

# Renaissance and Reformation<sup>1</sup>

Paul Edmund DAVENPORT

In this lecture I wish to describe and to indicate the significance of the movements in Europe known as the Renaissance and the Reformation and the period in which they occurred. First, however, I wish to spend a few minutes in giving an outline of medieval Europe; what was new and significant in the Renaissance and the Reformation can only be properly appreciated if we have an understanding of the medieval world and are thus able to see clearly how striking were the changes wrought by these upheavals in European society in the fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries.

## The Middle Ages

In dealing with medieval Europe I wish to begin with feudalism. Feudalism was a system of government in which political power was dispersed among men who possessed large estates of land rather than lying in any central authority. It was developed by the German kings who granted estates to their followers as rewards for service; the lords who received estates tended to govern them quite autonomously. After Charlemagne, who died in 814, political power shifted to these lords, who subdivided their holdings and gave shares to their own followers. There were mutual obligations between the lord and his vassals: protection on the part of the lord and military service on the part of the vassals. In theory the legal justification of the fiefs derived from royal authority, so the lords in a country would choose a king but would deliberately fail to respect his authority and sovereignty. From about the eleventh century, however, monarchs began to try to regain their authority and to develop strong monarchies; the ensuing conflict between lords and monarchs characterises the Middle Ages.

The word feudalism refers to this political organisation. The corresponding agrarian economic organisation is known as manorialism. The manor, that is, the lord's estate, was worked by serfs who lived in villages on the estate, who were bound legally to the lord, and who toiled to produce food for the lord and for their own families. The manor was self-sufficient, producing its own food, clothing, and tools. There was steady economic growth all over Europe from the tenth century,

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interrupted only by the Black Death (the plague) in the fourteenth century. The reasons for the economic growth were certain technological innovations (the three-field system, new ploughs, horse power, watermills) which stimulated agricultural production, freedom from foreign invasions, and a population increase of about fifty per cent, which could be supported by the increase in agricultural production.

This population increase in combination with the increasing productivity in agriculture and also in mining stimulated the growth of commerce and of towns. By the fourteenth century the merchants had risen to some importance with the increasing domestic and international trade in wool and woolen cloth (from England and Flanders), iron and timber (from Germany), furs (from Eastern Europe), leather and steel (from Spain), and so on. Towns began as centres of local trade and administration but grew quickly as commerce developed, and grew earliest in Italy (for example Venice, Amalfi, and Naples) where the feudal system was never as well established as in the rest of Europe. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the towns, which were outside feudal law, acquired great financial resources and a concomitant element of power, and were generally able to obtain from a king a royal charter licensing the town to operate as a corporation and permitting merchants and artisans to form guilds to protect their economic and labour conditions.

An important feature of the Middle Ages is the emergence of national monarchies. This can be traced back to the tenth century, when Europe was a collection of petty feudal states which arose out of the collapse of the Carolingian Empire. With the decline of papal authority in the early fourteenth century and the growing alliance of kings with the rising merchant class, from whom they got financial assistance, strong centralised governments with proper judiciary, bureaucracy, and taxation arose to control a country and the feudal lords within its territory, that is, to establish clear national monarchies such as, by the fifteenth century, England, France, Portugal, and Spain.

After the crowning of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III in 800, the Papacy gradually consolidated its supremacy in western Europe by converting the pagan north. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Papacy was regarded as the supreme head of western Christendom, above the kings of individual states. In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII declared that every human creature must be subject to the Roman pontiff. However, the rising national monarchies were beginning to reject the supreme authority of the Pope in their national affairs, and for a long time from the early fourteenth century the Popes became pawns of the French monarchy.

This, then, was the structure of medieval European society: until the fourteenth century an agrarian economy and society operating under a feudal and manorial structure, divided into many feudal states and united under Roman Christianity. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we see the development of commerce and

cities and their growth in wealth, power, and influence, the growth of national monarchies, and the waning of the power of the Papacy; also in these centuries we see the gradual breakdown of the feudal structure in many parts of western Europe as the serfs were emancipated and became hired labourers, working for a wage and not legally bound to a lord, and the lords became landed gentry. This gradual breakdown of medieval society provides the setting for the Renaissance, to which I shall turn in a moment.

But before that, I wish to spend a minute on the intellectual background of the Middle Ages, for the word Renaissance refers above all to the new cultural and intellectual environment of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and before we can appreciate what was new we must first consider the old, that is, the medieval, situation.

In the Middle Ages learning and education were in the hands of the clergy. In the eleventh century cathedral schools were established to educate the clergy. In the twelfth century the first universities evolved out of cathedral schools at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford; their purpose, too, was to train the clergy, but the students' studies were not limited to theology. In the liberal arts faculty, study centred on the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and then the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy), following which students could proceed to any of the faculties of canon law, civil law, medicine, or theology.

In the Middle Ages, then, the highly educated were almost always members of the clergy, and medieval thought generally operates in a theological context. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the famous problem of universals was most important, with the nominalists denying the existence of universal categories and the realists affirming their existence. Peter Abelard (1079–1142) produced, in the early twelfth century, a compromise between nominalism and realism known as conceptualism, holding that universals did have a real existence but only as concepts in men's minds. In the second half of the twelfth century Aristotle's *Logic* and *Metaphysics* became known in western Europe, and the following centuries were occupied not only with the problem of universals but also with the task of reconciling Aristotle with Christian teaching. The greatest exponent of Scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), produced a rationalism, which frequently appealed to Aristotle, to show the *probability* of fundamental tenets of the Christian Church which ultimately, however, had to be accepted on faith,

The medieval thinker had a strong conception of what is known as the Chain of Being: God's creation consisted of innumerable but linked degrees of being, from the four physical elements (air, water, fire, and earth) up to angels, with the whole universe being governed by divine will. This concept necessarily produced the idea that subordination and unity were natural rules for the state and that there was a

clear system of rank in human society. On the other hand, medieval Christianity asserted the doctrine of the equality of all souls before God, so that even the humblest vocation had dignity and worth. This is well exemplified by the feudal system, for although the concept of rank and place in the world was very strong in this system, the feudal contract was in theory binding on the lord as well as on the vassal or serf: the latter had their rights.

### **The Renaissance**

The word Renaissance means 'rebirth', and is commonly used to refer to the rebirth or revival of Classical learning and a consequent rejection of the medieval world which was seen in fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century Europe. Yet the word is also often used to refer to the whole process of change in the social and intellectual structure of Europe in the same centuries. The renewal of Classical learning and the profound interest taken in it were in fact made possible by these wider changes, and at the same time, the more Classical learning was studied, the greater was the movement away from medieval attitudes and beliefs. Essentially, then, the revival of Classical learning was just one factor in a large society emerging out of the Middle Ages, but a factor that also hastened that emergence.

In the previous section I mentioned some phenomena in fourteenth century Europe which indicated the incipient breakdown of the Middle Ages: the weakening of the feudal and manorial systems, the development of national monarchies, the new materialism stimulated by the growth of commerce, and the waning of the power of the Papacy. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these movements progressed, and we see also the important effects of the invention of printing, the exploration of the non-European world, the introduction of Copernican astronomy, and the Reformation, all of which I shall mention in more detail later. None of these elements of the metamorphosis which Europe underwent in these centuries depends directly for its existence upon the revival of Classical learning, except perhaps certain aspects of the Reformation.

However, just as Europe was emerging from feudal and ecclesiastical despotism without any clear sense of direction or purpose, the revival of learning came along to give men a sense of direction and purpose: they would declare the greatness and nobility of man in his own right, not the smallness of man before God; the rights and values of reason, which the Middle Ages had said must yield to faith, and of the senses, at which medieval Christianity had in principle frowned; and theories of the state and man's place in it which ignored the medieval idea of a society ordered and ranked in accordance with divine will. Hamlet's words: 'What a piece of work is a man: how noble in reason; how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how

express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals', illustrate well the Renaissance idea of the dignity, spiritual and intellectual freedom, and versatility of man.

