

PEOPLE OF GOD

THE HISTORY OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

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THE REFORMATION: PROTESTANT PHASE ONE

'HERE I STAND'

The date is April 17, 1521. Father Martin Luther of the Augustinian Order has been summoned before a meeting of the Imperial Diet (Council) in the German town of Worms. He is ordered to answer charges of heresy. His inquisitor will be Johann von der Ecken, the chief lawyer for the archbishop of Trier. The tribunal is scheduled to convene at seven o'clock in the evening in the audience hall of the local bishop's palace. The palace is the most ornately decorated building in town. Three stories high, its facade bears many traces of Italian design. Large green shutters protect the windows, and an iron gate, four meters high, guards the entrance way. Only people directly connected to the proceedings before the emperor or those wealthy enough to purchase a seat are permitted into the hall.

By six o'clock, everyone except the emperor and the seven electors of Germany is in place. Luther sits at a table to the left of the emperor's throne, silently reading through some notes and every now and then turning to read a passage from his Bible. At a table to the right, von der Ecken and another inquisitor are whispering with one another. At a quarter to seven a trumpeter announces the arrival of the electors. By order of seniority, they enter the room. Duke Frederick of Saxony, Luther's prince and protector, is fourth in line behind the archbishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne. Behind Duke Frederick march the three younger princes who make up the contingent of men who elect the emperor. Frederick wears a long purple cape and carries an ostrich-plumed white hat in his left arm. A silver, gleaming sword hangs from his belt.

Finally, Emperor Charles enters the room, at first to the fanfare of trumpets and then utter silence. Everyone stands respectfully. People are struck at how young the twenty-one-year-old looks and how shy he seems. He is led to the

throne by his guard and the archbishop of Mainz. Dressed in a white satin blouse with his gold imperial pendant hanging around his neck, Charles stands for a moment, his plush velvet hat on his head—the only man in the hall still permitted to have his head covered. Around his shoulders is a green silk cape bound together at the neck by a gold chain. His leggings are of the Spanish style—something which is not lost on his German spectators—multi-colored stripes of blue, red and orange with each stripe bordered in gold thread. Instead of boots, he wears delicate purple sandals. Charles seems almost afraid to address the audience, most of whom are much older than he and far more experienced at wielding power.

"Be seated," he says at last, and then he sits down himself. An attendant removes his cape, and he hands the man his hat. "My lord archbishops," he announces, "my lord princes, you may begin."

Von der Ecken stands to open the case against Luther. Pointing to a stack of some twenty of Luther's books, the red-cheeked prosecutor looks directly at Luther and asks, "Martin, are these your books, and are you prepared to repudiate what you have written in them?"

Luther stands and answers in a tense voice, "How could I repudiate *all*, sir, since by common agreement those portions of my writings which deal with the corruption of popes, bishops and priests are accurate and fair!"

The emperor suddenly stamps the butt of his sword on the floor and shouts, "No! They are not 'accurate and fair'!" A hush falls over the crowd. Charles regains his composure, looking around as if he is embarrassed for having made such an outburst.

Von der Ecken waits for the emperor's nod before continuing. "Do you repudiate your writings, Martin, in full or in part?"

"I will gladly repudiate any parts, sir, which you can show me are contradicted by Scripture."

"Ah yes," von der Ecken replies wearily. "'If I can show how they contradict Scripture,' Martin, you make the same response heretics throughout the centuries have made: 'Show me where I deviate from Scripture.' Don't you see, Martin, that your words lead to anarchy? Were every man given the right to judge Scripture for himself, every man would become pope. There would be no order, no unity within the Church. How dare you substitute your reading of Scripture for that of the successors of the apostles? Yes, Martin, you have retreated into the same lair in which all heretics hide, but I will not follow you there. Let us not argue fine points of Scripture so as to deter this diet from the investigation at hand. I ask you again, do you or do you not renounce what you have written in your books?"

"Very well, my Lord," Luther replies, in a voice that now shows no trace of hesitation, "if you want a simple answer, I will give it to you. Since I do not accept the authority of either popes or Church councils, because the two have on numerous occasions contradicted each other, I will not and *can* not retract anything I have written unless I am shown in Holy Scripture why I should do so. To

do otherwise would be to betray my conscience. That is my answer. Here I stand." The audience murmurs excitedly until the emperor's guard reestablishes order. Von der Ecken begins to interrogate Luther on the issue of Church councils, but after a brief exchange the emperor interrupts. "Enough! We have heard his answer. He denies the authority of Church councils and he says that every man may interpret Scripture free of guidance from the Church. What more need we hear?" Charles stands up, prompting the entire assembly to do likewise. "I have given my pledge that this man will not be harmed," he shouts, his young voice cracking at one point. "I will keep my pledge, but I have more to say on this matter. The accused will remain in Worms until I have declared my intentions more fully." The emperor turns and storms out of the hall. The audience bursts into excited chatter.

THE ROAD TO WORMS

How did Martin Luther reach this point? How is it that a pious and devout priest could break with the Church and lead millions of other Christians to do likewise? Let's retrace Luther's steps to the tribunal at Worms.

First we must ask the question, was Luther simply upset with the corruption he saw in the Church? Or would he have disagreed with traditional Catholic doctrine even had the Church not been corrupt? If it were just the former, we could perhaps conclude that Luther's revolt amounted to "sour grapes." Perhaps, we could say, he was just an angry priest who should have been more patient and forgiving with human sinfulness. By this line of reasoning, we could say that the entire Reformation might have been avoided if the Church had rooted out the sin and immorality among its leaders.

This response would be too simplistic. Yes, Luther was an angry, volatile man. Yes, he often threw temper tantrums and spoke and acted emotionally when it came to criticizing the pope and the clergy. But that is not all that motivated him. Although he hated the corruption in the Church, his principal reason for breaking with Rome was *doctrinal* and not *emotional*. Although we can never know for sure, history leads us to speculate that even if the Church had been untainted by corruption, Martin Luther would still have broken with it Rome. Yet, would his doctrinal disagreements have been as passionate had it not been for the corruption in the Church? Likely not. To understand Martin Luther we must understand *both* his anger at corruption *and* his theological attack on traditional Catholic doctrine. Let's start with his response to corruption and then turn to an analysis of his theology.

ST. PETER'S BASILICA AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER INDULGENCES

For Luther, the straw that broke the camel's back involved, of all things, a building project. Pope Leo X's predecessor, Pope Julius II, had begun work

on the greatest church ever built—St. Peter's Basilica. Leo wanted the basilica substantially finished during his pontificate so that his family, the Medicis, would get most of the credit for the project. The problem was that Leo didn't know how to handle money. To be more precise, he wasted money, spending vast amounts on all sorts of trivial things. Consequently, as his papacy progressed, he found himself on the verge of bankruptcy. Each day, he looked with despair at the huge basilica looming up from the earth before his Vatican apartments. The basilica project had become something like one of those "cost-overrun" government boondoggles of our own day. The more money Leo spent on the basilica, the more money it required.

