

L E S S O N 1

The Decline of Church Authority

THINKING FOCUS

What challenges did the Catholic church face between 1300 and 1500? Why?

Key Terms

- council
- indulgence

► Ornate, gold-encrusted crosses such as this one created in the 1300s reveal how wealthy the church had become. Compare it to this English crown, the symbol of the monarch's power. Which seems more impressive?

We are obliged by the faith to believe and hold . . . that there is one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church, and that outside this church there is neither salvation nor [pardon] of sins. . . . Of this one and only church there is one body and one head—not two heads, like a monster. . . . Furthermore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman [pope].

Pope Boniface VIII,
Unam Sanctam, 1302

King Philip IV of France knew that this latest decree from the pope was a response to the king's most recent challenge to the Catholic

church. He had ordered the church to pay taxes. Pope Boniface VIII replied by issuing a strong statement of his authority—the *Unam Sanctam*.

Furious, King Philip ordered his men to arrest Boniface at his family home in Anagni, Italy, and bring him back to France for trial. Though the aged pope died before he reached France, the king had succeeded in humiliating him. He had also damaged the authority of the once powerful church.



Conflicts over Power

Between 1100 and 1300, the office of the pope was extremely powerful. Indeed, during this time, the Catholic church had become increasingly involved in political matters, helping to hold Europe together. By the end of the 1300s,

however, monarchs who resented the pope's interference had risen to power. King Philip IV was one of many who refused to bow to the pope's authority.

Challenges from Monarchs

The cardinals, the highest ranking clergy under the pope, were responsible for electing a new pope when the old one died. In 1305, the cardinals attempted to restore harmony between the French monarchy and the church by electing a Frenchman as the new pope. This did improve the relationship between the French monarchy and the office of the pope. But then the new pope, Clement V, did something that angered the monarchs of other European countries. He moved the pope's residence to Avignon (*ah vee NYAWN*), France, to keep it safe from fighting going on in Italy.

The pope's residence remained in Avignon for 70 years, during which time seven popes were elected. The rulers of such countries as England, Germany, and the Italian city-states thought that these popes were dominated by

France. Although this was not entirely true, the monarchs nevertheless resented what they saw as France's overwhelming influence over the church. As a result, the church was less respected and lost some of its power to influence rulers.

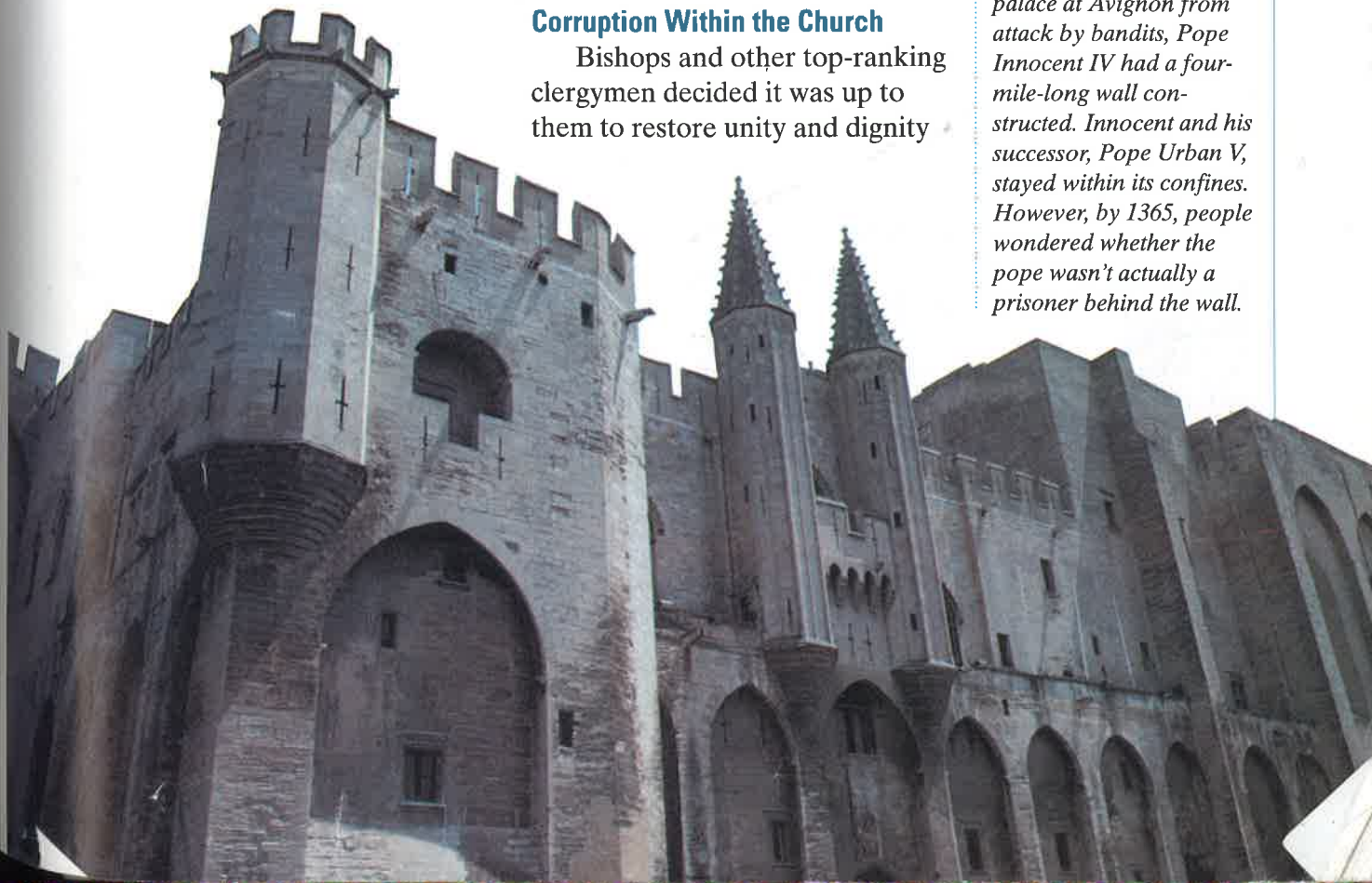
In 1376, Pope Gregory XI moved the pope's residence back to Rome. When he died in 1378, Urban VI, an Italian extremely unpopular with the French, was elected pope. In protest the French cardinals elected a Frenchman, Clement VII, who returned the pope's residence to Avignon. Pope Urban VI, however, refused to step down from office. Now the church had two popes!