In philosophy and the arts, and in thought in general, this rejection of a theocentric universe was not sudden. Indeed, the words from *Hamlet* I have just quoted mention angels and beasts and thus put man in the traditional medieval place between the two in the Chain of Being. What we see in these centuries is a gradual shift of direction, away from the typical medieval concentration on piety, social caste, the hereafter, and superstition, towards secularism, humanism and individualism, scepticism, criticism, inquiry, and materialism. Men gradually came no longer to exercise their intellects only in order to glorify God or to attain salvation, which had been the common motivations for such activities in the Middle Ages; they came to regard these activities as ends in themselves, or even, in many cases, they came to do them in order to glorify man.

### Italy

The Renaissance began earliest in Italy and reflected the values of that society. Italy had never been as strongly feudal as other parts of Europe, and in the fourteenth century the cities of Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Venice, each the centre of a city state, profited greatly from the commerce between western Europe and the Byzantine and Islamic Empires. The great merchants in these cities controlled politics as well as commerce; they were also the patrons of artists and writers, so their tastes were reflected in the contemporary culture, which was preponderatingly secular and humanistic, concerned with the Latin and Greek Classics and their themes rather than with Christian theology or the Bible.

Scholarship and education also showed the same tendency towards secularism and humanism. Petrarch asserted the value of the Classics as a guide to individual and social behaviour. The many schools which were established in fourteenth and fifteenth century Italy were for the education of the sons of merchants, not for the education of future priests, and these schools emphasised Classical studies and the training of their pupils to be socially minded, responsible citizens.

Great medieval art is almost almost always concerned with Christian or Biblical themes. In fourteenth century Italy the merchant patrons encouraged artists to explore other themes as well, and subsequently many great paintings depicting Classical themes and portraits of contemporary Italians were produced by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and many others.

I wish now to look at some of these points in a little more detail; first, at the city states and Machiavelli.

**City states.** In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in northern Italy the city states emerged as oligarchic republics controlled by nobles and rich merchants. Within the ruling group in most cities there was a constant struggle between the Guelf faction, which supported the Papacy, and the Ghibeline faction, which supported the Emperors. Most of these late medieval city states passed from oligarchy to despotism, as had happened in the ancient Greek city states. In Milan, for example, the republican government collapsed in the late thirteenth century and the rich Visconti family gained power, followed in the middle of the fifteenth century by the Sforza family, one member of whom, Ludovico Sforza, who was Duke of Milan from 1479 to 1500, was a noted diplomat and a great patron of art and learning.

South of Milan lay the Republic of Florence. The rich merchants and bankers of the city of Florence were mainly Guelfs, while the older nobility was mainly Ghibeline. A violent struggle between the two parties continued through most of the thirteenth century, while the prosperity of the city continued to grow; by the last decade of the thirteenth century seven major guilds held political power and the Guelfs had a law passed excluding the nobility from participating in government. Factional struggle developed among the Guelfs, and in the early fourteenth century many White Guelfs, including Dante, were expelled from Florence. The entrenched oligarchy of the fourteenth century gave way to despotism in the fifteenth century when the Medici family came to rule Florence. But the Medici governed Florence quite well, even introducing a form of income tax designed to ease the burden of the poor. Lorenzo de' Medici, who ruled from 1469 to 1492, was called 'the Magnificent' for his lavish patronage of the arts and his tolerance and wisdom. Indeed, Florence was one of the chief sources of the Renaissance, for most of the great names in Renaissance letters and art had some connection with Florence.

On the north-east coast of Italy lay Venice, which was governed by a Doge, the ceremonial head of the state. But the basis of political power was a Great Council, membership of which, from the fourteenth century, was hereditary and restricted to the great families, who were generally ruthless in securing their aims. However, Venice enjoyed great stability and prosperity; no despots overthrew the oligarchy of the great families, no factionalism disturbed the life of the ordinary citizens, and Venice's great merchant fleets brought vast wealth into the city.

This late medieval and Renaissance development of the city states (and there were more such states than I have dealt with, including Rome and Naples) caused the development of an art relatively unknown since Classical times: the art of statesmanship. And the dealings of states with one another were no longer controlled by feudal and papal authority, so out of the power-struggles and intrigues between states grew the new art of diplomacy. Further problems such as economy, war, trade, and the relation of the state to the individual, show the essential modernity

of, and rejection of medievalism in, the city states.

**Machiavelli.** The first book about this new art of statecraft was written by Niccolò Machiavelli (1466–1527). He lived in Florence under the rule of the Medici and then of Savonarola. After the execution of Savonarola in 1498 Machiavelli got an important post in the Florentine diplomatic service, and then after the Florentine Republic fell and the Medici were restored to power in 1512, he wrote his famous book 'The Prince'. Because of this book, Machiavelli's name has always been associated with deceit, unscrupulousness, opportunism, and immorality; and indeed, in the book, Machiavelli advises a prince 'not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest'. However, what Machiavelli was concerned with in the book was how to gain and how to maintain power in the contemporary society. He was not describing what he thought was a good way to act or how he thought society ought to be governed, but describing how society was in fact governed and how men did act, and therefore how a governor *must* act in order to maintain his power, especially in the face of, according to Machiavelli, essentially bad human nature. As Francis Bacon said of him, 'We are much beholden to Machiavelli and others that wrote what men do and not what they ought to do'.

Machiavelli divided his remarks, stemming from his long observation of Italian politics, into three sections: the nature and establishment of the various kinds of government which existed, the various ways of gaining and maintaining control of governments, and the nature of a prince, that is, a ruler, and how he must act to maintain his power. A prince, says Machiavelli, must be as strong as a lion and as crafty as a fox. He must pretend to have virtues which are generally highly regarded while in practice being as deceitful and unscrupulous as may be necessary to achieve his aims. Machiavelli's criterion for judging a prince is success, not morality. Consequently, the infamous Cesare Borgia receives much praise from Machiavelli; this was the son of Pope Alexander VI, who was Pope from 1492 to 1503, and he helped his father with political and military assistance to reassert papal authority in the Papal States of central Italy. He achieved his aims with the greatest ruthlessness and cruelty, by poisoning and assassination and by open warfare.

'The Prince' was, of course, a revolutionary work, and the one which has made Machiavelli so famous, but it is not his only work. In the 'Discourses' on the Roman historian Livy, Machiavelli shows himself to be a republican at heart when he prescribes magistrates elected by the people rather than an all-powerful prince for building a lasting government. He was convinced that his contemporary Italians had lost their republican civic virtue, so strong in Classical times, and he blames the Church for this loss: the Papacy had become corrupted by temporal interests, and on the other hand contemporary Christianity itself demanded contempt for this world.

In stressing secularism and power politics, Machiavelli shows himself to be a man of the Italian Renaissance and a humanist. The latter point is seen in both his Classical scholarship and his secular attitude towards politics. And it is interesting to note that, despite his cynical realism and, so to speak, 'scientific' attitude and approach to politics, he accepted the statements of the Classical historians as valid without questioning them.

**Humanism.** Turning now to Italian humanism, the centre of this movement was the revival of Classical Latin and Greek literature, history, and philosophy by Petrarch and his successors. But, of course, even in the Middle Ages works in these languages were not unknown, although most of the Greek works were known only through Arabic translations, which were often turned into Latin; they were mainly scientific, medical, astrological, alchemical, and Aristotelian philosophical works. What the humanist did was to recopy, often in quantity, Classical texts already known so that they were disseminated far beyond the small number of scholars who had known them in the Middle Ages; to discover lost texts, such as the works of Tacitus and Lucretius; and to learn and study ancient Greek and its writers.