Leo devised a scheme. He turned north to wealthy Germany. The prince-elector of Mainz, an archbishop, Albert of Brandenburg, was himself a poor steward of money. He was in arrears on his financial obligations to Rome. Leo proposed a deal. He would authorize a campaign in Albert's diocese to grant plenary indulgences. For purchasing indulgences, Catholics would be promised in a papal document that all their sins would be forgiven and all time in purgatory for those sins remitted. Albert could keep half of the money he collected, and the pope would get the other half. Albert's back taxes would be wiped out, and Leo would raise money to continue building St. Peter's.

By today's standards, Leo's plan was grossly unscrupulous. Catholics in that era, however, were accustomed to paying for spiritual benefits like indulgences. Nowadays, the Church makes it clear that neither sacraments nor indulgences nor any other means of grace can be bought. Even so, there are still those who think they can buy their way to heaven—despite what the Church teaches.

Such people were numerous in Leo's time. His sin was to exploit their superstitious tendencies in order to raise money. Archbishop Albert made matters worse by using priests to preach on indulgences who were interested only in their "cut" from how much money they raised. Some of these priests told their audiences that a plenary indulgence guaranteed the buyer that all *future* sins would be forgiven as well as past sins. In other words, these men said in effect, "Buy one of our indulgence documents and sin all you want without fear of going to hell or purgatory."

The most notorious of these indulgence peddlers was a Dominican named Johann Tetzel, who sold indulgences near the borders of Luther's Saxony. He went beyond telling his audiences that they could keep their own souls out of purgatory. He told them they could free the souls of their loved ones already in purgatory as well. His co-workers sang a little ditty to persuade the crowds: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory to heaven springs." When Catholics from Luther's Wittenberg went to hear Tetzel and succumbed to his sales pitch, Luther grew furious. He wrote his now famous *Ninety-five Theses*. There he attacked not only indulgences but the conception of papal and Church authority that supported indulgences. The

Theses were an overnight "best-seller."¹ Spurred on by this favorable reaction, Luther began to compose pamphlets (in German) in which he elaborated on his doctrinal disagreement with Rome.

LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

We must distinguish between "Luther's" theology and "Lutheran" theology. In his early days, some of what Luther taught was not radically different from ideas being advanced by other Catholic theologians. Later, however, as the controversy raged out of control, Luther's followers shaped his thoughts into a more formal body of doctrine. That body of doctrine—Lutheran theology proper—gradually took shape as being irrevocably opposed to traditional Catholic teaching.

What is the Church? Luther's principal grievance in the indulgence controversy was his opposition to the idea of the Church that the indulgence peddlers advanced. They taught that the Church contains a "treasury of merit" from which grace can be dispensed. This "treasury" contained all the "merits" earned by Christ on the cross. This idea turned salvation into an accounting system, where sinners must earn *grace* to blot out their sins and accumulate *merit* to reduce their time of punishment for committing those sins.

By this view, only ordained ministers in the Church can dispense grace. The clergy hold the "keys" to the Church. They can unlock the treasury of merit and allow the laity to gain access to the grace of salvation. Luther vehemently disagreed. Christians, he taught, can gain access to Christ's grace of salvation without going through the treasury of merit. They can go directly to Christ, bypassing the clergy and their indulgences. The institutional Church, Luther believed, is Christ's body on earth and is helpful to salvation. But if the Church is corrupt and does not truly represent Christ, Christians can receive Christ's love and grace without the assistance of the institutional Church. Further, Luther rejected the idea of purgatory altogether.

Few in the Catholic Church today believe in the mechanical, legalistic view of grace that the indulgence peddlers taught. Many Catholics today find Luther's views on grace and indulgences compatible with their own. At Vatican II, the bishops stressed the importance of the "priesthood of all believers," as did Luther. By this, Luther meant that each Christian ministers to other members of the Church. All Christians are priests to each other. Ordained priests do not have God's grace all locked up in some imagined "treasury of merit." Everyone, ordained or unordained, has direct access to Christ's love and grace.

Yet, Luther did not want to do away with the distinction between ordained and lay believers. He stressed the need for a community of believers governed

¹ Although they were written in a scholarly Latin that few could understand, several vitriolic translations circulated almost at once.

by full-time shepherds. He did not teach a "Jesus-and-me" doctrine; he did not profess that individuals can get to heaven without the Church. Only later would other reformers argue against the need for any institutional structure at all. Luther believed in the need for an organized Church, but he wanted individual Christians to be more aware of their autonomy and freedom before Christ than the Catholic clergy of his day would allow. Each Christian, Luther taught, freely receives Christ's grace without paying for it or otherwise adhering to mechanical rules or legalistic requirements.

What are the sacraments? Nor did Luther want to do away with the concept of *sacrament*. True, he wanted to limit the number of sacraments. He thought that only Baptism and Eucharist were sacraments because he believed these were the only two begun in the New Testament. He said the other five traditional sacraments were beneficial to Christian life but were not true sacraments. He believed Baptism truly empowers a person to become a member of the Church. It was not just a sign of one's faith, as later reformers would teach. Luther thus accepted infant baptism.

Nor did Luther feel that the Eucharist was just a *memorial* of the Last Supper as later reformers would teach. It is true that he did reject the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. That is, he did not believe that the bread of the altar becomes Christ's body and the wine Christ's blood. But he did believe that Christ was somehow really present in the bread and wine. It was just that he did not believe that the bread and wine actually changed into the Body and Blood. Rather, for him, they remained bread and wine, but were somehow mysteriously filled with Christ's presence at the same time.²

As for the Mass itself, Luther did not accept that it was a sacrifice, or that one could gain spiritual "merits" from the Mass. The liturgy for Luther was a devotional act. It was an act of worship in which Christ was present in the preached word and the bread and wine of the altar. But for him, the liturgy did not continue the work of Calvary, as Catholics believed.

The Bible as God's word. For Luther, Christ is most present to the believer in the gospel. That is why Luther placed so much emphasis on Scripture as the word of God. Yet, Luther was no literalist who opposed the written Bible to Church authority or Church tradition, as would later reformers. For Luther, final authority in the Church is in the gospel that Jesus preached and lived. If the Church teaches and lives that gospel, Luther believed, well and good. But if the Church does not, then the Bible is a better source for the gospel than the Church. He was not opposing the Bible to the Church. He was subordinating both Bible and Church to the *gospel*.

Faith versus works. The final point we should make about Luther's theology involves the difference between faith and works. He thought that indulgences, penance for the forgiveness of sin, the Mass and other means of receiving

grace were "works." He relied on Paul's words in Galatians to the effect that "a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). In other words, Luther did not believe that anything *one does* makes one holy. He condemned Catholic doctrine for teaching that people can gain grace by "doing things" such as going to Mass, performing penance, or buying indulgences.

