in mind. De Sales' vision of

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[334]H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation*, 381-384.
[335]Ryan., xii.
[336]Ibid., xii-xiii.

devotion was lofty, vibrant, and consistent, not weighed down by self-pity or sorrow. This could

be symbolized by the eagle; swift, agile, and high flying, as opposed to the ostriches (sinners)

that never fly or hens (the correctly righteous) that fly close to the ground.[337]

De Sales opens the introduction with a dedicatory prayer to the Lord. In it, he asks that

he not be condemned for guiding others in the way of salvation, but instead be allowed to join

those who are saved. De Sales writes that while the basic Christian message remains the same,

his way of treating it will be different from others who have written on the topic. He comments

that this work is meant to assist people from all walks of life who wish to enhance their devotion

to God. De Sales also comments on the times, writing, "This age is very capricious."[338] He

states that while many believe the task of spiritual development rests with the members of

religious communities, it is ultimately a bishop's responsibility.[339] Francis describes the task of

leading others to greater devotion as bittersweet, "…a pain that gives comfort like that felt by the

laborers in the harvest and vineyard, who are never better pleased than when they have most to

do…"[340] He makes a point of writing that while he does instruct others in their devotion he is

not perfectly devout himself. It is the teaching of others that will allow his devotion to grow.[341]

The *Devout Life* is divided into five parts. Part one explains how a person converts a

simple desire to extend one's devotion into a firm resolution to do so. The first four chapters are

centered on the concept of devotion itself. The first chapter describes what de Sales considers to

be true devotion. It begins with the love of God. When there is enough divine love within the

soul, there is grace, and grace pleases God. When we possess enough grace to allow us to do

good works, there is charity. When we are consistently ready and cheerfully able to do good

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[337]Ibid., xiv.
[338]Ibid., xxix.
[339] Ibid.
[340]Ibid., xxx.
[341]Ibid., xxxi.

works, we have arrived at devotion.[342] Devotion is also compared with the speed at which a person walks toward God and his commandments. Those with true devotion run and leap.[343]

Chapters six through eight deal with two sorts of purgations. The first is mortal sin. De Sales exhorts the reader to find a confessor and a book on the topic of penance. The reader should then attempt to recall all sins within memory. The second purgation is the affection for sin. De Sales tells us that a true devout life is one that is free from even the desire to sin. A longing for sinful pleasures ultimately weakens one's resolve. Chapter eight calls for the reader to hate sin "with a deep-rooted and vigorous contrition."[344] This sort of contrition can be obtained by taking part in the meditations that are found in the next several chapters.[345]

Chapters nine through eighteen are made up of ten separate meditations. Each meditation is centered on a specific topic and is divided into three or four parts. The first is on the subject of the reader's own creation. In preparation, de Sales tells the reader to put himself in the presence of God, he then asks him to consider the fact that the reader did not always exist, that God gave him his nature, not out of necessity, but out of goodness, and to consider the nature that God has given him; it is the most advanced on this earth, and it is capable of eternal life. The fifth meditation urges the reader to consider the uncertainty and unpleasantness of his own inevitable death. The sixth, seventh and eighth meditations consider the last judgment, hell and heaven.

Part two of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* is concerned with the elevation of the soul through the sacraments and prayer. This section is meant to instruct the reader on how to pray, worship God, and receive the sacraments. De Sales encourages the reader to have an active imagination. For example, if a person wishes to meditate on the Passion of the Lord then he

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[342]Ibid., 2-3.
[343]Ibid., 3.
[344]Ibid., 13.
[345]Ibid., 11-14.

should try to imagine that he is actually on Mount Calvary and is able to see the Lord on the Cross.[346] Chapter eight describes how we are to return to the worries and work of the day from a meditative state. De Sales warns that one must go about this gently as to avoid forgetting what was considered and achieved while in meditation. Chapter nine discusses the problem of spiritual "dryness," when it seems as if nothing is gained from meditation or prayer. If this occurs, de Sales tells the reader to not lose hope, remain patient, and to continue trying. He also advises using vocal prayer, prostrating oneself, and embracing the crucifix.[347] Chapter twelve instructs the reader on how to withdraw and reflect throughout the day, regardless of what one is engaged in. Thirteen discusses aspirations to God and ejaculatory prayers, which emanate from good thoughts. Here de Sales illustrates his point by mentioning historical figures such as Constantine the Great, St. Francis Borgia, and how they exhibited devotion.[348]