✎ This split, known as the Great Schism, weakened the church's authority. Many people, not knowing which pope to follow, lost faith in the church's ability to provide spiritual leadership.

Corruption Within the Church

Bishops and other top-ranking clergymen decided it was up to them to restore unity and dignity

▼ To protect the papal palace at Avignon from attack by bandits, Pope Innocent IV had a four-mile-long wall constructed. Innocent and his successor, Pope Urban V, stayed within its confines. However, by 1365, people wondered whether the pope wasn't actually a prisoner behind the wall.



to the church. During the 1400s, they created a series of **councils**, or groups of church leaders, which met to rule on matters of church law and faith. These councils became much more powerful than the pope. One council, the Council of Constance, finally reunited the church under one pope in Rome in 1417. Thus ended the Great Schism.

Although the councils reunited the church, they did not help it regain its former power. In time, the councils came to be controlled by the European monarchs.

Corrupt practices among the clergy further weakened their authority. The church collected taxes, property titles, and court fines to

obtain the money it needed to support itself. However, some clergy also sold **indulgences** to believers who felt they had sinned. These certificates, issued by the pope, were said to reduce or cancel punishment for a person's sins. With the wealth they obtained, some popes and higher clergy lived like princes.

Furthermore, the church sold clerical positions to the highest bidder, regardless of a person's background. This practice resulted in some clergy who were immoral, uneducated, or even illiterate. As such practices continued, the priesthood became more corrupt. Many people questioned the spiritual leadership of the clergy. ■

■ *How did the conflict between kings and popes lead to the Great Schism?*

The Call for Church Reform

The church had a long tradition of reform. Reformers called for changes among the clergy, including a return to the spiritual ideals set forth in the Bible. By the 1300s, however, the clergy had become so corrupt that these ideals had been forgotten. Many people were outraged by the abuses of the church. How could the clergy teach the Bible if they weren't devout

or couldn't read? Yet those who spoke out against church practices were branded as heretics. The church punished heretics with excommunication or execution.

Challengers of the Church

John Wycliffe, a scholar at Oxford University in England, was one such challenger of the church. In his writings in the late 1300s, he declared that monarchs should rule over the church in their own kingdoms. He also translated the Bible from Latin into English, which threatened the clergy's power. Since they were among the small percentage of the population able to read Latin, people depended on them to interpret the Latin Bible. If the Bible could be taught and read in English, people could interpret its meaning themselves.

Wycliffe was not the only reformer who defied the church. His

▼ *Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were two Protestant martyrs burned at the stake for heresy in 1555.*



ideas also influenced John Hus, an eastern European priest. In fiery sermons, Hus spoke out against the practice of selling indulgences and called for reform.