However, he did not condemn good works such as serving the poor or fasting and almsgiving. He merely taught that such good actions did not make one holy. As he put it, "Good works do not make a man good, but a good man does good works." In other words, first comes faith in Jesus Christ as savior, which makes one holy before God. Then come works. Luther thought that Rome had this backwards. Through its many spiritual practices, dispensations and indulgences, the Catholic Church taught that people could become holy. Luther said this was wrong. He advocated participating in spiritual practices as *acts of devotion*, not as means to grace.

In actuality the Catholic Church had always taught the primacy of faith as the essential prerequisite to salvation. And the Church had always taught that faith is a free gift, given to people irrespective of what they do. Yet, because of the corruption of the time, it *looked* as though the Church was professing one thing and doing another. It preached faith, but sold indulgences. It taught that the grace of salvation is a free gift, but encouraged people to buy their way out of purgatory. For Luther, this was an abomination which he could not tolerate. For him, "works" put the emphasis on human effort, on "working one's way" to heaven, whether by going to Mass, saying novenas or buying indulgences. He wanted to make it clear that only God can get one to heaven. And the only way that one comes to God is through faith in Jesus Christ, not through religious practices.

LUTHER: CHAMPION OF FREEDOM

The capstone of Luther's theology was this: that Christians must be free in their relation to God. What makes someone free? Purely and simply the salvation won by Jesus Christ. And how does one receive that salvation? Through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing *one does* makes one free. No ordained minister, no Church practice, no outward observance of rules and regulations can make one free. For Luther, the Church of his day imprisoned people in man-made religion rather than setting them free. He believed God had called him to preach the gospel of freedom. He dedicated his life to that calling. Luther's teaching was marked by inconsistencies—as was the life-style of the Church he condemned. But for the moment, let's simply note Luther's initial impulse, his burning desire to preach as Saint Paul did, "Christians, you were called for freedom!" (Cf. Galatians 5:13)

² His position was called consubstantiation.

FOCUS 23**LUTHER THE MAN:
A LIFE MARKED BY INCONSISTENCY**

Luther is such an interesting historical figure precisely because he was so human. He wore his heart on his sleeve and never feared speaking his mind. This was an attractive feature of his personality. It also meant that he was often overcome by his emotions. It was perhaps his susceptibility to emotional swings that led to many inconsistencies in his teaching.

For example, he taught that all people can find salvation through faith in Christ, but insisted at the same time on predestination. He taught that God knows ahead of time who will believe in Jesus as savior and who won't. God, Luther taught, withholds the grace of salvation from the latter and gives it only to the former. It is a very limited kind of "freedom in Christ" that sees a large part of the human race damned by God before they are even born.

Then there was Luther's intolerance of those who disagreed with him. He could proclaim in one breath, "Faith is a free work to which no one can be compelled," while in the other breath he could say, "He who does not receive my doctrine cannot be saved." The peasants and the poor attempted to use Luther's teachings on personal freedom to throw off the rule of princes by starting a social revolution in 1524. Yet, Luther reacted angrily to the peasants' revolt, urging the princes to "smite, slay and stab" the peasants. Luther said that the peasants should be reduced to slavery so that the princes could ensure the peasants' adherence to his doctrine. He called the rebels "mad dogs" who must be killed. And his words for the Catholic clergy were even harsher. The pope was "the devil's sow," and bishops were "ignorant apes." His views on women were not much better. According to Luther, "they are good for nothing... They are made for bearing children." Luther preached freedom in Christ, but frequently tripped over his own narrow beliefs and prejudices. By these, he would have kept some people enslaved to tradition—the very thing he accused the Catholic Church of doing.

FOCUS 24**PROTESTANTS' VERSUS CATHOLICS**

As Luther's movement gained momentum, a growing number of German princes broke with Rome and embraced Luther's doctrine. They did this largely for political rather than for religious reasons. Luther's chief lieutenant, Philip Melancthon, wrote: "Under cover of the gospel the princes were only intent on the plunder of the churches." The princes' desertion of Catholicism greatly alarmed Emperor Charles. To quell the political revolt, he convened a diet at the town of Speyer in 1529. A committee he appointed made certain recommendations about religious freedom. Among these were a recommendation that Lutheran doctrine be tolerated throughout Germany and that the Catholic Mass be celebrated everywhere. Some of the Lutheran princes formally "protested" to the emperor, insisting on governing religious matters for themselves in their own principalities. This "protest" led to these princes being called "Protestants." That name was eventually attached to all those who disagreed with Rome and accepted the new doctrines. Hence our term *Protestant*.

Eventually, the Protestant princes' revolt against the Catholic emperor led to open warfare. The Protestant princes forced Charles to give them the right to control religion in their own territory. Charles was so broken by this defeat that he resigned his office and entered a monastery in Spain. His brother Ferdinand succeeded him and presided over a conference at Augsburg in 1555. There the following agreement was reached. In Latin it was phrased, "*cuius regio, eius religio*." This means literally, "whose region, his religion." In other words, Protestant princes could demand that their subjects be Protestant, and Catholic princes that their subjects be Catholic. People who didn't like this arrangement were given freedom to migrate to a principality that supported their choice of faith. From that time onward, some areas of Germany became Protestant and some Catholic, and largely have remained so to this day.

THE REFORMATION: THE PROTESTANT PHASE TWO

LUTHER SET OFF A STORM that had long been gathering. He was by no means the first reformer within the Church who taught the doctrines discussed in the last chapter. Luther succeeded where others failed because of a unique blend of factors: among others, the strength of his personality, the sharpness of his intellect and the quickness of his pen, the protection he was offered by the powerful Duke Frederick of Saxony, the passion of German Christians to end their subservience to Italian churchmen.

Success breeds success. When other reformers saw that Luther was succeeding, their courage was fortified and they, too, challenged Rome's authority. In addition, princes in other places saw their colleagues in Germany gaining politically from Luther's movement. Promoting a movement that promised independence from pope and emperor looked to these princes to be a good way of furthering their own ambitions.

RADICAL REFORM EFFORTS: THE 'LEFT WING'

But "Luther's movement" did not remain *his* movement. As soon as his ideas became better known, other reformers thought they could improve upon Luther's teaching. One wing of the reform movement saw Luther as too timid. Radical preachers from this "left wing" of the Reformation wanted a full-scale return to the days of the early Church, where all things were owned in common. These radicals preached overthrow of the established order and the downfall of princes.

Needless to say, the princes didn't go for *this* kind of religious revolution. The princes accepted Luther, because he stood for the independence of princes against the tyranny of pope and emperor. But the radical reformers wanted to do away with government by Church and state altogether. This the princes could not abide. The princes moved angrily to suppress radical com-

munitarian Christianity root and branch. In one year they put to death over a hundred thousand peasants and urban workers who were aligned with one kind of radical movement or another.

A group known as the Anabaptists grew out of the radical movement. The Anabaptists are not to be confused with the later Baptists,¹ of whom we shall say more later. The Anabaptists were radical and communitarian, but most were pacifists. They did not want to achieve their goals through violence, as did some radical reformers.