Petrarch (1304–1374) is best known for his love sonnets, but for him the most important thing was his writings in Latin. He collected and copied manuscripts of Classical Latin authors, discovered some lost letters of Cicero, and wrote letters and books in Latin prose and verse which were Classical in style and diction. Latin had been the language of scholarship and international communication in the Middle Ages, but it was a distinctive, medieval Latin, very different from Classical Latin.

Petrarch's pupil, Boccaccio (1313–1375), also discovered many Latin manuscripts, and learned Greek and taught at the University of Florence. But it was shortly after the death of Boccaccio that the main revival of Greek in Italy took place. Between 1395 and 1440 numerous Greek scholars came to Italian universities and lectured on Greek and Greek authors, and encouraged the teaching of Greek in these universities. Homer and other poets and Plato and other Platonic writers were now translated from Greek into Latin. In 1462 one of the Medici rulers of Florence founded a Platonic Academy for the study of Platonism. The head of this Academy was Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), who became one of the leading figures of Renaissance Platonism. He studied Classical Latin literature and Aristotelian philosophy, and then learned Greek and spent most of the rest of his life translating all the works of Plato into Latin; he lectured on Plato and Neoplatonism and formulated his own Christianised version of Platonism. In his philosophy the universe consisted of a hierarchy of substances descending from God to matter. This is distinctively Neoplatonic and also has connections with the medieval idea of the great Chain of Being. However, being a Renaissance humanist, Ficino gave man a very special place in



this hierarchy: the human soul links the invisible and the visible world, that is, the highest and the lowest, and man is thus a central link of the whole universe. The Renaissance emphasis on the importance and dignity of man, which was an enlargement of the view of Classical antiquity, gave rise to this concept in Ficino's philosophy.

The humanists' researches vastly improved contemporary knowledge and understanding of Classical Latin and Greek and of Classical civilisation. Grammars and dictionaries of the Classical languages were written, literary criticism developed, and books on Classical history, geography, and mythology appeared. But the humanists were not only scholars of Classical civilisation; they wrote letters, poems, and treatises on rhetoric, history, politics, education, and religion, revealing a revaluation of man. They rejected the medieval view of man as a being with no intrinsic value, existing solely by the grace of God, and, as we saw with Ficino, emphasised the uniqueness of man as the centre of the universe and the opportunities in this earthly life for the human spirit to exercise its powers in linking the spiritual and the temporal. These ideas resulted from the new study of Plato and the Classical world, and many treatises were written on them, for example the *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* ('On the dignity and excellence of man') of Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459) and the *De hominis dignitate* ('On the dignity of man') of Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). Although most of the humanists showed derision for medieval thought, quite a few continued to respect and to study Scholastic thought. Almost all of them conformed nominally to Christianity, although the pagan and secular influence of Classical learning naturally encouraged a critical and sceptical attitude. Most of them were either teachers, or secretaries or orators for princes or city state governments, although by the middle of the fifteenth century many lawyers and doctors were also humanists.

As a more detailed illustration of all this, I should like to look briefly at the life and work of Lorenzo Valla (1405–1457), one of the most celebrated Italian humanists, whose contributions to legal reform, the revival of Classical Latin style, and the development of a critical approach to philosophy and to Biblical, Classical, and historical studies, were all outstanding. Valla was born at Rome, studied at Florence, and then moved around Italy teaching, although for many years he lived in Naples and in Rome. His first work, a dialogue on pleasure called *De voluptate*, dealt with Stoic, Epicurean, and Christian views on this subject. Valla regarded the Christian view as superior, but showed sympathy for the hedonism of the Epicureans. He also attacked some aspects of medieval Aristotelian logic. He wrote critical notes on the New Testament (later published by Erasmus) and translated much of Homer's *Iliad* and some other Greek texts into Latin. He also wrote what became a standard work on Classical Latin idiom and usage, *Elegantiae Linguae Latinae* ('Of the elo-

quence of the Latin language'). He was a great critic of legal and historical documents, and his most outstanding achievement in this field was, by pointing out certain anachronisms, to prove a forgery the supposedly fourth-century document called the *Donation of Constantine* on which the Papacy had based its claims to temporal power since the eighth century. In the Middle Ages Valla would have been excommunicated for his assertions, but the Renaissance Pope Nicholas V not only did not condemn Valla but in fact commissioned him to translate Thucydides into Latin.

**Literature.** Turning now to literature, two of the greatest works of literature of the early Italian Renaissance are Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*, neither of which owes much to the revival of Classical learning. This fourteenth-century flowering of Italian literature, including the work of Dante, derives rather from the spirit of the contemporary society, the Renaissance in the wider sense of the word which I indicated earlier: Italy's material prosperity, freedom from feudalism, her secularised Church, her commercial nobility, and her political independence in a federation of small states. What perhaps distinguishes Petrarch and Boccaccio as being more 'modern', less medieval, than Dante is their abandonment, in their vernacular works, of allegory and symbolism. But the *Canzoniere* and the *Decameron* find their inspiration in medieval tradition: Petrarch's lyrics continue the Provençal tradition, but with a more refined and more modern analysis of human emotion; Boccaccio's tales of cuckolded husbands and their unfaithful wives, cheating merchants, and lustful priests, go back to the medieval fabliaux, but he enriched them with humour and displayed many types of character with keen insight—and the atmosphere of these tales is less medieval than that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which was written a quarter of a century later. The *Canzoniere* and the *Decameron*, then, distinguish themselves from medieval literature not by a return to Classical themes or even techniques but by dealing freely with human nature in its many moods and aspects with both insight and a respect for the fundamental goodness and dignity of that nature.

In the fifteenth century, when the revival of Classical learning was at its height, we find a dearth of good literature. The vernacular, revived in the fourteenth century, was abandoned again for Latin and Greek, and the innovations and originalities in language, style, and approach made by Petrarch and Boccaccio were spurned by writers in favour of uninspired imitation of Classical style and approach. Histories imitated the style and manner of Livy (Bruno's history of Florence, for example); dissertations imitated Cicero (Valla's *De voluptate*, for example); poetry was in Latin (Pontano's elegies and Politian's hexameters); speeches and correspondence were in Latin.

However, all this labour on Classical literature and learning bore fruit for

literature in the sixteenth century, the great *cinque cento*. Here not only had the best of Classical literature been quite assimilated but the whole spirit of the medieval world disappeared. Beauty took the place of the Christian God as deity, and the centre of interest was human life and its actions, passions, sufferings, and joys, with little or no mention of the life after death. Yet the exponents of this new Classicism did not just imitate Latin or Greek models; writing in the vernacular, they applied their own creative originality to Classical themes.

Study of Aristotle's *Poetics* caused each genre (lyric poetry, epic poetry, comedy, tragedy, etc.) to become subject to strict rhetorical rules. The Classical conception of poetry as a 'product of imagination supported by reason' was the basis of the *cinque cento* rhetoric. This taste in poetry is seen well in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, written in *ottava rima*, containing a variety of episodes derived from the popular epic of the Middle Ages. The setting is medieval, but the treatment is Classical. The hero Orlando goes mad through love of a girl, and recovers only when the sorcerer Astolfo rides on a winged horse to the moon and brings back a bottle containing Orlando's senses. The poem is full of Classical allusions and similes.

Other epics followed the Aristotelian rules of composition, and the tradition of chivalry in epic poetry lost favour. Lyric poetry followed the style of Petrarch, but with a more Classical atmosphere. One of the greatest late Renaissance poets is Torquato Tasso (1554-1595), and in his finest work, *Gerusalemme liberata*, we see a not uncommon conflict in the mind of Renaissance man: a desire to express oneself in the Classical manner and following the Classical ideal, and the presence of a spiritual temper essentially Christian. Here Tasso managed to deal with a Christian subject in a Classical way rather successfully. The epic poem relates the story of the first Crusade in 1095 and deals much with the devil's attempts to hinder the Crusaders from capturing Jerusalem. Christian doctrine and the supernatural appear in an essentially Classical atmosphere.