Spiritual Movements

Spiritual movements also formed in response to the abuses of the church. These groups did not seek to reform the church but rather to express religious feelings in their own way. One such group, the Mystics, believed that a person could experience God through prayer, without the aid of a priest. Since the Mystics believed that both men and women could

experience God directly through prayer, many women were drawn to Mysticism. Margery Kempe and Catherine of Siena were two well-known Mystics.

From Philip IV of France to John Wycliffe of London to the Mystics of the 1300s and 1400s, people questioned the church's authority. They paved the way for Martin Luther, whose ideas would change the church forever. ■



▲ Catherine of Siena claimed that she “was chosen and sent on to this earth in order to right a great scandal.” That scandal was the Great Schism.

Then the Archbishop said to [Margery Kempe]: “I have received bad reports about you. They tell me you are a very wicked woman.” And she replied: “Sir, they tell me that you are a wicked man. . . .”

Then an important cleric in a furred hood said: “Hold your tongue: talk about yourself, and leave him alone. . . .”

Then the Archbishop said to her: “You will swear that you will neither teach the people in my diocese, nor argue with them.”

“No sir, I will not swear that,” she said, “because I shall talk about God . . .”

Straight away an important cleric produced a book, and quoted St. Paul against her, saying that no woman ought to preach.

She in reply said: “I am not preaching, sir, I do not get up in a pulpit. I only use conversation and holy talk and I intend to do that as long as I live.”

From *The Book of Margery Kempe*, c. 1432

■ What church doctrine did the early reformers oppose?

R E V I E W

1. **FOCUS** What challenges did the Catholic church face between 1300 and 1500? Why?
2. **CONNECT** Why might it be said that the church reformers of the 1300s and 1400s were carrying out the spirit of the Renaissance?
3. **HISTORY** How did corruption within the church contribute to its loss of authority among the people?
4. **BELIEF SYSTEMS** What basic principle did early religious reformers emphasize?
5. **CRITICAL THINKING** Find evidence from the lesson to support this statement: Power corrupts. Do you think this generalization always holds true? Explain.
6. **ACTIVITY** Enact a scene in which people are buying indulgences. Have one or two students pretend to be each of the following: priests, people who want to buy indulgences, reformers, and church officials who condemn the reformers as heretics.

L E S S O N 2

Martin Luther and the Reformation

THINKING FOCUS

What was Luther's role in the Reformation?

Key Terms

- Protestant
- Reformation
- pamphlet

► The entrance doors to All Saints Church are now inscribed with Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*.

Martin Luther, a priest and professor at the University of Wittenberg, approached All Saints Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. Quickly he nailed some papers, handwritten in Latin, to the church door.

No crowd gathered to see what Luther was doing. However, on the outskirts of Wittenberg, people were gathering around Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk. Tetzel

had been authorized by the pope to sell indulgences.

It was against such practices that Luther was protesting in the papers he nailed to the church door. In these papers, his *Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther explained his objections. He saw the practices as proof of how greedy and corrupt the Catholic church had become. Luther challenged the church to defend itself—if it could. He read over one of his theses:

Why does not the Pope, whose riches are at this day more ample than those of the wealthiest of the wealthy, build the one Basilica of St. Peter's with his own money, rather than with that of poor believers?

Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* was really an invitation to scholars to debate certain church issues. He had no idea that his challenge to the church would light a fire of protest and change that would sweep across Europe.



Luther Questions the Church



Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany. Luther's father, a hard-working miner, wanted his son to be a lawyer. So in 1501, Luther began studying law at the University of Erfurt.

A Man of Faith

One day in 1505, Luther was caught in a thunderstorm and thrown to the ground when a bolt of lightning struck nearby. Like most men and women of his time, Luther believed that God could come to the aid of humans. In the

storm he cried out, "Help, St. Anne, and I'll become a monk." True to his word, that same year Luther ceased studying law and joined the monastery in Erfurt.

Luther was a model monk, and in 1507, he was ordained a priest. A year later, Luther was selected from among his peers to teach at the University of Wittenberg.