Part three of the *Devout Life* features the theme of virtue and how one is to go about following specific virtues. The first chapter of part three serves as an introduction; de Sales tells the reader that each person may aspire to different virtues depending upon his role in life, and that mortifications of the heart are more exalted then corporal mortifications. He also gives the reader a few examples of virtuous behavior, pointing to St. Louis the king who visited the sick, and St. Dominic's love of preaching.[349] Chapters fourteen through sixteen are on the topic of poverty. De Sales tells the reader that avarice is a "raging fever," and to remain poor in spirit. He instructs the reader on how to be poor even if one is blessed with riches by routinely giving alms. De Sales again points out specific role models. He reminds the reader that if he is poor he is in good company: the Lord, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and many of the saints were also

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[346]Ibid., 42-46.
[347]Ibid., 48-51.
[348]Ibid., 53-62.
[349]Ibid., 76-85.

poor.[350] When de Sales offers the reader specific role models such as Jesus it is easy to recall Thomas à Kempis and *The Imitation of Christ*. Chapter twenty-three and the next several chapters discuss a person's exterior actions. De Sales writes that fasting should be done in moderation, labor is good, and that a person should get to sleep early in the night so that one may rise early and enjoy the morning.[351]

The fourth part of the *Introduction* considers temptation and how to avoid it. In Chapter two de Sales writes that while the Christian life is difficult a person should always put forth the effort; "You see that the mountain of Christian perfection is exceedingly high. O my God! You say, how shall I be able to ascend it? Courage Philothea!"[352] Chapters three and four address temptation directly, discussing how a person progresses from temptation to sin. Even though a person is tempted he should not take pleasure in it. De Sales reminds the reader of St. Jerome and St. Catherine of Siena, who were both tempted by lustful pleasures. In chapter thirteen which is relatively lengthy, de Sales writes that our devotion should always remain despite the change and inconsistency that occurs around us.[353]

In part five de Sales recommends an annual renewal of devotion around the time of the Feast of the Lord's Baptism (January). Chapter two instructs the reader to confirm his denunciation of sin, and that his entire body and soul is meant to serve the Lord. If he should ever falter in either of these he should confess and continue to serve the Lord.[354] Chapter three instructs the reader to examine himself in four ways: his duty to God, his self-perspective, his relationships with others, and his passions. This continues the theme of introspection which is

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[350]Ibid., 111-118.
[351]Ibid., 118-140.
[352] Ibid.
[353]Ibid., 192-209.
[354]Ibid., 212-215.

found within many of the devotional works of this era.[355] Chapter nine instructs the reader to

always follow the same procedure in preparation for meditation: placing himself in the presence

of God, and imploring His grace to assist him. Chapter ten asks the reader to consider the

excellence of the soul. De Sales asks the reader why he would be caught up in this world when

the soul was made for God and knows God. In chapter twelve the author once again points to

solid Christian role models. He tells the reader to consider the saints and the example they set

for us. Chapters thirteen through fifteen are focused on the love that Jesus Christ had for

humanity. De Sales asks the reader to recall the suffering that the Lord endured for him in the

Garden of Olives and on Mount Calvary. "When did his love for you begin? It began even when

He began to be God. When did he begin to be God? Never, for he has always been…"[356]

The *Introduction to the Devout Life* is a natural progression, completion and culmination

of the devotional works written throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Canonized in

1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877, St. Francis de Sales was seriously considering

the spiritual needs of the laity when he wrote the *Introduction to the Devout Life* in 1609. In the

late 1570s and early 1580s St. John of the Cross took Christian devotion to a metaphysical level

when he wrote the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul*. The more practical

Introduction to the Devout Life bears a resemblance to Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548).

Both the *Introduction* and the *Exercises* read more like handbooks.