Their principal doctrine was the rejection of infant baptism. They taught that people are first "saved" through a conversion experience in which they put their faith in Christ as savior. Then they are baptized, but only as a sign that they have already been saved. This sign, they believed, can only be made by adults. In other words, for the Anabaptists, Baptism was not a sacrament, but merely a ritual. It did not bring one the grace of salvation. It was merely a public acknowledgment that one had been saved.

For the times, this was an extremely radical doctrine. Luther was horrified at the Anabaptists' teaching and urged the princes to condemn them. Both Catholic and Lutheran princes responded eagerly. Anabaptists were expelled from nearly every city where they were found. In many places they were drowned simply for believing as they did. The Reformation had now turned into a persecution. The Anabaptists were the first group of Protestant believers to suffer for their faith.

RELIGION OR POWER?

The Anabaptist experience shows that the Reformation was not concerned simply with religion. More importantly perhaps, it was concerned with *power*—ecclesiastical and political power. The Catholic Church wanted to keep its power against the Lutheran princes. The Lutheran princes on the other hand wanted to expand their power against the pope and emperor. Both Catholics and Lutherans wanted to eliminate radicals like the Anabaptists. We will see how important the addiction to power was as we proceed with the unfolding story of the Reformation. We will look at three major examples: John Calvin's movement in Geneva, Henry VIII's revolt in England and the struggle of Catholics against Protestants for supremacy in France. By necessity, we will have to compress many details into a generalized picture.

CALVIN'S THEOCRACY

John Calvin (1509-1564) was actually more significant to the future development of Protestantism than Martin Luther. He was twenty-six years younger than Luther and had the time and energy to take up where Luther left off. He

THE REFORMATION: PROTESTANT PHASE TWO

was a Frenchman, highly educated (in both theology and law) and intelligent. Persecuted in Catholic France for espousing his theology, he traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, in 1536. There, Protestant reform was already firmly entrenched. A council of sixty men had been elected by the populace to run the city according to "Reformed" principles established in Zurich by a reformer named Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531).

Reformed and Calvinist theology. Let's say something about the word *Reformed*. It means something more than simply a church that is part of the reforming movement. *Reformed* came to take on denominational significance. In other words, just as some Christians were saying they were Lutherans or Anabaptists, other people were now saying they belonged to the Reformed Church. Calvin moved into Geneva when the city was accepting and experimenting with Reformed theology. He added his own thoughts to Reformed doctrine. The result was a new presentation of Reformed doctrine known as Calvinism. In the future, more Protestants would belong to the Reformed churches than to the Lutheran Church. This especially would be true in America, where Puritans, Congregationalists, Baptists, Dutch Reformed and Presbyterians all based their faith on certain tenets of Calvinism.

Calvin's theology. What was Calvin's theology? We find it principally in his major work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). It was, and is, a tremendously influential treatise. Calvin went much farther than Luther in establishing the Bible as the sole source of Church authority. For Calvin, it was impossible to know anything at all about God that is not in the Bible. Thus, Church tradition and the teaching of Church councils were for Calvin attempts to usurp the authority of the Bible. Unlike Luther, who emphasized the primacy of the *gospel*, Calvin stressed the primacy of a written document—the Bible itself. This was the origin of Protestant literalism, and was perhaps aided by the fact that Calvin had studied law.

Calvin emphasized the majesty of God and the depravity and smallness of humanity. Thus he read the Bible as revealing an angry, wrathful God whom Christians had to serve in fear and trembling. The source of humanity's "frightful deformity," as Calvin called it, is original sin.² Original sin has so weakened and debased human nature that human beings can do nothing on their own that is pleasing to God. In fact, Calvin believed, the vast majority of human beings will never be saved from the devastating effects of original sin. Thus, most people are going to hell.

Calvin's doctrine of *predestination* was even sterner than Luther's. Luther based his version of predestination on God's *foreknowledge* of those who will accept Christ and those who won't. Calvin, however, saw God as *creating* some people for hell and some for heaven. It's not, as it was for Luther, that God knows in advance who will accept Christ and who won't. Rather, for Calvin,

¹ Perhaps the best example today of Anabaptist descendants are the Mennonites.

² Calvin relied heavily on Saint Augustine for the concept of original sin in his doctrine.

God chooses some to go to hell and some to go to heaven. For Calvin, this was not a frightening or pessimistic doctrine. Rather, for him it emphasized God's power and majesty. Only God could have the power and autonomy to send some to hell and some to heaven. The fact that we humans can't understand this mystery, Calvin believed, shows how small we are and how glorious God is.³

Another difference between Calvin and Luther concerns their respective views of the Eucharist. Both Catholics and Luther, although in differing ways (Catholics believing in transubstantiation, Luther in consubstantiation), believed Christ is present in the bread and wine of the altar. Calvin disagreed. For him, Christ remains in heaven during the liturgy. By receiving Communion, the believer is united with Christ in heaven by the work of the Holy Spirit. This was a position that stood halfway between Luther on the one hand and the followers of Zwingli on the other. The latter taught that the Eucharist is simply a memorial service. It commemorates the Last Supper, but that is all. Calvin was not willing to go that far. He believed that the Eucharist was something like a traditional sacrament. Yet, he was unwilling to locate Christ in the bread and wine themselves.

Life in Geneva. Calvin wanted his theology to be applied on the political level. In 1541 he became head of the council of elders that governed Geneva. This governing body came to be known as the *Presbytery*. Calvin and the Presbytery established a *theocracy* in Geneva. This means that they united religious law and civil law. They believed that God—through them—was in direct charge of Geneva. The most recent example of this type of government is the ayatollahs' Iran, where people who sin against the Islamic law are likewise guilty of breaking the Iranian civil law. So, too, in Geneva, Calvin ordered corporal punishment of fornicators and adulterers. He regulated people's dress, especially that of women, by forbidding jewelry and certain hairstyles. He forbade theater and other cultural works, and censored books and literature. He used torture to impose his doctrine.⁴

In Calvin's movement, then, a concern with religion spilled over into a concern for power. Until Calvin's death in 1564, it was power rather than religion that governed Christian life in Geneva. Traveling now to England, let's turn to another example of how the quest for power outstripped religious reform.

HENRY VIII AND ANGLICANISM

Since it's such a familiar story, we won't recount in detail King Henry VIII's motivations in breaking with Rome. The reader is referred instead to movies

THE REFORMATION: PROTESTANT PHASE TWO

like *Anne of a Thousand Days* or *A Man for All Seasons*. They are accurate, fascinating reproductions of Henry's conflict with Rome over his desire to divorce his wife and his subsequent angry break with the Catholic Church.

Henry, head of the English Church. Ironically, Henry started out by condemning Luther and the Reformation. Pope Leo X was so pleased with Henry for doing this that he named the king, "Defender of the Faith." Henry proudly bore this title, thinking himself the most loyal Catholic monarch in Europe. Yet, when his wife failed to produce a male heir to the throne, and the pope failed to approve Henry's request for an annulment, he turned colors and became the most determined opponent of Rome that one could find. In 1531, he ordered English priests and religious to acknowledge him "the protector and only supreme head of the Church and Clergy of England." From that point on, Henry governed the English Church as authoritatively as any pope.