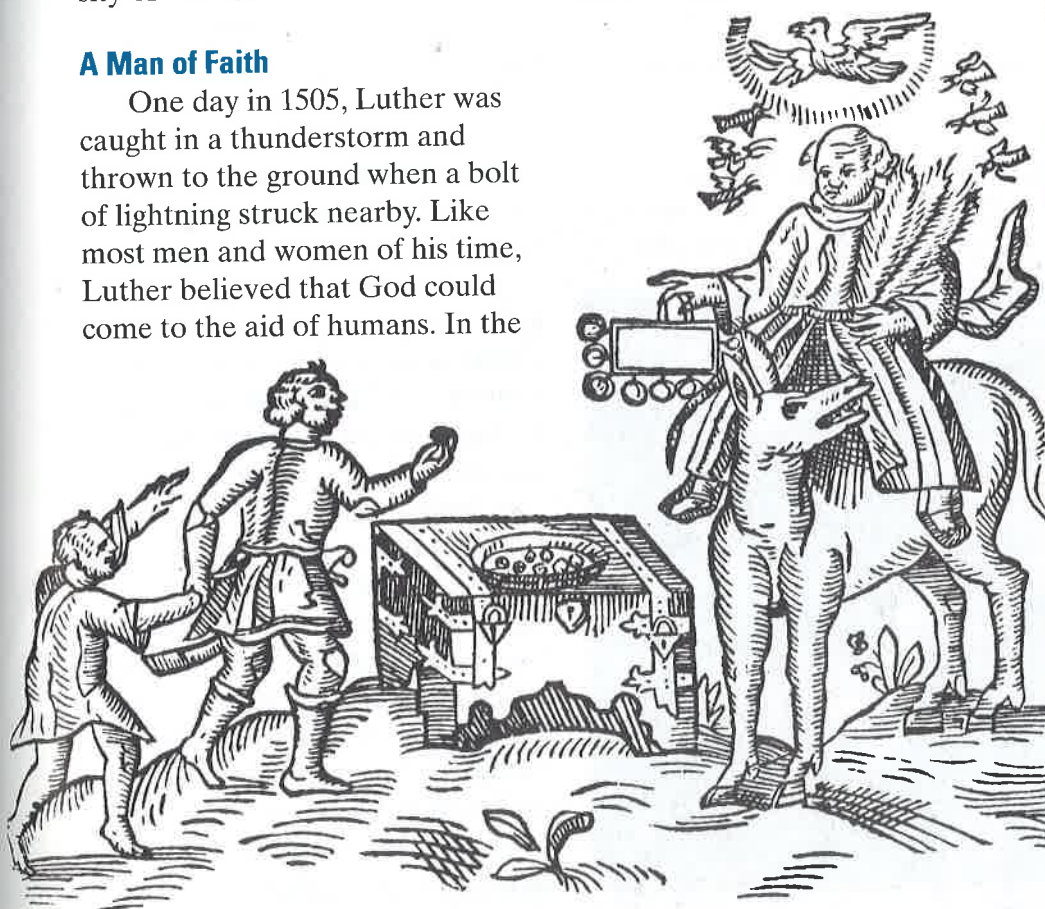
A New Religion

As a monk Luther had struggled to understand the true nature of godliness. The church taught that the performance of religious ritual and good deeds was necessary to ensure the soul's salvation. Luther worked hard to satisfy the church and save his soul. But he worried that his actions might not satisfy God.

◀ At the University of Erfurt, Luther became known for his long and serious talks. His friends nicknamed him "the philosopher." This engraving depicts Luther as he looked at this time.

Across Time & Space

Reform is not restricted to either the Middle Ages or the church. In the 1950s and 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr., led a social reform movement in the United States seeking racial equality. Under the leadership of this Baptist minister named for Martin Luther, the movement for civil rights gained wide support from blacks and whites. His policy of nonviolent protest helped curb racial injustice in the South.



◀ Johann Tetzel sold so many indulgences that some people made fun of him in a popular rhyme: "As soon as money in the box rings, The soul from Hell's fire springs."

Luther's fears vanished, however, when he read St. Paul's letter to the Romans: "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Romans 1:17). To Luther, Paul's message seemed clear: the path to God is through faith alone. Forgiveness was not something the church could grant, nor was it something individuals could achieve on their own. Instead, it was given by God to each person who accepted Him. This theory became known as justification by faith, meaning that a person could be made just, or good, by his or her faith in God.

Luther's belief in justification by faith led him to question the Catholic church's practice of selling indulgences. He objected not only to the church's greed but to the very idea of indulgences. He did not believe the Catholic church had the power to pardon people's sins. Rather, Luther taught that

salvation could be achieved only through God's mercy. No one needed to seek or buy salvation through the church.

By nailing his theses to the church door, Luther was not acting as a heretic. He was simply inviting other scholars to respond to his ideas in a debate, an ordinary method of learning at universities of his day.