The *Introduction* echoes many of the themes found within the other devotional works of

the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries such as imitating Christ and the saints, purging impurities

and sin, focusing on virtues, and growing closer to God. While the devotional works of this era

have subsequently been read by people from all walks of life, many of the earlier authors

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[355]Ibid., 217.
[356]Ibid., 226.

originally intended their works for a specific audience, such as the clergy. A key difference of the *Introduction* is that de Sales intended the book for all who wish to live lives more centered on Christ regardless of their occupation.

The German sociologist Max Weber famously linked religion with labor in his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). Weber postulates that ascetic Protestantism, especially Calvinism and Calvinist-influenced sects such as the Puritans were linked to the formation of western capitalism. Martin Luther challenged the Catholic belief that withdrawing from the world to serve as a monk or nun was praiseworthy. He considered monastic life to be selfish and instead advocated for a life lived outside the monastery in which worldly activity was justified as a natural condition of man's lowly state. Individual labor and the pursuit of one's individual 'calling' were simply the means through which men served one another.[357]

Calvinism inherits the Lutheran dislike of the monastic life and takes the justification of worldly activity a bit farther. Calvinists were grouped into two categories: the damned, and the elect. How was a Calvinist to know if he was among the elect? Weber explains that followers of Calvin, which included the Puritans, were conditioned to remain confident of their place among the elect. This self-confidence was achieved through a life of hard work, frugality and diligence. If wealth and, or success followed such an industrious life, they were considered to be signs of election.[358]

In contrasting the teachings of John Calvin and St. Francis de Sales one can see how in some ways they complement each other. Both of them were addressed to the laity, both of them see merit, albeit from a different angle, in labor or worldly enterprise. While the Calvinists

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[357] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 39-80.
[358] Ibid.

encouraged pursuing one's calling and engaging in a life of industry, de Sales taught that God can be found, served and glorified in even the lowliest of occupations. It is very likely that de Sales, who grew up in an age and in an area where Calvinism was rapidly spreading, absorbed a great deal of Calvinist theology. After all, de Sales was at one time was so depressed over the prospect of predestination that he ended up physically ill and bedridden.

Yet de Sales is the perfect reaction to Calvin's grim prognosis. If there is any making up for the logic and cold calculation of Calvin, de Sales formulates the response in his acknowledgement that a life of struggle should not be all for naught, and that God is to be found in even the most banal of situations.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

The remarkable career of St. Francis de Sales exemplified the reforms of the Council of Trent, and at the same time was in many ways a culmination of the spiritual traditions and reform impulses that were so much a part of the late medieval and Reformation world. H. Daniel-Rops describes de Sales as the pinnacle of Christian humanism, following in the footsteps of Thomas More and Erasmus, as well as the fulfillment of an era of devotional and mystical works that quietly reformed the Catholic Church from the inside out.[359]

The restoration or Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Church that was firmly in progress by the late sixteenth century is usually associated with the Council of Trent, the formation of the Jesuits, the completion of the new St. Peter's Basilica, and the appearance of the Baroque style. While these events are rightly associated with a reformed Catholic Church they are merely the most visible signs of a much deeper reform that had been in motion far earlier than the late sixteenth century and even earlier than the appearance of Lutheranism. The Christian devotional works studied here serve as evidence of a deeply-rooted reform impulse much older than the Protestant Reformation.

This hidden reformation was in part activated by the almost apocalyptic conditions of the Late Middle Ages. This was a time characterized by the constant threat of imminent death, an unresponsive Church that was too caught up in politics and worldly affairs to offer much in the way of spiritual guidance, and religious fanaticism as a fearful reaction to the theology of William of Ockham and the *via moderna*, which seriously questioned people's confidence in a reasonable hope for their own salvation. Ockham and the *via moderna* emphasized God's

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[359]H. Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation,*378-380.

omnipotence. Logic dictates that if God is completely omnipotent than He has absolute control over all time and space. For example, from the beginning of God's creation it was already decreed that of all the human beings conceived, certain ones would be saved and others would be damned. The doctrine of predestination had always been a part of Christian theology. However, almost since the beginnings of predestinarian theologies emphases have varied. Nominalism emphasized human helplessness in the face of an omnipotent God. Good works were now portrayed as a less reliable vehicle for salvation. The theology of the *via moderna*/ nominalism was a main cause of Luther's anxiety and provided part of the impetus which eventually forced Luther and most likely Calvin, from the Catholic Church.

