

The Reformation in Europe 1350-1600

THE STORY MATTERS...

The Protestant Reformation is the name given to the religious reform movement that divided western Christianity into Catholic and Protestant groups. Martin Luther's bold attempts to reform the Church led to new forms of Christianity. Although Luther did not see himself as a rebel, the spread of Protestantism ignited decades of bloody religious conflict and ended a thousand years of domination by the Catholic Church.

Lesson 16-2

The Spread of Protestantism

READING HELPDISK

Academic Vocabulary

community publish

Content Vocabulary

justification predestination annul ghetto

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

• How can reform influence society and beliefs?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Different forms of Protestantism emerged in Europe during the 1500s. Calvinism challenged Lutheranism with new ideas about salvation, England's Henry VIII created a national church, and Anabaptists challenged both Catholics and other Protestants with ideas about separation of church and state. In response to Protestantism, the Catholic Church also underwent a reformation.

Protestantism in Switzerland

GUIDING QUESTION *Why did Calvinism become an important form of Protestantism by the mid-sixteenth century?*

By permitting German states to choose between Catholicism and Lutheranism, the Peace of Augsburg officially ended Christian unity in Europe. Previously, however, divisions had appeared within Protestantism. One of these new groups arose in Switzerland.

Ulrich Zwingli was a priest in the Swiss city of Zürich. The city council of Zürich, strongly influenced by Zwingli, began to introduce religious reforms. All paintings and decorations were removed from the churches and replaced by whitewashed walls. A new church service consisting of Scripture reading, prayer, and sermons replaced the Catholic mass.

As Zwingli's movement began to spread to other cities in Switzerland, he sought an alliance with Luther and the other German reformers. The German and Swiss reformers saw the need for unity to defend themselves against Catholic authorities, but they could not agree on certain Christian rites.

In October 1531, war broke out between the Protestant and Catholic states in Switzerland. Zurich's army was routed, and Zwingli was found wounded on the battlefield. His enemies killed him, cut up his body, burned the pieces, and

scattered the ashes. The leadership of Protestantism in Switzerland passed to John Calvin.

John Calvin was educated in his native France. As a reformer and convert to Protestantism, Calvin had fled France for the safety of Switzerland. In 1536 he published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a summary of his understanding of Protestant thought. Because of the recent invention of the printing press, Calvin's work and the writings of other Protestant leaders could be distributed widely. This helped spread the ideas of the Protestant Reformation. Publication of Calvin's work immediately gained him a reputation as one of the new leaders of Protestantism.

Like Luther, Calvin believed that faith alone was sufficient for **justification**, the process of being deemed worthy of salvation by God. However, Calvin's belief in the all-powerful nature of God led him to other ideas, such as **predestination**. This meant that God had selected some people to be saved and others to be damned. According to Calvin, "God has once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction." Although Calvin stressed that no one could ever be absolutely certain of salvation, his followers did not always heed this warning.

The belief in predestination gave later Calvinists the firm conviction that they were doing God's work on Earth. This conviction made them determined to spread their faith to other people. Calvinism became a dynamic and activist faith.

Calvin created a type of theocracy, or government by divine authority, in the city of Geneva. This government used church leaders and non-clergy in the service of his church. John Knox, the Calvinist reformer of Scotland, called Geneva "the most perfect school of Christ on earth...." "Missionaries trained in Geneva went to all parts of Europe. Calvinism was established in France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and central and eastern Europe.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Describing How did divisions in Protestantism take place in Switzerland?

Reformation in England

GUIDING QUESTION *What made the English Reformation different from the Reformation in the rest of Europe?*

The English Reformation was rooted in politics. King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, with whom he had a daughter, Mary. He wanted to have a male heir and to marry a new wife, Anne Boleyn. The pope was unwilling to **annul** the king's marriage, so Henry turned to England's highest church courts.

Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer ruled in May 1533 that the king's first marriage was "null and absolutely void." At the beginning of June, Henry's new wife, Anne, was made queen. Three months later their child, the future Queen Elizabeth I was born.

In 1534 at Henry's request, Parliament finalized England's break with the pope and the Catholic Church. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 declared that the king was "the only supreme head on earth of the [new] Church of England." The king now had control over religious doctrine, clerical appointments, and discipline. Thomas More, a Christian humanist and devout Catholic, opposed the king's action and was beheaded.

Henry used his new powers to close monasteries. He sold their lands and possessions to landowners and merchants. The English nobility had disliked papal control of the Church, and now they had a financial interest in the new order. Additionally, the king received a boost to his treasury. In most matters of doctrine, however, Henry stayed close to Catholic teachings.

When the king died in 1547, he was succeeded by Edward VI, his nine-year-old son by his third wife. During the brief reign of King Edward VI, church officials who favored Protestant doctrines moved the Church of England, or the Anglican Church, in a Protestant direction. New acts of Parliament gave clergy the right to marry and created a Protestant church service. Before he turned 16, Edward died of tuberculosis.

The rapid changes in doctrine and policy during Edward's reign aroused opposition. When Henry VIII's daughter Mary I came to the throne in 1553, England was ready for a reaction. Mary was a Catholic who wanted to restore England to Roman Catholicism, but her efforts had the opposite effect. Among other actions, she ordered the burning of almost 300 Protestants as heretics, earning her the nickname "Bloody Mary." As a result of her policies, England was even more committed to Protestantism by the end of Mary's reign.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Determining Cause and Effect What caused the Protestant Reformation in England, and what resulted from it?

Anabaptists

GUIDING QUESTION *Why did both Catholics and Protestants consider Anabaptists dangerous radicals?*

Reformers such as Luther had allowed the state to play an important, if not dominant, role in church affairs. However, some people strongly disliked giving such power to the state. These were radicals known as Anabaptists. Most Anabaptists believed in the complete separation of church and state. Not only was government to be kept out of the realm of religion, it was not supposed to have any political authority over "real" Christians. Anabaptists refused to hold political office or bear arms because many took literally the biblical commandment "Thou shall not kill."

To Anabaptists, the true Christian church was a voluntary community of adult believers who had undergone spiritual rebirth and then had been baptized. This belief in adult baptism separated the Anabaptists from Catholics and other Protestants, who baptized infants.

Anabaptists also believed in following the practices and the spirit of early Christianity. They considered all believers to be equal. Anabaptists based this belief on the accounts of early Christian communities in the New Testament of the Bible. Each Anabaptist church chose its own minister, or spiritual leader. Because all Christians were considered to be priests, any member of the community was eligible to be a minister – though women were often excluded.

Their political beliefs, as much as their religious beliefs, caused the Anabaptists to be regarded as dangerous radicals who threatened the very fabric of sixteenth-century society. The chief thing other Protestants and Catholics could agree on was the need to persecute Anabaptists.

Many of the persecuted Anabaptists settled in Munster, a city in Westphalia in modern-day Germany, in the 1530s. Under John of Leiden, the city became a sanctuary for Anabaptists. In 1534 an army of Catholics and other Protestants surrounded the city. Then in 1535, they captured it, torturing and killing the Anabaptist leaders.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Discussing What beliefs did the Anabaptists have that alarmed the other Protestants and Catholics?

Analyzing PRIMARY SOURCES

Luther on Marriage

"The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages war, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, plants, etc. The woman on the other hand is like a nail driven into the wall."

-Martin Luther, from *Lectures on Genesis*

INTERPRETING

What might Luther mean by comparing a woman to a nail in the wall?

Reformation and Society

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the Reformation affect European society?*

The Protestant Reformation had an important effect on the development of education in Europe. Protestant teachers

were very effective in using humanist methods in new Protestant secondary schools and universities.

Protestant schools were aimed at a much wider audience than the humanist schools, which were mostly for the elite.