In this period the drama began to flourish, with tragedies being written at first in the Greek manner and then after the model of Seneca. At the same time comedies, based on Latin models such as the plays of Terence, became popular, and we have such plays by Ariosto, Machiavelli, and many others; most of the comedy-writers were Florentines. These comedies are valuable both for their literary merit and because they reveal much about the contemporary society.

**Art.** I wish now to turn to the fine arts. In medieval Europe painting and sculpture were subservient to architecture—those enormous Gothic cathedrals contained stained glass and statues, but they were stylised and their place was quite clearly as a part of the larger whole of the building. But in fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century Italy, painting and sculpture came into their own as artists influenced

by the new interest in Classical antiquity and by the contemporary secularism produced works meant to stand by themselves as independent works of art. These two influences, combined with the fact that statesmen and businessmen increasingly became the artists' patrons, produced considerable change in subject-matter also: alongside the traditional Christian themes we find many works dealing with pagan gods, the patrons themselves, figures from Classical antiquity, and scenes from the contemporary society. In architecture itself the Classical style was revived, based on the ideals of symmetry and horizontality described by the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius.

In the early Renaissance, that is, the fourteenth century, Giotto (*ca.* 1270–1337) was the first artist to give his paintings, still mainly on religious subjects, a three-dimensional, lifelike quality, in contrast to the earlier two-dimensional, austere paintings in the Byzantine tradition, by varying the brightness of colour, by the use of shadow, and by the use of perspective.

As the Renaissance progressed, every region in Italy produced individual characteristics. In the early fifteenth century Florence became the chief centre of artistic activity. The Florentines were mainly concerned with the study of human form, and this is clearly seen in the work of the sculptor Donatello (1386–1466) and the painter Masaccio (1401–1428). Masaccio, like most Renaissance painters, was much influenced by the anatomical realism of the sculptors; this and the use of *chiaroscuro* (the use of contrasting light and shadow) give his pictures a dramatic effect.

On the other hand, the Umbrian painters were more concerned with space and light, and generally painted serene landscapes, reflecting the gentle landscape of the district of Umbria; some Umbrian painters, such as Piero della Francesca (1416–1492), worked in Florence and could combine their talent for landscape with the Florentine mastery of the human form. Generally, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the characteristics of Renaissance art seem to be symmetry and balance, the perfect rendering of the human figure, and the presentation of the figures against a suitable, harmonious background. Classical and contemporary themes predominate, and even when the subject is Christian there is a Classical touch or a Classical atmosphere. This is seen very clearly in many of the Florentine Michelangelo's (1475–1564) works. He had a passionate interest in the human form, and many of his figures are slaves or other people in bondage, seeming to express a tragic sense of struggle. Michelangelo was versatile enough: sculpture, painting, architecture, and sonnet-writing. But even more versatile was Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), like Michelangelo a Florentine in training although he spent many years in Milan. Leonardo completed relatively few pictures, as his wide-ranging scientific studies took up so much of his time. His enthusiastic search for beauty and limitless curiosity about the physical world are seen in his paintings and in the more than five thousand pages of drawings

and notes which he left.

Italian Renaissance art is full of the spirit of the Classical revival, but is no mere imitation, especially in painting where there were no Classical models. It is a display of genius emancipated from the restrictions of the Middle Ages and inspired by Classical antiquity; it reveals the beauty of the world, that is, the beauty of Nature, and the beauty of man, and is thus full of the spirit of humanism.

**Summary.** The Italian Renaissance produced great men and great works, and liberated men from the restrictions of medieval culture and medieval dogma, which emphasised a holistic view of God's world where man was but a tiny being with insignificant faculties. The new emphasis on the power and dignity of man, coupled with the revival of the culture of Classical antiquity, especially Hellenic culture, made it possible for the individual genius to flourish freely in whatever field talent might exist. It opened the way for a liberal education in the modern sense and initiated the free critical and inquisitive spirit which gradually gave rise to modern science.

On the other hand, the Renaissance revolt against medieval culture produced a society which, in spite of its literary, artistic, and courtly refinement, was generally amoral or even positively immoral. The secularism of Renaissance Italy can be accepted uncritically, but the rejection of medieval Christian morality and piety and the merely abstract, non-practical admiration of Classical virtues gave rise to the regrettable situation that rulers of Italian states generally gained and maintained their positions by treachery, poisoning, and assassination, and that, with very few exceptions, they did nothing for the public good; that the Church was rife with corruption and immorality, and that no reform came for a long time. I said earlier in this lecture that the Renaissance was an age in which European men found a new sense of purpose; this is true enough, but we must realise also that this new purpose of declaring the beauty and dignity of man and Nature had as yet no firm intellectual, moral, and social foundation, and that the Renaissance in Italy was an age of ferment where system and order were lacking; the assimilation, consolidation, and synthesis of all the new elements, ideas, ideals, and attitudes that the Italian Renaissance produced came later and to a large degree formed the foundations of modern European society.

### The Northern Renaissance

During the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the new learning and the accompanying new intellectual culture spread north from Italy. Humanists visited the northern countries as diplomats and lecturers, and educated northerners went

increasingly to study in Italy; the dissemination of humanism was made all the easier by the fifteenth century invention of printing, about which I shall speak later. In the less urbanised north humanism spread among the upper classes of nobles, kings, and princes, churchmen of a high level, and also of course among intellectuals of whatever background.

However, the Renaissance in the European countries north of Italy took a rather different direction from that in Italy. The Italian Renaissance was most concerned with Classical studies, and was essentially amoral, pagan, profoundly secular, although on its highest levels it was concerned to show that the Greek sense of virtue and the Christian sense of virtue were identical and it did not reject Christianity but only the medieval development of Christianity. And secularism certainly came to play an important part in the general culture of the Northern Renaissance. But the Northern Renaissance was above all a Christian Renaissance, characterised by piety and public virtue, by the study of Latin and Greek in order to obtain a better text of the Bible. The medieval Church had stressed the virtues of asceticism and monasticism; Classical antiquity had glorified man. The northern humanists, applying the latter to the former, attacked scholasticism, monasticism, and the abuses in the Church because they distorted the true spirit of Christianity and made it difficult for a man to live a full life developing his human potential as a thinking Christian and as a member of society in this world. Furthermore, the Classical scholarship of the humanists led them into historical and related researches which eventually cast doubt upon the authority of the Church and undermined the whole belief in the medieval traditions and practices of the Church.

Because space is limited, I intend to look at humanism and the Renaissance in northern Europe in only two countries, Germany and England. But it is impossible to omit the Dutchman Erasmus from any consideration of the Northern Renaissance and I shall therefore deal with him also.

**Germany.** In contrast to Italy, in Germany humanism found favour in the universities. German scholars such as Peter Luder and Samuel Karoch travelled around the universities disseminating the new learning after the middle of the fifteenth century. Soon there were many German scholars of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and several German princes founded new universities and patronised humanist scholars. That the preoccupations of the German humanists were different from those of the Italian will be seen if we look briefly at the life and work of Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522). Reuchlin studied in France, specialising in Greek, and then taught Latin and Greek, especially Aristotle, at Basel. He made some translations from Greek and also wrote two Latin comedies in the style of the Roman dramatist Terence. After visiting Italy he began to study Hebrew, and it is his influence in the revival

of Hebrew studies for which he is best remembered. He published a Hebrew grammar and lexicon and also parts of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. He was involved in a famous quarrel with the Anti-Semites, who wanted to burn all Jewish books; Reuchlin objected for reasons of scholarship. For much of his life he was the centre of Greek and Hebrew studies in Germany, and his work on Biblical texts helped to encourage the critical spirit in Biblical and theological studies which prepared the ground for the German Reformation.