The Protestant reaction of the larger Reformation impulse, specifically that of Martin Luther, was indirectly set in motion by the frightful implications of the theology of the *via moderna* (nominalism) which emerged during the Late Middle Ages. Perhaps if more adequately addressed or explained at an earlier juncture, this unsettling theology may not have been as central a factor in the Protestant Reformation. While it was obvious that the Catholic Church was in dire need of reform, the theological undertones (nominalism) of Luther and Calvin's split with the Church provided a great deal more intellectual momentum to their respective agendas. Still, it was actually the Catholic Church's condition at this point which led to the theological experimentation and rebellion. At this point, the Church's credibility had declined precipitously due to the Avignon Papacy, the Great Schism, Conciliarist challenges, the obvious need for reform and the excesses of the Renaissance era. Instead of serving as a font of spiritual nourishment and pursuing the salvation of souls, the Church was bogged down by its involvement in self-defense, secular affairs and the worldly pursuits that therefore came to dominate church concerns.

Had the Church more thoroughly addressed all of these issues—corruption, the spiritual needs and the theological issues—together, many may have never concluded that reforms as thorough as Protestantism were necessary. Ironically, for the Protestants it was Catholic bad behavior, the corruption of works, which led to their dismissal of the significance of works for salvation.

The cold logic of Ockhamistic nominalism and the *via moderna* presented a significant challenge to the traditional Catholic view of man's salvation, which involves a complex mixture of faith and works. The God of Ockham and Calvin could take a man who had spent every second of his life and every ounce of his energy attempting to become the perfect Christian and still damn him to hell. He is a voluntaristic God who operates by His logic, not human logic. Ockham's version of God practically renders God insignificant to humankind (agnosticism), for what is the use in trying to live a decent and honest life if all efforts are in vain? The inscrutable nominalist God was all the more believable given the apocalyptic conditions of the Late Middle Ages.

Yet in the face of such cold logic all a person is left with is faith in a merciful Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints and the example that they set for all humankind. The *devotio moderna* and humanism was the reaction and counter-current to the inevitability of the *via moderna* and nominalism. From here it is not difficult to grasp why the *Imitation of Christ* was written, or why humans should perhaps bear a little more responsibility and take up Erasmus' *Enchiridion* as his guide. Perhaps one should even do as Luther instructed and simply have faith in the saving power of the Lord even if humans were completely subject to His will. Thus even Luther's ultimate downplaying of the nominalist God that had originally so terrified him provides the reader with a much more palatable option. While he was not actually a

nominalist, Calvin's theology and his version of God provide little to no room for human comfort in a predictable God. This is what separates Calvin from the rest of the authors who have been studied here.

Another threat to the Catholic Church was the disintegration of cultural unity and the growth in power of the national monarchies. The ancient dream of a unified Christendom with a single temporal and a single ecclesiastical authority (at least in theory) had become an increasingly fading possibility since the start of the Late Middle Ages. During this time nations such as France, England and Spain developed stronger centralized governments. Modernized warfare brought about higher taxes which in turn led many to see the need for an expansion of representative bodies and bureaucracies. Tax revolts grew more common among the nobility. A good example was the English nobility who rose up and forced King John to sign the Magna Carta already in 1215.   The growth of the power of national monarchies also promoted the growth of national churches, which maintained a Catholic identity but were sometimes only nominally allegiant to Rome.

It could be argued that the publication of *The Imitation of Christ* in 1427 marked the birth of a new literary genre: works aimed at an increasingly literate general population and dedicated to the topic of personal Christian devotion and spirituality. Written during a period of protracted warfare, disease, and religious controversy, *The Imitation* attempted to fill the spiritual void that had developed as a result of all the factors enumerated above, including the *via moderna,* and the horrifying emphasis on an increasingly rigid predestination. Nominalism made God far more omnipotent, and unpredictable. Thus through *The Imitation,* the theology of the *via moderna* and nominalism was answered in Northern Europe with the *devotio moderna,* which avoided the complexities of nominalist theology, espoused a mystical quality and focused on Jesus Christ as

a role model. Piety and faith here trumped reason. In an era where spiritual resources were limited to most people, *The Imitation* with its Christocentric, devotional qualities was a natural fit. Another reaction to nominalism was humanism, which is generally recognized to have begun on the Italian Peninsula with Petrarch. In the north its most eloquent spokesman was Erasmus. In short, humanism emphasized human free will and a humanity that is made in the image and likeness of God.