At first, no one accepted Luther's invitation. Over the next few years, however, his *Ninety-Five Theses* sparked a religious movement to reform the Catholic church. Because the reformers were protesting against what they felt to be the abuses of the Catholic church, they came to be known as **Protestants**. And because they wanted to reform the Catholic church, that is, improve it by making changes, their movement is known as the **Reformation**. ■

■ *How did Martin Luther's beliefs conflict with church doctrine and practices?*

▼ *Luther claimed that his burning the bull was purely symbolic; in reality he thought it was the pope himself who should have been burned.*

The Reformation Begins

Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* were soon translated from Latin into German. Within a year, his

ideas were known throughout Europe. As one historian put it, they spread "as if angels from heaven themselves had been their messengers." Encouraged by this success, Luther wrote hundreds of essays between 1517 and 1546, in which he stressed justification by faith and criticized church abuses.

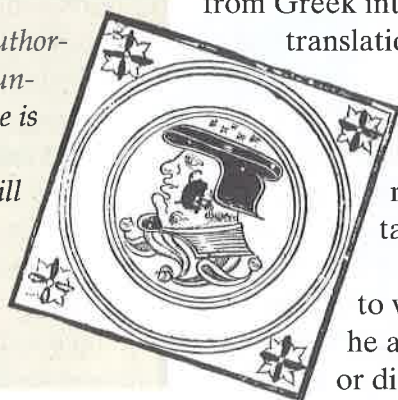
✱ Finally, in 1520, Pope Leo X issued a bull—a statement of the pope's authority—condemning Luther and banning his works. Defying the pope, Luther publicly burned the bull. The break with the church was then complete. In January 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther.

However, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, decided to give



Luther one final chance. In 1521, at a meeting in Worms, Germany, the emperor demanded that Luther recant, or take back, his teachings. Facing church officials and an excited assembly of people, Luther refused. He said in part:

I do not accept the authority of popes and councils. . . . My conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything. . . . Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.



A near riot broke loose. Luther strode out, his hands raised high in triumph. Yet the emperor later declared him an outlaw whom anyone could kill without punishment.

Fortunately for Luther he had a powerful friend in Frederick the Wise, Prince of Saxony. The prince arranged a pretend kidnapping of Luther and hid him away for about a year in the castle at Wartburg. Here, Luther translated the Bible from Greek into German. His

translation allowed the German people to read the word of God without having to rely on the interpretation by the priests.

Luther continued to write works in which he attacked the church or discussed books of the

Bible. His teachings eventually inspired a new Protestant religion called Lutheranism. This new religion would continue to oppose the once all-powerful Catholic church. ■

◀ Turn this woodcut portrait of Luther upside down to see what his opponents thought of him.

■ How effective were the church's responses to Luther's teachings?

▼ Many people feared that the art of printing, new to Europeans, came from the devil. But by 1500, there were more than 1,000 print shops in Europe.

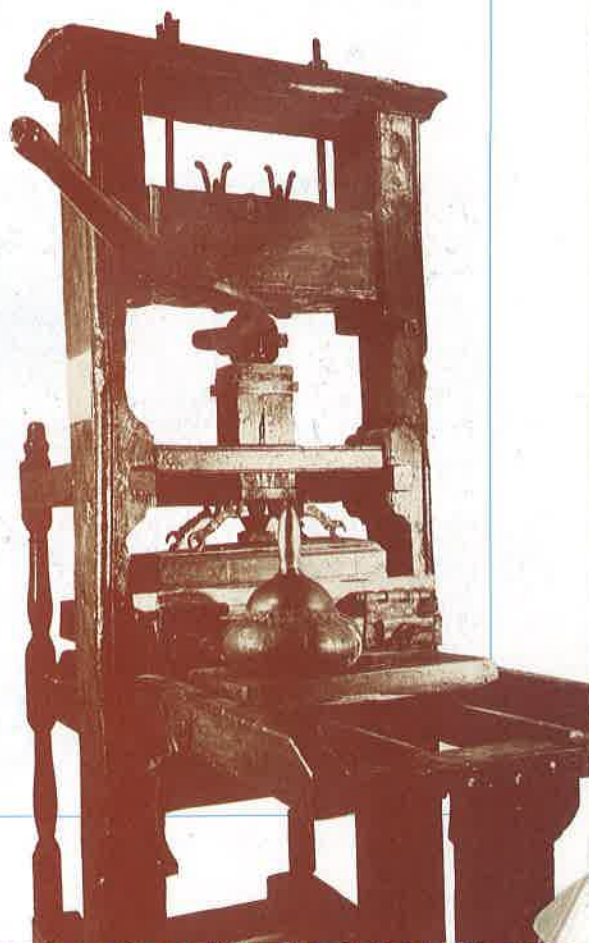
Protestantism Spreads

Why did Luther's ideas, which challenged the centuries-old Catholic church, succeed? First, many people recognized the widespread corruption within the church and were eager for reform. Second, Luther wrote and spoke with conviction. His words were immensely appealing to the people.