In 1534, Parliament, now completely subservient to Henry, passed the Act of Succession. This Act required all Englishmen to swear an oath to Henry as head of the Anglican Church. It also required them to support Henry's daughter, Elizabeth, as his heir, rather than Mary. Mary was Henry's daughter by Catherine of Aragon (his partner in the marriage he had tried to have annulled). Mary Catholics refused the oath. The most famous of these was Sir Thomas More. More had been Lord Chancellor of England. When he refused to take Parliament's oath, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London and eventually beheaded for his faith. (See Focus 25.)

Cranmer and new theology. How did Henry's new establishment of the Anglican Church affect theology? The name to note here is Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. When Henry was King, Cranmer had to tread lightly. Henry was still a Catholic in religious sentiment. He refused to allow Lutheran or Calvinist doctrines into his Anglican Church. Henry, for example, kept the Catholic Mass and accepted the Catholic theology of the Mass. After Henry's death, however, Cranmer began openly to promote Lutheran and Calvinist theology. He repudiated Catholic teachings on the Mass such as transubstantiation and the idea of the Mass as a sacrifice. Cranmer was put to death during a brief Catholic resurgence under Queen Mary Tudor ("Bloody Mary"). But when Mary died and was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth I, Cranmer's theology returned to style.

Queen Elizabeth molds the new Anglican Church. It was really Queen Elizabeth rather than her father Henry VIII who established for the Church in England its distinctly Anglican character. Elizabeth first moved to persecute Catholics. Persecution was nothing new in England. Elizabeth's Catholic half-sister, Bloody Mary, had put Protestants to death. Henry VIII had executed Catholics. Anabaptists, Calvinists and anybody else who would not accept his direct political control of the English Church.

Elizabeth consolidated her theological grasp on the Anglican Church by

³ From a modern psychological viewpoint, one wonders if Calvin was not "projecting" his own grandiose need for power onto God.

⁴ The Catholic inquisitions likewise used torture. Both the inquisitors and Calvinists hideously distorted the gospel in their zeal to force their views on others.

having her advisors publish *The Book of Common Prayer* and the *Thirty-nine Articles*. The former was meant to be the standard for Anglican belief. It attempted to steer a middle path between traditional Catholicism and Protestant doctrines that rejected the sacraments altogether. For example, on the Eucharist, the prayer to be recited at the Anglican liturgy joined together a little bit of traditional belief in the Real Presence, and a little bit of the idea that the Eucharist was only a memorial of the Last Supper. The prayer read: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving."

The *Thirty-nine Articles* was likewise something of a compromise document. It upheld the validity of "traditions and ceremonies of the Church which be not repugnant to the Word of God." At the same time, it rejected purgatory, confession of sins to priests and indulgences. Elizabeth realized that many of her subjects were still very much Catholic. She thus tried to give them some leeway to accept Anglican doctrine. But when push came to shove, she angrily persecuted anyone who accepted the authority of Rome. As in Germany, the Reformation in England was more about power than about faith. Elizabeth wanted to shape the Church in England according to her views mostly for *political* reasons rather than for *religious* reasons. Let's look across the Channel to France and see how this theme was repeated there.

'PARIS IS WORTH A MASS'

The Reformation never gained a foothold in France as it did in Germany, Switzerland, England and elsewhere. There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the two most important are these: (1) Although reforming intellectuals like Calvin were prominent in France, most intellectuals stayed with Catholicism. (2) In addition, the French Catholic Church was already semi-independent before Luther's revolt. French Catholics had long been French first and Catholic second. They weren't about to tolerate Italian churchmen telling them what to do. King Francis I, only a year before Luther published his *Niney-five Theses*, had gained from Pope Leo X the right to appoint French bishops and abbots in France.

Yet, Luther's and Calvin's respective doctrines did gain popularity in France. And when King Francis persecuted and murdered large numbers of Protestants in southern France, the outrage produced more converts for the Protestant cause. The French converts called themselves *Huguenots*. Huguenot power spread throughout southwestern France. French princes, like their German counterparts, thought they, too, could use religion to further their political ambitions. They wanted to be independent from the French Crown and rule their own duchies independently. They hoped the Protestant movement would help them do this.

By 1559, the resulting religious turmoil had reached fever pitch. Perhaps

half of the French nobility had deserted Catholicism for one Protestant sect or another. Even more important, the large, educated, skilled middle class in France was moving swiftly toward conversion to Protestantism. In 1562, religious warfare broke out. Cruelty and persecution were practiced by both sides.

The worst incident occurred in 1572. The French queen, Catherine d' Medici, persuaded a powerful duke to assassinate the Huguenot leader. The attempt failed. Panic-stricken, the queen persuaded her son, King Charles IX, to slaughter Huguenots in their homes before they could retaliate. Some ten thousand were murdered in this "St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre," as it came to be known. When Pope Gregory XIII in Rome heard the news, he attributed the action to God's divine intervention on behalf of the Catholic cause and called for a celebration. The pope, too, thus showed that he was more interested in power than he was in the gospel.

When the Catholic king, Charles, died, the crown eventually descended to a Protestant prince, Henry of Navarre. However, French Catholics refused to accept Henry. Henry wanted desperately to conquer Paris, the Catholic stronghold. War waged back and forth. When Henry at last stood before the walls of Paris, he felt unconfident about proceeding further. He realized that the vast majority of the lower classes were Catholic. And since the lower classes in France comprised most of the population, Henry admitted to himself that a Protestant king could never rule the hearts of his subjects.

He thus took a step motivated purely by expediency. "Paris is worth a Mass," he said, as he converted to Catholicism. Henry restored order to France and ended the religious strife. He even granted the Protestants a good deal of freedom in worshipping as they chose.

But Henry's opportunistic conversion proved to everyone that the Reformation was not so much concerned with religion as it was with power. What had started out with Luther as a religious revolt, ended up a half-century after Luther as competition for political control of the Church and the accompanying control of people's lives by the state.

FOCUS 25

THOMAS MORE: SAINT, REBEL OR PATRIOT?

Four hundred years after he was put to death for refusing to accept King Henry VIII as head of the English Church, Thomas More was made a saint of the Catholic Church. But why did More refuse the oath he was told to take? Let's look at the details. Had More accepted Parliament's Act of Succession, he would have agreed that Henry was sovereign of the English Church. He also would have accepted Elizabeth as Henry's heir. To More's way of thinking, Elizabeth was an illegitimate child. She had been born to the King's former mistress Anne Boleyn. More felt that Henry's first wife, Queen Catherine of Aragon, was Henry's lawful wife. Thus, for More, Catherine's daughter, Mary, was lawful heir to the throne. In refusing the oath, More, a highly skilled lawyer, acted as any English lawyer might have done. That is, he refused to condone the king's attempt to subvert the laws of royal descent.