In the north the *devotio moderna* combined with Italian humanism to shape northern and especially Erasmian humanism. Born in the Netherlands, Erasmus had an upbringing similar to Thomas à Kempis. In the *Enchiridion* (1503) Erasmus reminds the reader that with some help from God's grace, his free will has the power to resist sin and to become more Christ-like. Erasmus warns the reader of the temptations that lay waiting for him. He also advises having a deep knowledge of one's own interior life so that a person may be more equipped to resist temptation and sin. In short, works matter.

But a warning accompanies. Erasmus also speaks out against empty ceremonialism: "That men might better imitate the lives of saints than burn candles to them or gape at one of their soiled handkerchiefs."[360] Erasmus' negative view of excessive ritual foreshadows the coming Protestant Reformation, which shared the same concern. The excessive ceremonialism was both a reaction to the cataclysms of the era and a manifestation of the superstitions common at the time. Because the Church was preoccupied with worldly affairs, spiritual guidance was at a minimum. Many people therefore found a measure of comfort in pious ritual.

The unsettling theology of nominalism and the *via moderna*, a general inadequacy of spiritual guidance, a recognition of unscrupulous religious practices, and a German dislike for the papacy were all ingredients in the developing theology of Martin Luther. Luther was the

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[360]Ibid., 15.

culmination of all the religious issues that were boiling under the surface during the Late Middle

Ages. Luther brought all these issues to the surface and subsequently redirected them in a way

that would forever change Christianity and European society. This was the beginning of the

Protestant Reformation. Like à Kempis and Erasmus, Luther was also deeply concerned over his

prospects for salvation. The key difference is that Luther would not accept any ambiguity. He

wanted to know whether he was saved or not. As he studied scripture he was drawn to a line in

Romans, 1:17: *For it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written,*

"The one who is righteous by faith will live." The discovery of this verse brought peace to

Luther as he came to the realization that it freed him from his anxiety over his salvation.

In the *Freedom of a Christian* (1520) Luther argues that people are free from the need to

do good works in order to attain salvation, even though good works still prove a person's faith in

Christ. Faith in Christ as the merciful redeemer is the most important factor while good works

will naturally follow this faith. This order of faith and then works made it possible for Calvin's

more complete predestinarianism. Luther also opposed Erasmus' position of human free will

and because of this, man does not possess the ability to achieve salvation. Without the

possibility of human free will, the nominalist omnipotent God still dwells behind the redeeming

Christ, and somewhat reluctantly Luther gives in to the doctrine of predestination.

It is somewhat ironic that while Martin Luther is considered a heretic by the Catholic

Church, he had indirectly done much to reform it. He did so by identifying the basic problems,

which he most forcefully assembled in one place for the first time. The posting of Luther's

Ninety-Five Theses could be compared to opening Pandora's Box. Suddenly all the underlying

problems of the Church erupted. This included theological issues that were never completely

resolved and an exposing of all the abuses and corruption that had crept into the Church. With

his actions Luther kicked open the door of dissension in Christendom. The Catholic Church would never again maintain the sort of preeminence in Europe that it had achieved in the fifteen hundred years prior. On the other hand, Luther's open challenge to the Catholic Church ultimately served to make the Church a stronger if smaller entity.

Like Martin Luther, John Calvin was a once loyal son of the Catholic Church. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) attempted to develop a universal Protestant theology. From a theological standpoint, John Calvin has much in common with Martin Luther, but Calvin pushes some of those beliefs to their logical conclusions. If a person could imagine a spectrum with Catholic orthodoxy on one end, John Calvin would be placed almost completely on the opposite side. Luther would fall somewhere in between.