The printing press, developed in Europe about 1450, also contributed to Luther's success. Printed **pamphlets** containing unbound essays on current topics could spread new ideas quickly to many people. By 1523, about a million copies of Luther's pamphlets were in circulation. The printer in A Moment in Time on page 346 is typical of the craftsmen who worked the early printing presses and published Luther's pamphlets.

As the Reformation spread, it gained the support of European peasants. In 1524 and 1525, arguing that everyone was equal under God, a group of poor German peasants took up arms against their wealthy landowners. Known as the Peasants' War, this revolt was badly organized and lacked strong leadership. Government armies quickly crushed the uprising.

The peasants were surprised and disappointed to discover that Martin Luther did not support them in the Peasants' War.



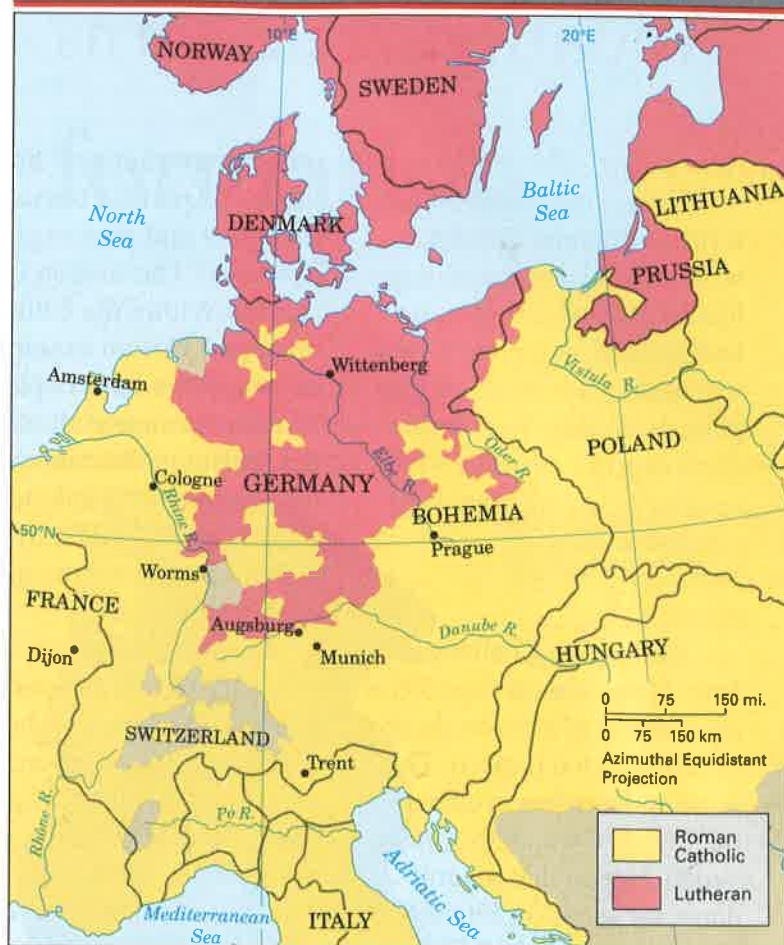
In the pamphlet *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, Luther criticized the rebels for seeking economic gain in the name of God. As a result, Luther lost the support of many social reformers.

However, Luther's ideas became popular with the German princes. Luther did not believe that the church should own property. He also thought that rulers should appoint clergy members. Thus, Luther favored a more powerful role for rulers and a weaker church authority.

Many German princes who wanted freedom from the pope's authority favored Protestantism. Others remained Catholic because they depended on the support of the pope. Eventually, the differences between these German princes erupted in war. From 1546 to 1555, war raged between the Catholic and Protestant princes.

Finally, in 1555, a compromise, called the Peace of Augsburg, was reached. This compromise permitted each German prince to decide which religion would be allowed in his state. Most rulers of northern Germany chose Protestantism, and most in southern Germany remained Catholic. Many people had to move to states that allowed them to practice their own religion.

Lutheranism in Central Europe



By 1560, the Reformation was established in Germany and, as you can see on the map above, in much of the rest of Europe. Compare this map with that on page 529 of the Atlas showing the distribution of religions in the world today. What other countries can trace their religious roots to the ideas of the Reformation? ■

▲ In what countries did Lutheranism become established by 1555?

