

The Age of Reformation

The Protestant Reformation was a reaction against the traditions, policies, dogma, and abuses of the Catholic Church. Those who opposed the church were called **Protestants** for the various protests they waged. These protests altered the religious unity of Europe, brought about religious wars, and resulted in the fragmentation of the Christian faith into many different denominations.

The Protestant Reformation

Some of the issues that led to this religious shift away from the Catholic Church include:

- **The Great Schism:** Two different popes (**Clement VII** and **Urban VI**) claimed authority over the Catholic Church; this conflict was not resolved until the **Council of Constance in 1414**; and the overall result was the weakening of church unity
- **Sales of indulgences, nepotism, simony:** These everyday aspects of Catholic life angered Protestants, who believed that they were not scripturally sound
- **Clerical immorality and absenteeism:** Protestants were alienated by these conditions
- **Humanism:** The rise of scholarship during the Renaissance, and humanists' interest in returning to classical texts made study of and access to the Bible of great importance

Protestant Leaders

- **Martin Luther (1483–1546)** was a German theologian who was discontented with the medieval Christian teachings that God required perfect righteousness for salvation. Luther argued on behalf of “**justification by faith alone**” whereby grace was given freely to those who believed in Jesus Christ. In 1517, Luther famously attacked the Catholic system of indulgences promoted by preachers like **John Tetzel**, when he posted his **Ninety-five Theses** on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. Condemned to heresy in 1520, Luther was protected by friends who hid him in a castle, where he translated the New Testament into German, using Erasmus's Greek text and Latin translation.
- **Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531)** headed the Reformation in Switzerland. He was opposed to the sale of indulgences and to religious superstition. Zwingli successfully petitioned for the **end to clerical celibacy** and the **clerical right to marry**, which was adopted by all Protestant groups. Zwingli believed that anything that lacked literal support in Scripture was not to be believed. He questioned traditional behaviors like fasting, adoration of saints, pilgrimages, and other sacraments. His beliefs translated into a regime of harsh discipline in Zurich, and made Switzerland an example of puritanical Protestantism. Zwingli and Luther disagreed in the famous **Marburg Colloquy (1529)** over the presence of Christ's body in the **Eucharist**.
- **John Calvin (1509–1564)** was the leader of the Calvinists, who believed in divine **predestination** or the concept of “**the elect**” and the individual's duty to reform society according to God's plan. Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* is a theological statement of the Protestant faith. Calvin believed in the unity of church and state, and he stressed the **sovereignty of God** over all creation. He led a theocracy in Geneva.

The English Reformation

Protestant ideas did not take hold in England until the sixteenth century. Important figures are listed below.

- **Martin Bucer**, a Strasbourg reformer who influenced Calvin, was forced into exile during the Augsburg Interim and helped to draft the religious texts of the English Reformation.
- **William Tyndale (1492–1536)** translated the New Testament into English in 1524–1525, and it began to circulate in England in 1526.
- **Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475–1540)** and **Sir Thomas More (1478–1535)**, chief ministers to King Henry VIII, guided the royal response to English Protestantism.
- **Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547)**, married to Catherine of Aragon, who did not produce an heir; in order to divorce her and then to marry Anne Boleyn, he converted himself (and the rest of England) to Anglicanism.
- **Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556)** and **Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540)**, Lutheran sympathizers who helped Henry VIII declare himself supreme ruler over English affairs, which enabled him to take charge of the Church of England and put an end to Catholic interference with his policies.
- **Edward VI (r. 1547–1553)**, Henry's son, presided over the flourishing of Protestantism in England. Oversaw all vestiges of Catholicism removed from churches and English life.

The Counter-Reformation

Important figures, documents, and groups of the Counter-Reformation are listed below.

- **The Society of Jesus**, the new order of Jesuits, was one of the most influential Counter-Reformation groups, organized by **Ignatius of Loyola** in the 1530s. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* embodied a program of spiritual disciplines that encouraged believers to transform their spiritual selves through discipline and practice.
- **The Council of Trent**, the result of an effort by Emperor Charles V to force Pope Paul to reassert church doctrine, met from 1545–1563, and was attended predominantly by Italians. The council made reforms in internal Church affairs (including restricting the selling of church offices and religious relics), strengthened the authority of local bishops, and subjected them to new rules requiring them to reside in their dioceses and be visible and accessible to their congregations.