Calvin takes the distant God conceived by Ockham and nominalism, perpetuated by Luther, and then magnifies His majesty and omnipotence. By human standards this God operates outside of any human conceptions of justice. Like Luther, Calvin disagrees with the doctrine of free will and agrees with a rigid application of the doctrine of predestination. Catholicism acknowledges predestination or divine foreknowledge, but still recognizes human free will within that framework. Lutheran theology acknowledges but leaves unresolved the finer points of the stricter formulations of the doctrine of divine predestination he seems to support while Calvin's theology emphasizes them, believing that God—at least by human logic—arbitrarily saves some and damns others. Calvin is the complete opposite of a humanist: Man is a lowly sinful creature while God reigns in absolute sovereignty. Interestingly enough, both Luther and Calvin's conceptions of an uncompromising God the Father resemble the angry God that can be found within *The Imitation of Christ* or even the Old Testament. The individual philosophies of Thomas à Kempis, Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin, despite their obvious

differences, all emerge from the same basic Christian context albeit as elaborations, reactions, or perhaps exaggerations.

As Protestantism progressed with a vigor that posed a real threat to the Catholic Church, the less dramatic interior reform of the Catholic Church during the sixteenth century effected a purification for the Roman Church. The individual philosophies and works of St. Ignatius, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales and many others served as the new machinery in what was to become a refurbished Catholic Church.

In that context Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548) served as a breath of fresh air for the Church. The *Exercises* recall the Christocentric, mystical nature of *The Imitation of the Christ* and the militaristic themes of Erasmus' *Enchiridion*. What Ignatius offers in the *Exercises* is a spiritual workout with the aim of developing a person's relationship with God. Ignatius' program requires a great deal of human effort and discipline, with the aid of God's grace. In this way the *Exercises* also contain an element of Christian humanism and directly oppose the Protestant tenet that all human efforts to conquer sin are useless. Ignatius struggled with his faith as Luther did, but arrived at a different solution.

Ignatius also founded the Society of Jesus, which is the physical embodiment of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian spirituality. Just like the *Exercises*, the Jesuits were not formed to directly counter the spread of Protestantism but rather to reform human hearts and souls. The Jesuits have since been to all corners of the earth. Just as Luther began a grassroots movement with his *Ninety-Five Theses* so too did Ignatius with the *Exercises* and the Society of Jesus. These two elements were visible evidence of a resurgent Catholic Church on its own terms and contemporarily with Luther.

Besides Ignatius, the Church was blessed by this time with numerous individuals who were collectively reforming it. This list includes but is not limited to St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Ávila, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, and St. John of the Cross. Like St. Ignatius before him, St. John of the Cross, also offered a spiritual improvement program that centered on his *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night of the Soul* (1582). By the time of the writing of the *Ascent* the underlying forces of reform had begun to yield visible results. The Society of Jesus was busy winning over hearts and souls, and the Council of Trent had addressed many of the problems that were plaguing the Catholic Church. In the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night*, St. John takes the reader on an arduous mystical journey that ultimately ends with a direct encounter with God. While most people who begin this journey may never actually achieve a divine union, St. John proposes that they still have effectively grown closer to God. In effect this is a form of freedom, and is in direct opposition to the predestinarian regime of Luther and Calvin.

While many readers may find St. John's metaphysical path to God intimidating, there is an alternative. St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1608) is specifically meant for lay people. The philosophy of de Sales and his Introduction to the Devout Life was partly a response to the culture of lay empowerment that developed as a result of the Reformation. The trend of an increasingly literate and participating laity continued into the Early Modern Era. De Sales insists that it does not matter what one's position or occupation may be; it is always possible to live a holy and devout life, and that devotion can be found in even the most menial of tasks. In comparing de Sales to Calvin, the two philosophies share similar themes. Calvinism fostered the "Calvinist work ethic" which says that confidence in one's salvation is achieved through hard work and industry. By the same token, de Sales states that there is spiritual

fulfillment in labor and that a person can grow closer to God through work. This new emphasis on personal diligence and productivity from both the Protestant and Catholic camps was connected with the growth of capitalism in the Early Modern Period. Daniel-Rops remarks that while Calvin begins his philosophy with the majesty of God, de Sales begins with the flawed man created in the image of God. The Abbé Bremond labels the philosophy of de Sales as 'devout humanism.' This 'devout humanism' of de Sales could be seen as the complete synthesis of the strains of both Christian humanism and mysticism. In other words, de Sales represents the fulfillment of an era of Christian spiritual development that began with the publication of *The Imitation of Christ* in 1427.