Most of the German humanists were similarly concerned with theological matters and the infusion of the Classical sense of virtue into the dry formalism of contemporary theology. Humanism tended in Germany to be limited to groups of scholars such as Reuchlin, and did not pervade the whole society as it quickly came to do in Italy. In Italy art, architecture, literature, and social manners were reformed in the Classical spirit; in Germany the medieval world continued much longer, and even the work of such great men as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Hans Holbein (*ca.* 1497–1543) owed little to Italian or Classical influence but rather grew out of the continuing tradition of medieval Gothic art. Dürer refined the technique of engraving, and like Leonardo da Vinci studied perspective and human proportions, but apart from his realistic portraits his works have a medieval atmosphere and are often on Christian themes treated allegorically or symbolically.

Perhaps the German humanist who came closest to the Italian models was Conrad Celtis (1459–1508). Celtis studied at Cologne and Heidelberg and then lectured at various German centres of humanism on Classical studies. He spent a few years in Italy, pursuing humanist studies and continuing to write Latin lyric poetry. He became poet laureate in Germany and professor of poetry and rhetoric at a German university, and founded two literary academies, based on Italian models, in Heidelberg and Vienna. In his poetry the Classical influence is complete; in one poem, for example, he begs Apollo, master of the Muses and god of the sun, to leave Italy and come to Germany to inspire the Germans in the Italian Classical manner.

But in general the German spirit was less extroverted and less concerned with outward expression of genius (as in the plastic arts) than the Italian, and was more serious and disputative. German humanism soon became absorbed in the religious problems of the Reformation. Indeed, the Reformation was in many ways the German Renaissance; emancipated from medieval dogma, German thinkers did not, in contrast to Italy, turn to pagan antiquity and the construction of an amoral society based rather superficially on Classical models, but to a moral and spiritual reformation of Christianity, in which Martin Luther was to become the leading figure.

**Erasmus.** Desiderius Erasmus was born about 1466 in Holland. He went to a Church school and then a monastic training school, and at twenty-one became an

Augustinian monk. Even in the monastery his favourite writer was Lorenzo Valla, and his first book was modelled on the Italian's work, arguing that Classical learning, which was then being revived, was not opposed to Christian virtue.

In 1495 he visited Paris University, but was disappointed with the arid, formalistic Scholasticism he found there and with the Scholastics' opposition to all Classical learning except Aristotle. In 1499 he visited England and met the humanists Thomas More, William Grocyn, John Colet, and Thomas Linacre. These men were both devout Christians and scholars of Classical antiquity, and in their lives and their works Erasmus saw again the possibility of reconciling Christianity and the Greek and Latin Classics. When Erasmus read Cicero and other Classical moralists, he felt that the justice, truth, honesty, and fidelity of their moral principles were identical with the best elements of Christian virtue.

Eager to learn Greek, he mastered the language in three years. He then published several translations from both Greek and Latin authors, including Aristotle, Plutarch, and Seneca. He was also concerned to publish good texts of Christian documents, and so produced editions of the writings of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and then critically revised the Greek text of the New Testament and in 1516 produced a new translation of it into Latin.

Erasmus' most famous book is *The Praise of Folly*, written during his second visit to England in 1509. In this book Erasmus satirised the formalism of the Schoolmen, the greed and lust of the monks, and the general abuses which were rife in the contemporary Church. The Schoolmen, the monks, and the Church had got out of touch with their age, and the instant popularity of Erasmus' book shows the general discontent which existed among those who came into contact with them.

When Martin Luther began in 1517 to criticise the Church openly, Erasmus, like most of the Christian humanists, supported him in principle. However, Erasmus was a very moderate person, and as Luther's position necessarily became harder and more intolerant, Erasmus could no longer support him; in addition, Erasmus had the humanist belief in the goodness of man, but Luther's position became more and more predestinarian. The Reformation became nationalistic and fanatical; Erasmus wanted tolerance and humanity, and hoped that the concept of virtue seen in the Classics and Christianity at their best would find universal approval.

Erasmus is an excellent example of a humanist of the Northern Renaissance: a devout Christian who saw the spirit of Christian virtue in Classical antiquity; who detested the formalism and arid disputes of medieval Christianity; who recognised the potential of man to live a life of public and private virtue and Christian love in a tolerant and liberal spirit; who could say that Christ, Socrates, and Cicero were the three great men of history.



**England.** In England, it was during the Tudor period, from 1485 to 1603, that the Renaissance appeared. It was from the early part of this period that the medieval system started to pass away, with the gradual emancipation of the villeins, the growth of London as the centre of commerce, the rise of an educated middle class, the increasingly strong national Parliament, the expansion of trade routes to other parts of the world, the establishment of a national Church and the concept of a national state: all these changes broke down the structure of medieval England inside a medieval Europe united under the rule of the Roman Church. And when we talk about the breakdown of medieval England we are, in terms of social and economic history, talking about the breakdown of feudalism and manorialism as seen earlier in the European context: serfs and peasants became hired labourers; barons became prosperous landlords, farming for profit, or trading; a middle class of prosperous town-dwelling tradesmen and merchants, no proper part of the feudal system, expanded; and production for the satisfaction of immediate needs was being replaced by production for profit.

The new humanist studies came from Italy to Oxford in the last two decades of the fifteenth century. John Colet, William Grocyn, and Thomas Linacre brought home from their study in Italy a new interest in Greek literature, Latin literature and grammar, and scientific medicine, and also the new ideals of social behaviour based on the ancient Roman pattern. A landmark in the promulgation of the humanist approach in England was the series of lectures on St. Paul's Epistles in the Bible given by John Colet at Oxford about 1497 after his return from study in Italy. He cast aside the Scholastic interpretations and, using the Greek text of the New Testament, gave a realistic and humanist exposition of the life and teaching of St. Paul. Scholasticism quickly lost favour among the younger generation at Oxford and Cambridge. Thomas More and Erasmus were Colet's friends, and such men as these gave the Renaissance in England, as in Germany, a more moral and religious outlook than in Italy, although, as we shall see later, the secular humanist approach of Italy did exert a great influence on English Renaissance literature.

This new spirit, at the same time moral and intellectual, Classical and Christian, expressed itself in the new grammar schools, where Classical Latin and Greek were taught, and in the Reformation of the English church, about which I shall speak in more detail later. Such men as Colet and Erasmus, known as the Oxford Reformers, attacked the abuses of the contemporary Church, such as the worldliness of the priests and also monasticism and the worship of images and relics.

I should like to look briefly at the life and work of some of these men who introduced humanism into England. John Colet (*ca.* 1466-1519) studied first at Oxford and then spent three years in Italy and France. He became a priest on his return to England, and, as mentioned earlier, his lectures on St. Paul expressed a new

spirit of Christian humanism. He founded St. Paul's School in London and insisted that Classical Latin and Greek be taught there. He favoured the philosophy of Italian Neoplatonists such as Ficino, and so vehemently attacked the contemporary Church, which he felt had strayed far away from the purity of the early Christian Church, that he was suspected of being heretical.

William Grocyn (*ca.* 1446–1519) studied and, after becoming a priest, taught theology at Oxford, and from 1488 to 1490 visited Italy where he learned Greek to aid him in his theological studies. He then lived in London and pursued critical studies in Biblical interpretation and Church history, for a time teaching Thomas More and Erasmus.

Thomas Linacre (*ca.* 1460–1524) studied at Oxford and then at the University of Padua in Italy, which was famous for medical studies. Both a Classical scholar and a doctor, he was the physician of King Henry VIII, translated into Latin some of the works of the Greek physician Galen, published works on Classical Latin grammar and composition, and founded the Royal College of Physicians.

Thomas More (1478–1535) is one of the greatest of this group of English humanists. He studied at Oxford, specialising in Latin and Greek, and then studied and taught law in London, becoming a very successful lawyer, although he continued to pursue his studies of Latin and Greek and of theology. In 1504 he became a member of Parliament; in 1510 the deputy Sheriff of London; in 1523 the Speaker of the House of Commons; from 1529 to 1532 the Lord Chancellor of England. Unlike the other three humanists, then, More led a very active political life. He was a deeply religious man, and at one time considered entering the Church. But, reflecting the increased secular interests of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he decided to give his talents to the State rather than the Church.