Reformation

What was the difference between Luther and Calvin?

Calvin continued, and built, on the reforms proposed by Luther. The major doctrinally difference is the concept of Predestination. In terms of organization, Calvin went much further: Luther believed that the state should control the church if the two were in conflict but Calvin believed that the state had to be the handmaiden of the church. Because of this, Calvin came to dominate the Reformation. Luther's protectors- the princes of the HRE; he needed them in order to survive (The Prince of Saxony saved him from the Diet of Worms) and since he envisioned only a religious reformation, not a political or social one, he was willing to submit to the authority of the state as long as the state was Lutheran. The HRE princes could use Lutheranism as a way to become more independent of the HR Emperor. Calvin, on the other hand, stated that a Christian had the right to demand Christian leadership. His followers challenged more successful monarchies than the HRE so their struggle lasted longer and became increasingly political.

Luther's teachings were mostly attacks upon the Catholic Church and its teachings. Generally, he did not offer specific doctrines or set up a structure. Calvin's theology (The Institutes of the Christian Religion) was the first major explanation of the teachings of Christianity from a biblical, Protestant standpoint. The book was translated into several languages and disseminated. This encouraged his followers to be more militant and more aggressive in proselytizing and agitating for reform at the national level (Puritans in England).

Catholic teaching says that at the moment of consecration of the bread and wine (Jesus said "This is my blood...this is my body") the taste and texture remain, but the actual substance (substantiation) becomes the actual Blood and Body of Christ. Luther believed in Consubstantiation, the spirit of Christ enters into and becomes one with the host (bread and wine). Calvin insisted that the bread and wine were mere symbols and they remained bread and wine.

Erasmus believed that Luther went too far. He agreed with Luther's attacks upon the abuses by the various individual members of the Catholic Church. But being a faithful Catholic would not accept or tolerate an attack upon the Spiritual Church or its teachings. The Spiritual Church (as opposed to the worldly or temporal church) was, by tradition, infallible (papal infallibility was not official until the 1800's) and Erasmus blasted the people who violated the teachings of the Church but who never actually claimed the teachings were untrue.

Was Luther a Conservative??

No... he was revolutionary

He challenged and overthrew the power of the most powerful institution in Europe.

Yes...

He did not challenge the economic or social order (as exhibited in the Peasants' Rebellion). No redistribution of wealth or equality of all classes. He believed in the power of the state and order.

He encouraged his followers to work within the existing political framework (city councils) to create Reformation-friendly laws and to push for reformers to be hired for existing religious positions, and to place their churches under the guardianship of reformers princes.

He did not advocate changes in the social system, but rather sought to refocus elements of the existing system toward a Christian life.

He taught that (social) work was an act of worship and that all work was credible and should be done to the best of the individual's ability.

He felt was returning the Church to its original purity, not starting a new religion.

His view was patriarchal concerning marriage. While he felt men should be companionate and fulfilling with the man as head of the household.

He expressed the typical prejudices of his age concerning Jews and Judaism.

Protestants Catholics

Emphasized role of the Bible Bible + traditions of Middle Ages + Papal announcements

“Priesthood of all believers” All Medieval view about the special nature and role of the clergy.

individuals were equal before G-d.
Sought a clergy that preached.

Anglicans rejected the pope’s authority.
Monarch became the Supreme Governor
of the church. Medieval hierarchy: believers, priests, bishops, and popes.

Lutherans rejected the authority of the
pope but kept the bishops.

Most Calvinists governed church by
Ministers and a group of elders, called
Presbyterianism.

Anabaptists rejected most forms of
church governance in favor of
congregational democracy.

Most Protestants denied the efficacy All seven sacraments
of some or all of the sacraments of
the medieval Church-the most
controversial was the Eucharist.

Consubstantiation- Lutherans Transubstantiation

Zwingli saw the communion
as purely symbolic- a memorial
celebration , or thanksgiving for
G-d’s Grant of salvation. This was
main reason for break with Luther.

Protestants (continued) Catholics (continued)

Lutherans believed in Justification Salvation through living life according
By Faith. to Christian beliefs and participating in the practices of the Church (good works).

Calvinists believed in Predestination.

Lutherans and Anglicans believed in a state controlled Church. Catholics and Calvinists believed church should control and absorb the state (theocracy)

Anabaptists believed church should

Ignore the state.