But a close reading of the events leading to More's death reveals something else at work in More's heart. He primarily refused Henry's oath because he realized that if Henry were to succeed, the Church in England would be splintered into dozens of competing bodies. In this he was proven to be right. More hated the corruption in the Catholic Church and frequently condemned it. Yet, he preferred Rome and all its folly to a Church that was torn by doctrinal strife and contradictory teachings. He realized that if Henry became head of the Church in England, there would soon be not one pope competing for Christians' loyalty, but dozens. For More, the Church, sinful as it was, had to remain unified. He could not participate in its being divided. For that conviction he was willing to pay with his life. Thomas More died as a man who loved his country and his Church equally. He was an English patriot who died for his faith and for his king.

FOCUS 26

HEALING THE BREACH: A FIRST STEP TOWARD RESOLVING THE THEOLOGICAL QUESTION THAT UNDERLIES THE PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC SPLIT

As we leave the Protestant phase of the Reformation era, let's notice that recently there's been some good news on the theological front. Recall that Luther's bedrock doctrine was "justification by faith apart from works of the law" (cf. Galatians 3:11). For Luther, as well as for all later Protestant reformers, this doctrine was virtually a theme song by which they rallied their troops to combat Catholicism, with its supposed insistence on "works" as the means to salvation. On June 25, 1998, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, as approved by Pope John Paul II, published its Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, which in turn had been approved in Geneva by the Lutheran World Federation (an organization which represents fifty-seven million of the world's sixty-one million Lutherans). In the *Joint Declaration*, Catholics and Lutherans now profess together:

By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.... We confess together that good works—a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love—follow justification and are its fruits.... When Catholics [as at the Council of Trent] say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities. (*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, in *Origins* [Catholic News Service: Washington, D.C.] Vol. 28; No. 8, July 16, 1998, pp. 120-124.)

Catholics do not believe that they are saved by their own efforts, any more than Lutherans do (cf. Focus 8). Yet, although Catholics share this faith, sometimes we have acted as though we believe otherwise—with our scores of devotions, novenas, indulgences, miraculous medals and so on.

All of these practices do nothing to "earn grace," as often seemed to be the understanding in the pre-Vatican II Church. If they fit in anywhere in the Christian life, they fit in as responses to God's goodness for having already earned all the grace for us that was ever available—when Jesus died on the cross. In the *Joint Declaration*, it is stated, "Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, to look away from one's own experience and to trust

in Christ's forgiving word alone" (page 120).
 In other words, we Catholics, in our spirituality have sometimes acted as if our salvation is a question of accumulating spiritual bonus points, when in reality it depends on what God has done in Jesus Christ, rather than on anything we do. With the *Joint Declaration*, we move at least a little closer to reconciling the long and painful separation between Christians that began in the sixteenth century.

THE REFORMATION: THE CATHOLIC PHASE

CATHOLIC REFORM BEFORE LUTHER

It would be inaccurate to think that there was no reformation within the Church before Martin Luther initiated the Reformation. Well before Luther, Catholics had sought to reform the Church. In actuality, the Church is always in need of reformation and the Church has repeatedly responded to this need. Think, for example, of the Cluniac reformation that we studied earlier. Think also of the debate in the fourteenth century over the Church's wealth and over ownership of private property by the clergy. Many Franciscan preachers condemned such ownership, allowing themselves only to "use" property, not own it. These radical Franciscans were not very successful. Clerical ownership of property and clerical competition for money and power were commonly accepted in the late Middle Ages.

Yet the reforming impulse within the Church continued. One of the most notable examples of this was the foundation of religious orders whose very purpose was to reform the Church. The Theatine Fathers, for example, were founded shortly after Luther's revolt by Gaetano di Triene. Paolo Consiglieri, Bonifacio da Colle and Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa. Cardinal Carafa would later become the stern, reform-minded Pope Paul IV (see below). The Theatines dedicated themselves to improving both the educational level of the clergy and the clergy's spirituality. More than two hundred Theatine priests were appointed bishops. They carried Theatine reforming zeal into their dioceses.

Ironically, the very age in which Church corruption had sunk to the depths was also the age in which Catholic reform preaching reached a high point. John Capistrano, Bernardino of Siena, Vincent Ferrer and Archbishop Antoninus of Florence all flourished in the fifteenth century. They were all masters of reforming oratory. They preached reform to clergy and laity alike, calling many within the Church to return to the gospel. It was said that Bernardino of Siena, by his preaching alone, converted entire towns. Along with preaching there were reform writings, such as Cardinal Gasparo Contarini's book, *On the Duty of the Bishop*. In this influential book, Cardinal

Contarini strongly criticized the life-styles of bishops and urged them to reform.

CATHOLICISM RESPONDS TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Yet to be historically accurate, we must say that the Catholic Church didn't take reform seriously until Luther's revolt started succeeding. To be blunt, the Catholic Church didn't reform until it had to. A clear sign that the Catholic Church was going to take internal reform seriously was given during the papal election following the death of Pope Leo X. Prior to Pope Leo's death, Italian politics, including bribery and intimidation, assured that candidates only from wealthy Italian families could be elected pope. In 1522, however, the cardinals who met in the electoral conclave turned to a reform-minded Dutchman. The new pope kept his own name, Adrian, and was known as Pope Adrian VI.¹

The reforming Dutch pope. Adrian Dedel (1459-1523) was one of the most interesting figures of his day. He had taught the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus was the most respected scholar in Europe and a leading Catholic advocate of reform. So scathing were Erasmus's reform writings that it would later be said, "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched." In addition, Pope Adrian had tutored Emperor Charles. Then, he had been appointed archbishop of Tortosa in Spain. It was in Spain that he learned of his election by the cardinals to the papacy. Before leaving for Rome to accept the papal office, he wrote a stern letter to the Sacred College. In it, he told the cardinals that he was coming not to celebrate with them, but to chastise and correct them.

Similarly, he wrote letters to Catholic princes throughout the Empire, criticizing them for creating a climate in which clerical corruption could flourish. For example, consider the letter Pope Adrian wrote to a Diet of German princes and bishops.

All of us, prelates and clergy, have turned aside from the road of righteousness and for a long time now there has been not even one who did good.... You must therefore promise in our name that we intend to exert ourselves so that, first of all, the Roman Curia, from which perhaps all this evil took its start, may be improved. Then, just as from here the sickness spread, so also from here recovery and renewal may begin.²

Had Adrian lived to enforce his reforming policies, it is highly possible that the Protestant Reformation would have been nipped in the bud. The fact is, however, that Adrian served as pope for only a year, dying in 1523. It was

THE REFORMATION: THE CATHOLIC PHASE

well known that he had incurred enemies within the ranks of the cardinals for proposing reconciliation with Luther. It was rumored that the pope wanted to make the following concessions to Luther and his followers: acceptance of a married clergy; acceptance of communion to be received by the faithful as both bread and wine; and acceptance of Mass in the vernacular. Indeed, twice conferences between Lutherans and delegates from Rome met to discuss these proposals. With Adrian's death, the conferences came to nothing.