More was executed in 1535 because he refused to take an oath recognising Henry VIII as the supreme head of the Church in England, after Henry had broken off relations with the Papacy over the question of the annulment of his marriage. More never publically opposed Henry's actions, but just insisted that he be allowed to hold his own opinions, namely that no layman such as King Henry could become head of a church, and that Christendom should be indivisibly united under the papacy (although he certainly agreed with the need for wide reform *within* the Church); and thus More became the symbol of the man who maintains his beliefs and follows his own conscience against pressure from the State.

More's humanism is seen clearly in his writings, especially in his most famous book, *Utopia*, written between 1515 and 1516. The book describes an imaginary country which is a pagan and communist state whose organisation is governed entirely by reason. The daily schedule of life is carefully arranged; the authority within each family resides in the eldest man; there is no money, no unemployment,

no poverty; land and food are divided equally; every ten years people change houses to prevent them from developing any sense of ownership or property; all the people receive education.

Essentially, More was arguing that communism, which had also been the way of life of the very early Christian Church, was the only way to cure the social evils of his time. He was very aware of the excessive luxury of the owners of large estates; of the increasing number of unemployed; of the cruel laws against minor theft, which was very common when there was so much poverty; of the harsh taxes, levied to replace money wasted by war, which caused greater hardship; of the rising merchants who were fixing prices. He saw the cause of these troubles in the ability to own property and to acquire money, and in his *Utopia* simply eradicated the cause. More was attacking not only the new capitalistic society he saw developing in his own lifetime, but also the medieval world with its strict hierarchy and specialisation—although *Utopia* is a well-ruled society, it is equalitarian and non-specialised.

Plato's *Republic* was a main source of inspiration for *Utopia*, although More's classless and non-specialised society is very different from Plato's. More also drew upon Pliny, Tacitus, and other Classical writers. He thus belonged to the humanist movement of the sixteenth century, but he went beyond this in *Utopia* and tried to find a social and political philosophy which would eliminate the evils he saw in his own society. In spite of the completely pagan character of the Utopian society, it is important to note that More insisted his work was a book of ethics, which must be founded in religion.

**Intellectual climate.** The new learning, the new discoveries of remote parts of the world, the changing social and economic structure, the religious changes of the reformation of the Church, all created an atmosphere of uncertainty and conflict in sixteenth century England from which no new synthesis came in that century. The traditional view of a natural social hierarchy, stemming from the idea of the great Chain of Being, was emphasised by many writers, including Sir Thomas Elyot in *The Governour* and Richard Hooker in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, written in the fifteen-nineties: for Hooker law (divine, natural, and man-made) maintains the regulated order of the universe and without it chaos would result. Renaissance theorists held that society should be a construction of human reason. Puritans and Catholics agreed upon the separation of Church and State, though not, of course, on any other points. Hooker supported the new Church settlement, arguing that Church and State were fundamentally inseparable. Machiavelli, who advocated unscrupulousness in politics, horrified the English, but they generally agreed with his emphasis on the active life in society, and the social virtues of antiquity as

opposed to what they regarded as the idle life of the Church. The conduct of the individual, and his conflict with the claims of social order, was one of the main points of discussion. Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570) and Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) emphasised Classical studies for the formation of character and the excellence of Classical codes of social behaviour. Ascham, North, and a great many others, embraced Italian Neoplatonism, with its emphasis on beauty and harmony, and the cultivation of the soul through courtly love. Others embraced Stoicism, so that the plays of Seneca were widely read and the tragic hero became an important figure in drama. This increased consciousness of individuality gave rise to a number of psychological works, the most famous of which is Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which, however, was written in the second quarter of the next century.

These, then, are some of the problems which occupied the intellects of sixteenth century Englishmen: some of them arose out of the contemporary social situation, some of them were remnants of the Middle Ages, and some of them were introduced by the new humanist learning; and, as I have said, they interacted with one another without producing any real synthesis. The greatest intellectual expression of the sixteenth century was its literature, and I now intend to look at this briefly, pointing out the above elements wherever possible.

**Literature.** The first writers, apart from the four humanists I have already mentioned, to be influenced by the new humanism were the educationists Thomas Elyot (1490–1546), John Cheke (1514–1557), Thomas Wilson (1525–1581), and Roger Ascham (1515–1568). Elyot's *The Governour* is a treatise on moral philosophy and education written for people who would govern their country; although partly influenced by the work of Italian humanists, it is full of the spirit of Classical antiquity. Ascham's *The Scholemaster* contains advice to school-teachers on the teaching of Latin, but it is full of his own experiences and interesting anecdotes. It is interesting that while he much admires the ancient Romans and his English is very Latinate, he expresses scorn for contemporary Italians and for Italianate fashions among his contemporary upper-class Englishmen, and advises against sending one's son to Italy to study.

The earliest poetry to show the influence of humanism was that of Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542) and the Earl of Surrey (1517–1547), but the influence here was directly from the humanism of Renaissance Italy with the result that the Classical touches are usually second-hand. The style and contents of their poetry, however, were profoundly influenced by Italian lyric poetry, especially that of Petrarch; most of their poems are love-poems full of the contemporary Italian convention of lamenting their unrequited love and the hard hearts of their mistresses. These two men

were the first to write sonnets in English.

In the first half of the sixteenth century the earlier miracle plays and morality plays remained popular. Near the middle of the century we see the first Classical influence in the drama with the appearance of comedies and tragedies based on Latin models. The comedies combine Classical and contemporary English characters and are best represented in the *Ralph Roister Doister* of Nicholas Udall (1506–1556). The tragedies of the Roman dramatist Seneca, who lived in the first century A.D., served as models for the English tragedies. Seneca's plays are full of atrocities, and tragedy is always associated with crime; we find this in the play *Gorboduc* written in 1562 by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, and the influence is also present later in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

This steady preparation in the first three quarters of the sixteenth century, and the presence in England of very many Classical and contemporary Italian works (almost all of which were translated into English at the same time), produced the great flowering of literature seen in the Elizabethan period. This literature is not imitative, though it may contain literary conventions which originated outside England and many Classical references and allusions: the poetry of Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, and Samuel Daniel is of this kind, but it is inspired by each poet's own original genius. This is equally true in the drama: the plays of its greatest exponents, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare, are usually based on some previously existing source, but are so full of the authors' original genius and invention that we can only indicate Renaissance characteristics in the broadest terms.

Elizabethan literature, fed by the Classics and the contemporary culture of Italy and also of France, expresses all the exuberance resulting from the new confidence in the capacities of man, the analysis of man's nature and his character, the problem of his relation to the natural order, the quest for beauty, the secularism, and also the patriotism, which I mentioned earlier as being characteristic of the European Renaissance. There is much conventionality, romanticism, and sentimentality in Elizabethan literature which, in a way, betrays the thinness of, the lack of real intellectual and spiritual foundations behind, this new vision of man. As we approach the end of the sixteenth century we can see a darkening of the tone of literature, a change from lyric exultation to a more sombre and reflective mood as the infatuation with these new ideas of man and the world was beginning to pass. There is, for example, a profound difference of mood and outlook between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*; and the poetry of John Donne at the beginning of the next century shows a profound intensity of passion and range of thought that is a far cry from anything we can find in the greatest part of Elizabethan literature outside Shakespeare.

