

Beulah Heights University

Th 602 History of Christian Thought II

Final Exam

We have reviewed Christian Thought from Anselm to the twentieth century. For this exam you are to complete the following using no more than 700-800 words:

- 1) Define 2-3 key issues / controversies in the development of Christian Thought that traverse the entire 1500-year period.**

The first key issue is the heresy and the schism of the twelfth century that centered around the rise of a great number of preachers, teachers and movements which did not fit within the hierarchical and doctrinal framework of the Catholic Church.

Through the reformation, the second issue was the demand for ecclesiastical reform and unity gave rise to nominalism and the conciliar movement, with the most distinguished scholars devoting their attention to questions of ecclesiology, and proper means to reform and unite the church. Medieval mysticism was not consciously directed against the established church, but in fact it often led an existence that was marginal to the life of the organized church. The controversy was between three sections of people. The first, aimed at strengthening and renewing the church by emphasizing the limits of reason in preference to “learned ignorance.” While the former attempted the path of institutional renewal, there was another sect that sought reformation through a deeper spiritual life, and finally, the third sought reformation through “direct, local acts of reformation – practical as well as doctrinal, practiced without waiting for the consent of established authority, eventually leading to the great western schism.

The third issue, through the Anabaptist movement is divided into three groups, the “early,” “revolutionary,” and then “spiritual and rationalist reformers.” This movement began in Zurich because they believed that the Reformation must purify not only theology but also the actual lives of Christians, especially in what had to do with social and political relationships. They were also exasperated that the church should not be supported by the state, neither by tithes and taxes, nor by the use of the sword. The other issue was that Christianity was a matter of individual conviction, which could not be forced on anyone but rather required a personal decision for it. They also did not support the baptism of infants since they cannot decide.

- 2) Identify the important individuals associated with these key issues and how these issues impact western society and the Christian Church. Think first about your response, develop an outline of your thoughts, then proceed. I am not interested in sermons and public opinions. I want your academic thoughts and supporting comments. Do not leap to the problems of the current Church. Focus on the 2 parts of the test above. I look forward to your responses.**

Anselm of Bec is associated with trying to resolve heresy and schism. He introduced a theological method that consisted in posing a theological problem and then solved it not on the basis of the authority of Scripture or the Fathers, but through the use of reason. The type of

problem which he usually poses is not a mere speculative question but is rather the erroneous position of a heretic or an unbeliever who must be refuted. The impact of this to western society and the Christian church is that it sets out from the presuppositions that such a heretic or unbeliever would accept, and from such presuppositions attempt to prove orthodox doctrine, attain faith through reason, so that to the unbeliever is shown their error and to enrich the faith of a believer with understanding.

While Anselm of Bec addresses a theological problem through use of reason, in dealing with the problems about ecclesiastical reform and unity of the church, Augustine and his followers placed will above reason. What was important for them was not to know the rational truth, but to do that which is good. The impact to western society and the Christian church is that it has prompted them to be practical and moral rather than abstract and metaphysical.

In relation to the third of Anabaptists, Ulrich Zwingli was led by patriotic and intellectual consideration because of the practice of mercenary service, which was one of the main sources of income for many Swiss towns and villages. In addressing these problems, Zurich approached the Scriptures as a Christian humanist, believing that the way to rediscover the true nature of Christianity was to rediscover the message of Scripture and apply it to the renewal of Christianity. The Anabaptists therefore believed that the Reformation must purify not only theology but actual lives of Christians, especially in what had to do with social and political relationships. The impact is that the church and the state are separate entities that are respectful of each other, and rather than being a state religion, Christianity is a matter of individual conviction that requires a personal decision for it.

Gonzalez, J. L (1971). *A History of Christian Thought, Volume III*, Abingdon Press. Nashville. 428-471