Convinced of the need to provide the church with good Christians, Martin Luther believed that all children should have an education provided by the state. To that end, he urged the cities and villages of German states to provide schools paid for by the public. Protestants in Germany then established secondary schools, where teaching in Greek and Latin was combined with religious instruction.

To some extent, Protestantism also modified the traditional view of marriage. Protestants had abolished monasticism and the requirement of celibacy for their clergy. The mutual love between man and wife in marriage could be praised. However, reality more often reflected the traditional roles of husband as the ruler and wife as the obedient servant and bearer of children. Calvin and Luther saw this role of women as part of the divine plan.

Other traditional features of European society were unaffected by the Reformation. Anti-Semitism, which is hostility or discrimination against Jews, remained common in Europe after the Reformation. Martin Luther expected Jews to convert to Lutheranism. When they resisted, Luther wrote that Jewish houses of worship and homes should be destroyed. The Catholic Church was no more tolerant. In Italy's Papal States, which were controlled by the popes, Jews who would not convert were forced to live in segregated areas called **ghettos**.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing What was Luther's view about women's role in society?

Catholic Reformation

GUIDING QUESTION *What prompted the Catholic Reformation during the sixteenth century?*

The situation in Europe did not appear favorable for the Catholic Church. Lutheranism had become rooted in Germany and Scandinavia, and Calvinism had taken hold in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and Eastern Europe. In England, the split from Rome had resulted in the creation of a national church. However, the Catholic Church was revitalized in the sixteenth century. It found new strength and regained much that it had lost to the Protestant Reformation. Three elements supported this Catholic Reformation, which is also called the Counter-Reformation. The first was the

establishment of a new religious order, the Jesuits. The second was the reform of the papacy. The third element was the Council of Trent.

A Spanish nobleman, Ignatius of Loyola, founded the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. Pope Paul III recognized Loyola's small group of followers as a religious order in 1540. All Jesuits took a special vow of absolute obedience to the pope, making them an important instrument for papal policy. Jesuits used education to spread their message and established schools. Jesuit missionaries were very successful in restoring Catholicism to parts of Germany and eastern Europe and in spreading it to other parts of the world.

Later in the century, a Spanish nun, Teresa of Avila, promoted the reform of the Carmelite order. The Carmelites were one of the four major religious orders founded in the Middle Ages who took a vow of complete poverty. In 1562 Teresa founded a small convent at Avila where the nuns followed a very strict way of life.

Reform of the papacy was another important element in the Catholic Reformation. The participation of Renaissance popes in dubious financial transactions and in Italy's politics and wars had encouraged corruption. It took the jolt of the Protestant Reformation to change the Catholic Church.

Pope Paul III saw the need for reform. He took the bold step of naming a Reform Commission in 1535 to determine the Church's ills. The commission blamed the Church's problems on the popes' corrupt policies.

Pope Paul III also called the Council of Trent. Beginning in March 1545, a group of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots, and theologians met off and on for 18 years in the city of Trent in modern-day Italy near the Swiss border.

The final decrees of the Council reaffirmed traditional Catholic teachings in opposition to Protestant beliefs. Both faith and good works were declared necessary for salvation. The seven sacraments, the Catholic view of the Eucharist, and clerical celibacy were all upheld. Belief in purgatory and in the use of indulgences was strengthened, although the selling of indulgences was forbidden. The Roman Catholic Church now possessed a clear body of doctrine. It was unified under the pope's supreme leadership. Catholics were now more confident as defenders of their faith.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Exploring Issues What were the three key elements of the Catholic Reformation, and why were they so important to the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century?

REVIEWING VOCABULARY

justification	process of being justified, or deemed worthy of salvation, by God
predestination	belief that God has determined in advance who will be saved (the elect) and who will be damned (the reprobate)
annul	declare invalid
ghetto	formerly a district in a city in which Jews were required to live