In reading all the works that have been discussed, the reader will likely find dynamics that highlight both the similarities and differences among them. First, and very apparent, especially with the earlier works, is a sense that something is wrong. All of the authors addressed in this thesis would agree that the Catholic Church was in need of reform. Where they differed was in how that was to be done, and how drastic the solutions necessary. All also agreed that salvation was serious business. This seriousness was doubtlessly predicated on the especially precarious nature of life in the times in which the authors lived. Getting Christianity right therefore assumed a special urgency.

Another element of this time was a gradually increasing rate of literacy that accompanied the growth of an educated "middle class" of merchants and professionals who were well-equipped to evaluate events in the world around them. Still, Christian theology with its increasing complexity and competing factions was far too intricate for the average layperson to navigate, despite the laity's growing sense amidst their growing sophistication during a difficult time that a personal interest (and relationship with Jesus) was important to cultivate. Ironically,

just as more of the population was looking for more spiritual guidance, the Catholic Church was devoting more and more of its energies to secular affairs and less to the faithful precisely when they were craving its good example and guidance. All of these works, in their own ways, attempted to satisfy this need.

All of these works also shared similar views of basic characteristics of the persons of the Holy Trinity: God the father is a stern, fatherly figure, carried over from the Old Testament. Even if God the Father respected human freedom, he represented stern justice and was not eager to be merciful. Christ the son, however, was that mercy, and therefore it was important to develop a personal relationship with him as the savior. Finally, all these works emphasized reform, not just of the church but of each individual Christian.

There are, however, also specific aspects of these works which distinguish them from each other. While all of the authors here attempt to reform their readers as well as Christianity, some of them contributed to the overall reform of the Catholic Church while others simply gave up and struck out on their own. While *The Imitation of Christ* and the *Enchiridion* placed a new emphasis on a more personal relationship with Christ, they remained Catholic. On the other hand Martin Luther's emphasis on faith alone in one's relationship with Jesus "broke faith" with Catholic doctrine.

These works of devotion also differed in their styles and methodologies. *The Imitation of Christ* offers the reader a role model and a high Christian standard and applies that standard to various life situations. The *Enchiridion*, *The Spiritual Exercises*, and *Introduction to the Devout Life* all read more like handbooks. Luther's and Calvin's works generally attempt to demonstrate their respective theological stances, and prove their superiority over Catholic theological "business as usual." Finally, St. John of the Cross ventures into poetry and mysticism.

There is also the matter of human free will, and perhaps this more than anything else accentuates a growing divergence in attitudes between the Catholic and the Protestant conceptions of God, man, and the role of Jesus as mediator and savior. While the Catholic authors insist on humanity's free will and ability to grow closer to God, Luther and Calvin argue that man is essentially a slave to a fate predestined by an omnipotent, immutable and unyielding God. When the nominalist school (Ockham/*via moderna*) emerged in the 14th century it signified the growth of a powerful opposition to the relative theological orderliness or "thomistic synthesis" of the High Middle Ages. The nominalists make a very seemingly clean rational argument that if God is completely omnipotent, He must preordain all things, and that man subsequently could not possibly have free will. The nominalist view along with a Catholic Church that had appeared to grow somewhat comfortable and blasé in its role as Europe's only major Christian sect were all very important causes of the Protestant Reformation.

The devotional works addressed here were created in the quest for reform, reform of both the individual and the Church. This occurred as the importance of developing a better relationship with Jesus was taking on a new urgency for both pre-Reformation and post-Reformation Catholics as well as for Protestants. For all denominations an important social common denominator was the emergence of a larger group of educated, literate laity confronting very difficult times. In the end, Latin Christianity would not survive the new approaches to Christianity intact, although varying branches of Christianity would find the reform and direction they craved—albeit at the price of religious and cultural unity that continues to influence (and trouble) European civilization to this day.

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