Services emphasized the sermon Sermon emphasized the Eucharist.

Protestant Reformation, Catholic and Counter- Reformations, Wars of Religion (1517–1648)

CAUSES OF THE REFORMATION

1. Corruption of the Roman Catholic Church during the Renaissance
 - Sale of church offices (simony); nepotism; sale of indulgences
 - Decline of morality among the clergy
2. Impact of Renaissance *humanism*, which questioned Church traditions
 - Humanist “glorification of humanity” contradicted the Church’s emphasis on salvation
 - Prosperity brought the “virtue of poverty” into disrepute and the Church lost the “spirit” of Christ’s message and was out of touch with the mass of believers
3. Declining prestige of the papacy
 - Babylonian Captivity* of the Church in the 14th century when popes, subservient to the French king, took up residence in Avignon and lost prestige in the rest of Christendom.
 - The *Great Schism* beginning in 1378, when French and anti-French cardinals elected two popes—one of whom lived in Rome, the other in Avignon—and lasting over forty years.
 - Moral decline of the Renaissance popes bred cynicism
 - Papal involvement in secular politics fostered contempt
4. Influence of religious reformers, such as Wycliffe and Huss
 - Stressed personal communion with God
 - Diminished the importance of the sacraments
 - Weakened the influence of the clergy
5. Resentment of secular rulers over the power of the popes and clergy
 - Monarchs of growing nation-states resisted papal supremacy over national churches
 - Resentment over vast landholding of the Church within national boundaries
6. Invention of the printing press, allowing dissenters to spread their ideas throughout Europe and making the Bible available to the common people

Tenets of Lutheranism as published in a series of tracts:

1. *Salvation by faith alone*: Good works (the sacraments and such) cannot guarantee salvation but rather are an outward manifestation of the faith that a loving God will grant that salvation. This concept was inspired by Luther’s reading, many years earlier, of a passage from Romans I: 17: in which St. Paul says “ the just shall live by faith. . . .”
2. *The Bible is the ultimate authority*: Neither the Pope nor church councils can define Christian doctrine; every believer should read and interpret the Bible, and the faithful will be divinely guided.
3. *The grace of God brings absolution*: Neither indulgences nor confession can bring forgiveness of sins; the individual is freed of sin only by the Grace of God; pilgrimages, veneration of saints, fasts, and worship of relics are useless.

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THE REFORMATION (1517-1648)

CHRONOLOGY OF THE REFORMATION

- 1517—Johann Tetzel was authorized to sell indulgences to finance construction on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- 1517—Martin Luther posted his *95 Theses* on the church door at Wittenburg castle in Germany.
- 1519—Luther debated John Eck and questioned the authority of the pope and church councils. In response, the papacy condemned Luther's propositions and ordered many of his books to be burned.
- 1519—Ulrich Zwingli began his teachings, thus spreading the Reformation to Switzerland.
- 1520—Thomas Munzer began the Anabaptist movement.
- 1520—Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther.
- 1521—Charles V and the Diet of Worms outlawed Martin Luther and forced him to seek refuge with Frederick the Wise.
- 1525—German peasants revolted in response to Luther's writings. Luther condemned the actions of the peasants but was later troubled by the behavior of the nobles.
- 1527—King Henry VIII first petitioned for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon.
- 1529—The term Protestant is coined at the Diet of Speyer, a meeting of the German princes.
- 1530—Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer annulled the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon.
- 1531—Ulrich Zwingli was killed in battle.
- 1534—Henry VIII was recognized as the official head of the Church of England under the Act of Supremacy.
- 1536—John Calvin published the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Geneva.

CHAPTER 3

- 1539—Parliament passed the Six Articles and affirmed many of the sacraments.
- 1540—The Jesuits were officially recognized and encouraged by Rome.
- 1541—John Knox began the Calvinist reform movement in Scotland.
- 1549—Thomas Cranmer published the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was used as a model for services in the Church of England.
- 1555—The Peace of Augsburg allowed German princes the right to choose the religion of their subjects.
- 1558—Elizabeth was crowned Queen of England and began a forty-five-year reign as a Protestant queen.
- 1568—Led by William of Orange, the Netherlands revolted against Spanish rule.
- 1588—The English fleet defeated the Spanish Armada.
- 1590s—William Shakespeare began some of his most famous works.
- 1603—Elizabeth I died, and James VI of Scotland ascended to the English throne as James I.
- 1618—Two of the Bohemian king's men were thrown out of a window in the Defenestration of Prague. Amazingly, the men survived because they landed in a pile of manure. This marked the beginning of the Thirty Years' War.
- 1620—Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II defeated the Bohemians at the Battle of White Mountain.
- 1632—Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus was killed in battle while fighting on the side of the Protestants during the Thirty Years' War.
- 1648—The Peace of Westphalia marked the end of the Thirty Years' War.