Setback under Clement. Instead, the cardinals meeting to elect Adrian's successor, returned to their policy of choosing wealthy Italians from powerful families. Adrian's successor, Pope Clement VII (1523-1534), was a Medici. Clement profoundly underestimated the gravity of Luther's movement. Clement should have turned all of his attention to the still-healable breach between Luther and Rome. Instead, Clement spent his papacy involved in political intrigues and schemes calculated to improve his political fortunes. He even plotted against the one man who could have helped him prevent the spread of Luther's movement—the Catholic emperor Charles. Clement encouraged Charles's enemies, and Charles grew so angry that he sent his German troops to sack Rome. During one week in 1527, both Catholic and Lutheran soldiers under Charles's authority laid waste to Rome. In order to avoid arrest by Charles's soldiers, Clement had to sneak out of Rome in disguise.

Clement's reign was a debacle. With Adrian, the Catholic Church had considered the possibility of reconciling with Luther. With Clement, all hope of reconciliation was lost. It was Clement who mishandled Henry VIII's demand for a divorce. The pope stood fast in disallowing Henry's request. He did so largely for political reasons and without using tact in dealing with Henry. Clement sided with Spain in the controversy. Spain wanted to uphold the honor of their Spanish queen, Catherine of Aragon, when she resisted the divorce. Henry's rage against Rome was directed as much at Clement's favoritism toward Spain as it was at the pope's canonical reasons for denying Henry an annulment. Had Clement been more compassionate and tactful, Henry might never have broken with Rome. By Clement's death in 1534, not only England, but many other areas of Europe had become firmly Protestant. This was due largely to Clement's ineptitude in confronting the religious crisis that had engulfed Europe.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

Clement's blunders led to his successor's call for a reforming Church council. Pope Paul III (1534-1549) announced the council in 1535. Yet for six years, bishops and princes stalled and argued with each other about where they should meet. Finally, in 1541, Emperor Charles intervened. He suggested that the council meet in the German town of Trent, which lay just over the Italian border. Even with the emperor's urging, however, it took four more years for the bishops

¹ In some lists of the popes he is called Hadrian, after the Roman emperor of the same name.

² Pope Adrian VI, "Instruction to the Diet of Nuremberg" (1522), in Hubert Jedin, ed., *History of the Church*, 10 vols. (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), vol. V, p. 108.

to quit fighting with one another and agree to meet in council at Trent.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was concerned with two agendas: ending corruption in the Church and solidifying Catholic dogma against the new Protestant doctrines. The Council was not as successful in achieving an end to corruption as it was in clarifying doctrine. The struggle to end corruption would be taken over by reform-minded popes like Paul IV. He would be aided by new religious orders that insisted on adherence to gospel life-styles for its members. The most notable of these reforming orders was the Jesuits, of whom we shall say more shortly.

Trent on dogma. As for its doctrinal thrust, the Council of Trent made many lasting accomplishments. We can only highlight some of these. In response to Luther's teaching on the Bible, the Council had this to say:

The Church receives and venerates with a feeling of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; also, the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession.³

In other words, the Council made it clear that God's revelation is to be found both in Scripture and in Church tradition. This position was at odds with the teaching of Protestant theologians. They taught that "Scripture alone" is the source of God's revelation—not Scripture plus Church tradition.

On the key issue which led Luther to break with Rome, justification by faith, the Council stated that God alone, through Jesus Christ, justifies human beings. Further, the Council stated, the gift of justification is just that—a gift. It cannot be earned by human effort. Even in the sacraments, the Council stressed, it is God's initiative, and not human initiative, that makes the sacraments efficacious. So far, Luther would have been in agreement with the Council on this point.

Where they differed was in speaking of the role of human will. It is erroneous, the Council taught, to say, as Luther and Calvin taught, that God saves people apart from any apparent good works they may perform. For Luther and Calvin, the human will was powerless to do any good at all until God had justified a person. The Council, on the other hand, said that sinners can "convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with God's grace."⁴ Thus, in this sense, the Council taught that both faith and good works lead to salvation.

Yet, the Council stressed that one can gain spiritual merits from good works only after one has been justified by God's grace of salvation as received in Baptism. For the Council fathers, salvation is both a "grace and a

reward." It is a grace "promised to the sons of God through Jesus Christ." It is "reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given" because of the believer's good works and spiritual merits.

The means by which faith and works come together in the believer's life is the sacraments. The Council said the sacraments are necessary for salvation. It upheld the traditional seven sacraments (those tabulated by Peter Lombard during the Middle Ages), and upheld the doctrine of transubstantiation. It also said that the sacraments confer grace in and of themselves. That is, the sacraments do not give grace merely because of the believer's faith, as some Protestants taught.

Rather, the Council taught, the grace of the sacraments is always present. This is so regardless of one's state of holiness. The sacraments are efficacious by themselves. They are not "stirred into action" as it were, by the faith or holiness of the believer. Likewise, the lack of sanctity in a priest cannot nullify the effectiveness of the sacraments.

For Protestants, the Council's declaration on the sacraments meant that Rome still upheld "works" as a means to salvation. That is, Protestants believed that through its teaching on the sacraments the Catholic Church still held out to people the possibility of "earning their way" to heaven. The Council insisted, however, that it is Christ working in the sacraments that makes them efficacious. Christ's presence in the sacraments, the Council said, means that God always takes the initiative in giving grace through the sacraments. Thus for the Council of Trent, the grace of the sacraments is not "earned," as the Protestants said. Rather, in the sacraments, the believer responds in faith to God's initiative.

THE JESUITS: PUTTING TRENT'S DECREES INTO ACTION

Historically, the hierarchy had shown itself to be inadequate at implementing its own reform. Thus, all that was needed for the decrees of the Council of Trent to be implemented was someone to implement them. The Catholic Church found this "someone" in the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits. This religious society was founded by a Basque knight named Ignatius Loyola (1495-1556). Like Luther in many respects, Loyola was scrupulous and stern in his faith. Unlike Luther, he had been converted from a life of pleasure. He became the most ardent advocate of Catholicism in the entire age of Reformation. In opposition to the Protestant doctrines, Loyola and the Jesuits preached "the Tridentine faith." (The word *Tridentine* referred to the dogma clarified at Trent.)

Showing his military perspective on things, Loyola made his followers take a vow "to serve the Roman pontiff as God's vicar on earth and to execute immediately and without hesitation or excuse all that the reigning pope or his

³ In Justo Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), vol. III, p. 54.

⁴ This was essentially Saint Augustine's position on grace and free will, as summarized by the Synod of Orange (529); see p. 32.

successors may enjoin upon them." Loyola wrote that the Jesuits "ought always to be ready to believe that what seems to us white is black if the hierarchical Church so defines it." Within twenty-five years of their founding in 1540, the Jesuits had attracted over a thousand of the most educated, zealous, reform-minded men in Europe.