**Science.** Before turning to the Reformation, I wish to look at some of the Renaissance developments in science. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Galen, Ptolemy, Archimedes, and other Classical scientific writers were translated from Greek into Latin. However, the Renaissance humanists tended to accept the Classical authors as unquestionable authorities. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, virtually discovered from his anatomical studies that the blood gets from one side of the heart to the other by passing through the veins and arteries of the body; however, Galen had said that it passed through invisible pores in the interior wall of the heart, and Leonardo, convinced that Galen must have been right, went no further in his investigations. Leonardo also lacked the scientific sense of systematic observation, and although he projected flying machines, war machines, pumps, and the like, he never tried to construct them. At the University of Padua, where there was a strong spirit of scientific inquiry that anticipated the seventeenth century emphasis on the experimental method, a man called Vesalius was unable to find the pores of which Galen had written and in a book published in 1543 rejected Galen's idea and some other ancient notions about anatomy which his investigations had shown to be false.

The most significant scientific development in the sixteenth century was of course in astronomy. Copernicus (1473-1543) was born in Poland and studied in Italy. His work in mathematics and astronomy convinced him that the Ptolemaic concept of a geocentric universe was wrong, and in 1543, the year of his death, he published a book setting forth his concept of a heliocentric universe. However, he retained the basic plan of the Ptolemaic universe with its elaborate system of revolving spheres, only now the spheres moved round a stationary sun instead of a stationary earth. It was not until the next century that a more realistic picture of the universe began to appear. Copernicus' idea shocked Europe—for Renaissance humanists, whether they were Christian or not, and for all Christians, the idea of an earth-centred and man-centred physical universe had seemed so natural and had been of great importance in their thinking.

The most important technological development in the Renaissance was printing. Until the mid-fifteenth century documents were written by hand, usually on material made from the skin of certain animals. In the fourteenth century the technique of engraving developed, and many identical copies of an engraving, which could contain words as well as pictures, could be produced. But in Germany in the fourteenth-forties movable type was invented, perhaps by a man called Gutenberg. In this technique each letter was cut separately and the pieces arranged to form words; after printing, the pieces could be used again. This, plus the introduction of the technique of paper-making from China, made it possible to produce books in hundreds of identical copies and so to spread learning more quickly and widely, and more

cheaply, than in the days of hand-copied manuscripts. The use of printing spread quickly through Europe; it was introduced into England in 1478 by William Caxton, and by 1500 there were seventy-three presses in Italy.

Another important invention was the magnetic compass, for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the widening of European horizons as explorers began to discover how large the world is and began to bring back much wealth from the Americas, Africa, and India. The Portuguese and the Spanish founded colonial empires in the sixteenth century, to be followed in the seventeenth by the French, the Dutch, and the English.

### The Reformation

The Church in the Middle Ages had become too secularised. The Papacy was too much concerned with power politics and aggrandisement in Europe, had too many vested interests, and was burdened with a cumbrous administrative machinery. The clergy had become lax and worldly, and they were often poorly educated—many of them did not properly understand the Latin they were reciting every day in Church. In the late Middle Ages and Renaissance the secularism of the Church aroused antagonism on many levels of society, and was satirised in the writings of William Langland, Chaucer, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Thomas More, and others. Also, the lack of spirituality and the externalising of religion seen in the late medieval Church were criticised by certain outstanding spiritual figures, such as St. Teresa of Avila, and by Christian humanists such as Thomas More, John Colet, Erasmus, and the German Willibald Pirckheimer.

In addition to this general antagonism, there was also the direct influence of the humanists, as I mentioned earlier. The revived study of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew led to critical study of the text of the Bible, which was no longer interpreted according to the traditional views of the Church but according to the best philological and historical criteria the humanists could devise. Erasmus exhorted people to study the Bible directly by themselves, although he was in fact preceded in this by the fourteenth century Englishman John Wycliffe, who translated the Bible into English and insisted that the ultimate authority in Christianity was the Bible and not the declarations of the Church.

The Reformation was a movement in the sixteenth century (i. e. in Renaissance society), eventually affecting many countries, to make the Christian church free from Roman, that is, papal, influence, and was characterised by large groups of Christians renouncing all connection with the Roman Church and organising their own churches, known loosely as Protestant churches.

**Luther.** The immediate cause of the Reformation was a certain protest made by Martin Luther. Luther was a German who lived from 1483 to 1546. When he was seventeen he entered the University of Erfurt, where great controversy was taking place between the humanists and the Scholastics. Although he had specialised in law, when he was about twenty-two he entered the Augustinian order. Before he was thirty he became professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, where he sympathised with the humanist approach to Christianity against the Scholastic. When he visited Rome in 1510 he was deeply shocked at the worldliness of the priests.

On 31 October 1517, Luther nailed a document, which came to be known as the Ninety-Five Theses, on the door of the church in Wittenberg. This action marked the beginning of the Reformation. The document was a protest against indulgences. A man who committed a sin in the eyes of the Church had to do penance on earth and, it was believed, suffer punishment after death in Purgatory as a preparation for Heaven. In the medieval Church the idea developed that a priest could grant an indulgence to the sinner whereby both the earthly penance and the punishment in Purgatory were remitted. In theory, of course, the sinner was freed from only the necessity to be punished and not from the need for his own contrition and for God's forgiveness of the sin. However, the common people tended to think that by buying an indulgence they were freed from their sin, that is, they could buy God's forgiveness for their sin, and many priests went around encouraging this idea and selling indulgences.

In attacking indulgences Luther was, in effect, attacking the whole Church structure. He came to assert that the sinner's contrition alone was enough to obtain salvation, so that the intermediary role of the Church between God and man was unnecessary. As noted earlier, the Christian humanists at first supported Luther in his denunciation of abuses in the Church, but when it became clear that Luther was attacking not only the abuses but the whole Church and its structure, many of them deserted his cause.

Because of the printing press, Luther's protest quickly circulated throughout Germany. He was called upon to recant, but he only produced more writings attacking more elements of the Church. He was excommunicated in 1521.

Luther was protected by the ruler of his own German state, Saxony, and during the next few years he translated the Bible into German and remodelled the church in Saxony according to his own views; he was aided in this by his colleague Philipp Melancthon. The Lutheran church had priests, but they were allowed to marry; Luther himself married a nun to set an example. The church also retained two of the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, but denied any miraculous quality in them. Veneration of saints and relics, monasticism, and the pomp of the Roman Church all disappeared.



Lutheranism spread throughout northern Germany, and spread also into Scandinavia. The princes of Germany had many political and economic grievances against the Roman Church, and they readily turned to Luther, who in turn picked up this nationalistic sentiment and exhorted the princes to seize the lands of the Roman Church in their territories. Luther's reform was originally purely religious, essentially to assert the supreme authority of the individual conscience over the organised church, and to insist that a man could attain salvation purely by his own faith, without any assistance from the Church and without performing any particularly virtuous deeds: as we say, justification by faith alone. However, Luther became more and more a German nationalist, concerned to establish a German church, as he realised he needed political support for his reforms. He consequently came to assert that a Christian was free spiritually but that he must accept and obey the existing political authorities, with the result that the Lutheran church in fact became subservient to State power.

The Emperor (of the Holy Roman Empire) Charles V was a devout Catholic and decided, for political as well as religious reasons, to oppose the Lutheran states; he formed alliances with Catholic German states, mainly in the south and west of Germany, to help him defeat the Lutherans. In 1531 the princes and some city governments in northern Germany formed the Schmalkaldic League to oppose Charles V. The outcome of twenty-five years of sporadic conflict was stalemate, for in 1555 the Peace of Augsburg recognised the Protestants and agreed that the Protestant church should be recognised in any state whose prince acknowledged himself to be a Protestant. I say Protestant because by this date there were other reformed churches than the Lutheran, all renouncing papal authority, and I shall turn to these now.