■ Why did Protestantism spread throughout Germany between 1517 and 1560?

REVIEW

- 1. FOCUS** What was Luther's role in the Reformation?
- 2. CONNECT** What similar task did John Wycliffe and Martin Luther undertake? What was the purpose of their work?
- 3. HISTORY** How did Gutenberg's invention help spread Protestantism?
- 4. POLITICAL SYSTEMS** How did Luther's reforms affect political events in Germany?
- 5. CRITICAL THINKING** How do you think Martin Luther would have advised the European peasants to handle their problems with their landowners?
- 6. ACTIVITY** Think of a topic you would like to debate. Then write out your position on the topic and post it on your class bulletin board. As in Martin Luther's time, invite other students to debate your viewpoint and exchange ideas.

L E S S O N 3

Era of Reformation

Here's an imaginary scene that might have occurred in 1560.

A young Frenchman arrives in Geneva, Switzerland, and enters a Calvinist church—a plain wooden structure one story high. Inside, the people sing a hymn in French.

Looking around, the young man compares this church with the Catholic church he attended as a boy. Absent are brightly colored stained-glass windows, candles, ornate statues, paintings on the walls. The young man sees just one cross, a plain wooden one that hangs above the small altar table.

When the singing stops, the minister delivers a sermon on the importance of living a virtuous life.

The entire service is simple but serious, and the young man feels comfortable in this church.



T H I N K I N G

F O C U S

What effect did the Reformation have on religion in Europe?

Key Terms

- predestination
- Counter Reformation
- inquisition

◀ *Like Luther, Calvin was a persuasive writer and speaker who united many religious reformers.*

Calvin and the Reformation

In the early 1500s, reform spread throughout Europe. Three of Martin Luther's ideas became the center of debate. One idea was justification by faith. The second was the idea that the Bible was the only authority for Christians, rather than the laws of the Catholic church or papal bulls. The third was a belief in a priesthood of all Christians, denying the special powers that priests had in the Catholic church.

Around 1517, when Luther posted his *Ninety-Five Theses*, Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss priest working in Zurich, brought the Reformation to that city. He urged Christians to study the Bible on their own and deepen their faith.

After Zwingli's death, John Calvin, a Frenchman educated in law, continued to teach the ideas of the Reformation. Forced to flee France in 1534, where the Catholic church had been harrasing

► For many believers, church reform involved trying to reach a new relationship with God. That struggle was sometimes agonizing, as seen here in Albrecht Dürer's *The Prodigal Son*.

■ What religious ideas and practices were important to Calvinists?

▼ Can you list some of the beliefs or practices central to each of the religions named here?

Protestants, Calvin moved to Switzerland. The city of Geneva soon became the center for a movement called Calvinism.

Calvinism differed from other movements of the Reformation in one important way. Calvin taught that God had already chosen, or predestined, a special group of believers for salvation. This theory is known as **predestination**. Luther also accepted predestination but thought that people could never know whom God had chosen.

Calvinism emphasized being devoted to God and leading a disciplined life. According to Calvinists, a person who could maintain such conduct was probably a member of God's chosen group.

Calvinist church services were plain. No images of saints hung on the walls; no organ accompanied the singing. Nothing appealing to the senses interfered with what the worshiper experienced as his or her spiritual link to God.

Calvinists also followed a strict code of moral behavior. Laughing

or making noise in church was prohibited. So were fortunetelling, gambling, and even dancing at social gatherings. Councils elected by church members enforced this code of behavior, as well as other laws of the Calvinist church. By the time Calvin died in 1564, Calvinism had taken root in Scotland, England, France, Italy, Bohemia, Poland, and the Dutch Netherlands. ■



Other Protestant Movements

One Protestant group, called the Anabaptists, lived by an even stricter moral code than that of the Calvinists. The Anabaptist movement began in Zurich around 1525

among a group of dissatisfied followers of Zwingli. They believed that the state was made up of sinners. Therefore, the Anabaptists believed, true Christians should withdraw from the state and form a separate community.

Both Catholics and Protestants openly opposed the Anabaptists. They resented the Anabaptists' claim that members of all other religious groups were sinners. Anabaptists were widely harassed, and many were executed. Those who survived fled to Poland and Holland.