They fanned out from Rome on missions into every corner of the globe. They became the leading Catholic educators and missionaries, both in Europe and in the new world. After the Jesuits' founding, Loyola himself served as "general" or administrator of the Society. His associates, Francis Xavier, Peter Faber, Peter Canisius, Francis Borgia, James Laynez and other first-generation Jesuits, spread the Tridentine faith throughout the world. The Jesuits stemmed the Protestant tide. After they began preaching, no further principalities or countries in Europe would go over to Protestantism.

HEALTHY REFORM— AND REFORM TO AN EXCESS— UNDER POPE PAUL IV

Healthy reform. What happened to the Catholic Church because of the Council of Trent? The most obvious answer is that the Catholic Church now took reform seriously. The Jesuits took the lead by setting a no-compromise example of poverty, chastity and obedience. These vows had always been professed by the clergy, but now the clergy started to live them. The entire climate changed within the Church. Popes and bishops quit winking at corruption. They insisted that the lower clergy lead moral lives. Bishops were appointed to their sees and told to live there. They could not be absentee administrators as before. Further, they could no longer serve as bishop or abbot of more than one benefice (place) at a time. The Catholic Church also moved against simony by prohibiting the sale of Church offices.⁵

It likewise banned nepotism by prohibiting the appointment of one's relatives to Church offices, a practice that had been common during the Renaissance.

Reform to an excess. The man who first imposed many of these tough restrictions was Pope Paul IV (1555-1559). Paul was known for his iron will and no-nonsense attitude toward Church reform. In a sense, he became a Catholic Calvin. Paul instructed the magistrate who administered the city of Rome to punish immoral conduct as a violation of the civil law. The pope also proclaimed that no book could be published unless it first cleared the Church's censors. The book must then bear the word *Imprimatur*, which means, "Let it be printed." In 1559, Paul published an *Index of Forbidden*

⁵ This was principally a reaffirmation of earlier Councils' (Chalcedon [451] and Third Lateran [1179]) condemnations of simony.

Books and ordered mass burning of suspect books. All Protestant works plus any Catholic works critical of Rome were consigned to the flames. Paul then restored the dreaded Inquisition.⁶

The pope turned the Inquisition into a means of persecution every bit as intolerant as the methods used in Calvin's Geneva. Tolerance and acceptance of religious differences were not to be permitted within the Catholic Church. As Paul himself wrote, "No man must debase himself by showing toleration toward heretics of any kind, above all toward Calvinists." The Inquisition eventually became a means of Church-sponsored terrorism. One contemporary cardinal observed, "From no other judgement seat on earth were more horrible and fearful sentences to be expected." Pope Paul even had people burned at the stake "by proxy." When the Inquisition acquitted a cardinal whom Paul had accused of heresy, the pope burned the accused's brother at the stake instead.

TOWARD THE AGE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Was Paul's papacy an aberration? The Jesuit Peter Canisius said of Paul, "Even the best Catholics disapprove of such rigor." Paul's successor, Pius IV (1559-1565), sought to distance himself from Paul's tactics by telling the papal inquisitors to "proceed with gentlemanly courtesy rather than with monkish harshness." Yet, the damage had been done. Paul's actions encouraged overzealous Protestant reformers, in effect, to go the Catholics one better. Protestants thus developed their own cruel and violent means to squelch Catholicism.

In the next chapter we shall see how the Reformation degenerated into a battle to prove one's own faith "right" and the other side's faith "wrong." At first a *debate over doctrine*, the Reformation would now be a *war among Christians* seeking to outdo each other by their intolerance. The age of "us versus them" in the Church had arrived.

⁶ This was the "Congregation of the Inquisition," which was the final court of appeal from the lower inquisitions. It had been established by Pope Paul III in 1542.

FOCUS 27**MOVING FROM THE COUNCIL OF TRENT TO VATICAN II**

Until about 1965, Catholics and Protestants alike thought that Catholicism came only in one "package." Then Vatican II came along and showed that the way in which Catholics practice the traditional faith can change. While this encouraged many Protestants, it frightened many Catholics. Most Catholics of that era had grown up as Tridentine Catholics, but without realizing this. The Catholic Church had been very self-assured and strict in its preaching of Tridentine Catholicism. Thus, most Catholics didn't realize that this model of the Church went back only to the sixteenth century, and that it was not incapable of being updated. For example, priests wearing Italian *birettas* (liturgical hats), nuns dressed in seventeenth-century French costumes, believers "going to confession" in a dark box, celebrating Mass in Latin and in the manner defined at Trent, were all mistakenly thought of by many Catholics as the way things had always been done in the Church.

In fact, Trent introduced many innovations into the practice of Catholicism. The sixteenth-century model of the Church was no more valid than that of the tenth century, or the eighth or the fourth. Yet, until Vatican II, the Catholic Church often made it seem as though only Trent's version of Catholicism was valid.

A famous Catholic theologian, Bernard Lonergan, S.J., once said of Tridentine doctrine on the eve of Vatican II that "it was so fixed and inflexible that it did not require a mind to think it." Vatican II changed that. Vatican II showed Catholics that the faith of the apostles could be professed in a twentieth-century model. No longer was it necessary for Catholics to live in the sixteenth century. Yet, Trent's lesson is valuable. Vatican II is not carved in stone either. Once the Catholic Church implements the teachings of Vatican II, it must then move onward toward the new and the unknown. Christianity is ever looking forward. To present the gospel in only one "package" is to restrict the work of the Spirit, who continually makes all things new.

FOCUS 28**TERESA OF AVILA:
A WOMAN CONTRIBUTES TO CHURCH REFORM**

Not many would think of the mystic Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) as a Church reformer. Yet, her entire life was in one sense dedicated to reforming the Church. To begin with, when she was prioress of her Carmelite convent in Avila, Spain, Teresa was widely sought out by male Church leaders for spiritual direction. The life of contemplative holiness that Teresa passed on to her spiritual disciples radiated throughout the Church. Teresa could be blunt in her correctives. Like Saint Catherine of Siena before her, Teresa did not shrink from telling powerful bishops and cardinals to reform their lives and turn to the gospel.

Teresa's most lasting contributions to the age of the Reformation were her writings: *Vida, The Way of Perfection* and *The Interior Castle*. In them she encouraged Christians to devote themselves to contemplative prayer. She defines this prayer as "friendly intercourse and frequent solitary converse with Him Who we know loves us." Teresa was a great mystic, blessed with amazing insights into the ways of God. In one of her visions she was granted a special insight of the Trinity, the greatest of mysteries. Yet, Teresa constantly stressed that the way of contemplative holiness was for everyone, and not just for monks and nuns shut away in monasteries.

She also stressed that the purpose of contemplative prayer is to lead Christians toward service of the Church. Teresa practiced what she preached. She would often interrupt her solitary prayer life to attend to the most mundane duties of her convent, or to counsel someone whose faith needed strengthening. She was truly a contemplative in action. Her faith and her teachings spread throughout the Catholic world. She motivated Catholics to achieve the only true "Church reform" that is possible—the reform of the human heart from within by the power of the Spirit.