**Zwingli, etc.** As Luther's fame spread, other reformers appeared in the early fifteen-twenties, notably Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, John Oecolampadius in Basel, and Ulrich Zwingli in Zürich. Strasbourg was a free city in the Holy Roman Empire, and the reformation of the Church there began about 1523. Bucer was the leading figure, and although he largely followed Luther's theology he introduced new doctrines of his own and put much emphasis on philanthropy; he also helped in the reformation of the Church in some other German cities. Oecolampadius was a great scholar of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and a friend of Erasmus. He led the moves for the reform of the Church in Basel, and in 1529 the city government accepted many reform measures. Erasmus and other Catholic scholars immediately left the city.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a more significant figure than these two. He was a Christian humanist and, like most of the reformers, a priest. In 1522 he began to protest against fasting, and shortly against celibacy, monasticism, confession,

indulgences, and the whole Catholic ritual. After Zwingli's disputations with the Catholics, the magistrates of Zürich accepted his proposals in 1525 and reformed the church services to ones of great simplicity. Zwingli's main difference with Luther was about the Eucharist. Luther believed the body and blood of Christ to be present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist; Zwingli, and subsequently most non-Lutheran Protestants, thought that the bread and wine merely symbolised the body and blood of Christ. After Zürich became Protestant many other German-speaking towns in Switzerland followed suit. Some of Zwingli's followers formed a sect known as the Anabaptists, many of whom were anarchistic and violent.

**Calvin.** John Calvin (1509–1564) was a Frenchman educated in legal, humanist, and theological studies. After reading works by Erasmus and Luther he rejected the Roman Church, and left France for Switzerland where, in Basel in 1536, he published his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which set forth his theological and moral views. In 1541 the Swiss city of Geneva asked Calvin to help in the religious reformation of the city, and from then until his death Calvin was the ruler of Geneva.

Luther had insisted that a man could find salvation simply by faith in Christ and God, and that it was not necessary to perform virtuous deeds to obtain salvation. Calvin agreed with Luther about the irrelevance of good deeds, but whereas Luther had said a man could save himself by his own faith, Calvin insisted that he could not: only God could save a man, and however much faith a man might have he could not be sure that God would save him. Calvin, then, much more strongly than St. Augustine, believed that God had predestined which men would be saved and which men would be damned, and that no man could attain salvation by his own merit. Of only one thing could a man be sure: if he led an immoral life he was certainly damned.

His beliefs in these matters help to explain the emphasis in Calvin's Geneva on strict morality, strict observance of the commandments, and the fear of God. In Geneva the church governed all aspects of a citizen's life. Pleasure, privacy, and individualism had to be sacrificed; music, dancing, drinking, and festivity were all contrary to the austere morality believed necessary to gain at least the subjective hope of salvation. But Calvin also felt the importance of organisation in the church structure and in its control of civil government, and so developed an effective system whereby temporal and spiritual power were not separated.

Followers of Calvin took this form of Protestantism to Scotland, France, Holland, and England (where, in its English form, it became known as Puritanism).

**English Reformation.** The immediate cause of the English Reformation in the

second quarter of the sixteenth century was political, not theological. However, discontent with the Church had existed for some time. In the fourteenth century John Wycliffe had protested about the state of the Church in England at the time, especially about the excessive wealth of the monasteries, and he found many supporters. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries there were the humanists such as Grocyn, Colet, Linacre, and Thomas More who were critical of the abuses in the contemporary Church. At Cambridge in the fifteen-tens and fifteen-twenties, there was a group of scholars in favour of Church reform, the most famous of them being Hugh Latimer. Books by Erasmus and Luther circulated in England in the fifteen-twenties, and although proscribed they sold well in Oxford and Cambridge.

But, as was the case in Germany, there was a single incident which began the reformation of the English church. King Henry VIII, who reigned from 1509 to 1547, wanted a male heir, and as his wife Catherine of Aragon had not produced one he wanted to have the marriage annulled and marry again. The Pope would not grant an annulment of the marriage, so in 1533 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, pronounced the marriage annulled and Henry married Anne Boleyn. The Pope excommunicated Henry, whereupon Henry broke off relations with the Papacy; his Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534 by which he became the supreme head of the church in England. The willing cooperation of his Parliament shows the national antagonism which existed towards the Papacy.

In the past Henry had written an attack against Lutheran ideas, and he never showed any favour towards Protestantism. Apart from the break with Rome and the abolition of the monasteries, which was completed by 1539, Henry wanted to make no change in the organisation of the English church. Catholics such as Thomas More felt that Henry had already gone too far, while people with Protestant opinions wanted clerical marriage and the use of English in the church services introduced. Henry, however, maintained his position and the Act of Six Articles of 1539 affirmed Catholic doctrine. By the time Henry died the separatism of the English church was generally accepted throughout England.

Under the next monarch, the boy-king Edward VI, who reigned from 1547 to 1553, the Protestant party increased its power and Thomas Cranmer set forth the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone as a doctrine of the English church. Under the next monarch, Queen Mary, who reigned from 1553 to 1558, the Protestants suffered a setback as the Queen was strongly pro-Catholic. She executed many outstanding Protestant churchmen, including some bishops, and replaced them with Catholics.

Queen Elizabeth, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, was a moderate Protestant and spent much of her time steering a middle course between extremists. She

removed the Catholic bishops of Mary's reign, had the church adopt the Bible and prayer-book in English, and had Parliament adopt the famous Thirty-Nine Articles in 1563, in which both many Catholic practices and certain Lutheran and Zwinglian doctrines were rejected; the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation in the Eucharist and Zwinglian symbolism were both rejected; the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone was in effect accepted although the excellence of good deeds was also stressed. The resulting English church, or Anglican Church as it is usually known, was, then, more Catholic than Protestant in its ritual and its episcopal structure, but in other points approached the Protestant churches, and Elizabeth made sure the church would remain a national church with the monarch as its supreme governor. Since this time the Anglican Church has always had people who are rather Catholic in outlook and people who are rather Protestant in outlook, as well as those of more intermediate opinion. Anglicanism is indeed generally regarded as the *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism.

In Elizabeth's reign, many English Protestants who had had contact with European Calvinism came to hate the essentially Catholic ritual which still existed in the English church and the control of the church by the State. These people came to be known as Puritans, and Elizabeth, to whom the splendour of the Catholic ritual had some appeal, dealt with them quite severely. Although discontented, most of them remained quiet and stayed within the Church of England: it was in the next century that they were to make their presence felt.

**Summary.** The Reformation produced profound theological controversy which is outside the scope of this lecture. However, all the reformers had in common the desire to reject the claim of the Roman Church to be supreme; they all wanted to be rid of the elaborate external rituals of the Roman Church and to emphasise the necessity for the individual to find God for himself: they felt that the overclericalised Roman Church stood as a barrier between God and man, especially as the layman was supposed to need the priest with his, so to speak, miraculous powers to act as an intermediary in a man's dealings with God.

The sixteenth century protesters against the state of the Roman Church were successful where their precursors (Wycliffe, for example) had failed. Aside from certain political considerations mentioned earlier, a major reason for this success is, I believe, that the ethos of Renaissance society was favourable to such a reform. The reformers' early stress on the individual, on individual experience, on the authority of a man's conscience, derived primarily from the humanist movement's emphasis on the dignity of man. The Biblical, philological, and historical studies of the Christian humanists prepared the ground for the reappraisal of the authority and the claims of the Roman Church. Without this new cultural and intellectual

climate of the Renaissance and the Christian Renaissance, so few European men would have had the courage to speak out that attempts at reform would have been doomed to failure.

I have just suggested that the impetus of the humanist and Christian humanist movements was necessary to the start and the progress of the Reformation. In this sense we may say then that the Reformation was a child of the Renaissance. This is not, however, to suggest that it remained a faithful child—the increasing predestinarianism and the rather gloomy view of mankind (stemming from the idea of man's complete depravity after the Fall) which the Reformation quickly developed were quite antagonistic both to the spirit of humanism and to the general attitude of Roman Catholicism, which although emphasising the smallness of man before God, nevertheless asserted that any man had the chance to find salvation through the grace of God and his own repentance and good deeds.

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