The political and social consequences of the Reformation

The Protestant Reformation occurred at a time of sharp conflict between emerging nation states, bent on conformity and centralization, in regions accustomed to running their own affairs. Lutheranism, or at least anti-Romanism, swept over Germany, assuming the proportions of national upheaval. It became mixed with all sorts of political and social revolution. Traditional resistance was stirred by the new religious ideas and incited by preachers who went beyond Luther's teachings in asserting that anyone could see for himself what was right. Many townspeople perceived a religious revolt as an ally in their struggle to remain politically free and independent. Protestantism came to represent decentralization (as with the Roman Empire at the time of the Reformation) or the power of the parliament (as in England at the time of the Civil War.) Catholicism came to represent a centralized monarchy. German and Swiss cities embraced the reformed religions in order to protect their independence. Protestantism was also seen by peasants as a promise of political liberation and social betterment. It was seen as a way to end serfdom and chip away at the advantages enjoyed by secular and ecclesiastical landlords.

In Address to the German Nobility of the German Nation, Martin Luther urged the German princes to force reforms on the Roman church and, especially to curtail its political and economic power within Germany.

Religious reform became a territorial political movement. The Elector of Saxony and Prince of Hess, recognizing the political and economic opportunities offered to them by the demise of the Roman Catholic Church in their regions. Soon they were pushing the protestant faith and politics within their districts and on their neighbors. By the 1530's the Protestant lands had formed powerful defense of alliances and prepared for war with the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.

At first the German peasants believed Luther to be an ally. The peasantry had been organized since the late 15th century against efforts by territorial princes to override traditional laws and customs and to subject them to new regulations and taxes. Luther sympathized with the peasants in an effort to override traditional laws and customs. His teachings about religious freedom encouraged peasant revolt in the Peasants' Revolt of 1524-25. Luther, however, saw Christian freedom as an inner release from guilt and anxiety- not the restructuring of society. Horrified at the way in which religious revolution became confused with social revolution, Luther defined his position more conservatively. Always well disposed to temporal rulers and having called upon the princes to act as religious reformers, he was thrown by the peasant uprisings into an even closer alliance with the princes. Lutheranism took on a character of submissiveness to the state. Christian liberty was spiritual, known only to God. In worldly matters, the good Christian owed perfect obligation to established authority. Luther repudiated all connection with the peasants, called them filthy swine, and urged the princes to suppress them with the sword. He labeled the peasants as un-Christian and urged princes to crush the revolt without mercy. 70,000- 100,000 peasants were killed. His decision ended the promise of the Reformation as a social revolution. It was the trait of the reformers to

work within the framework of the reigning political powers. Therefore, political and social reforms progressed very slowly and actually changed medieval society very little. In general Lutherans accepted the socio-political status quo.

Calvinists refused to recognize the subordination of their church to state, or the right of any government to lay down laws for their religion. They insisted that the true Christian, the elect (or Godly) should Christianize the state. They wished to remake the society itself into the image of a religious community.

John Calvin and the Genevan Reformation

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Calvinism replaced Lutheranism as the dominant Protestant force in Europe. Calvinism was the religious ideology that inspired massive political resistance in France, the Netherlands, and Scotland. Calvinists believed strongly in both divine predestination and the individual's responsibility to reorder society according to God's plan. They became zealous reformers determined to transform and order society so that men and women would act externally as they believed, or should believe, internally.

- The religious reform became a territorial political movement, lead by the Elector of Saxony and the Prince of Hesse.
- Luther and his followers sympathized with the peasants. The Lutherans were not, however, social revolutionaries. When the peasants revolted against their masters, Luther condemned them in the strongest possible terms as "un-Christian" and urged the princes to crush their revolt without mercy. His decision ended the promised of the Reformation as a social revolution.
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