Major Religions During the Reformation

Religion	Time Founded	Founder	Source of Authority
Roman Catholic	1st Century A.D.	Simon Peter	Pope, Cardinals, Bishops
Lutheran	1529	Martin Luther	Congregation
Church of England	1534	Henry VIII	King of England
Calvinist	1546	John Calvin	Presbytery (Council of Elders)

Not all religious reform movements had religious causes. In 1533, Henry VIII of England was excommunicated for divorcing his wife and marrying another woman. So, Henry set up a new church—the Church of England. In 1534, the English government recognized the monarch as the supreme head of the new church. Although independent of the pope, the English church remained basically very similar to the Catholic church in its principles and practices. Not until Henry's son, Edward VI,

became king in 1547 did a Protestant religion gain a strong following in England.

Although these reform movements had different beliefs, they shared the same basic motivation: the desire to bring about changes in the church. And because those changes were not coming from within the church, the reformers created their own churches. ■



▲ Following the formation of his church, Henry VIII ordered hundreds executed for refusing to accept his authority over the pope.

■ Find evidence to support this statement: Some Protestant groups sought to make political as well as religious reforms.

The Church's Response

During the 1400s, many priests recognized that reforms needed to be made. They realized that selling indulgences was corrupt, and they protested against such abuses.

Reforms came slowly. However, as more and more people left the Catholic church to join the

Protestant movement, Catholic leaders urged Pope Paul III to assemble a general council to discuss church reform. The Council of Trent, held from 1545 to 1563, set two main goals: to rid the church of abuses and uphold traditional Catholic beliefs. This movement

UNDERSTANDING REFORM

The leaders of the Reformation first tried to change the Catholic church from within. Reform means to change an existing institution.

Participants in a revolution, on the other hand, seek to destroy or replace an existing institution. Therefore, the actions of the colonists in America against the English in 1776 were a revolution, not a reform movement.

Issues and Leaders

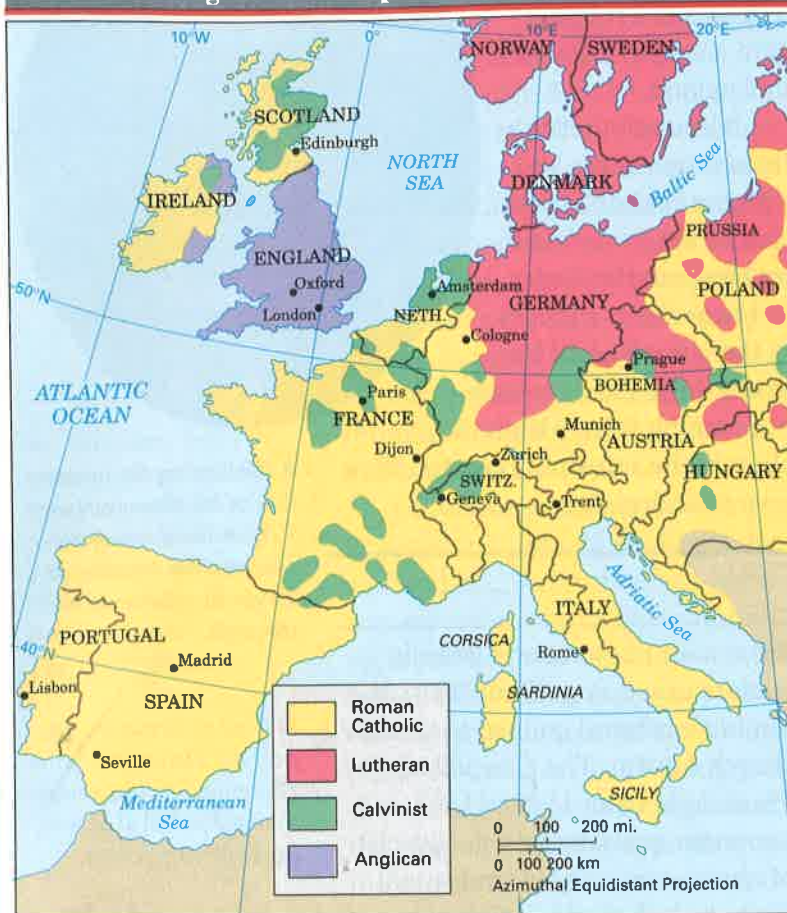
Reform movements start because people want to improve some aspect of society. In the mid-1800s, many people wanted to reform the United States voting system to allow women to vote. Leaders of this reform movement, such as Susan B. Anthony, campaigned for women's rights for more than 70 years. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitu-

tion to guarantee women's right to vote.

The Results of Reform

Sometimes the changes brought about by reform movements go beyond what the reformers had in mind. For example, Luther's religious reformation helped to foster a climate of questioning that led to many social, political, and scientific changes during the following 300 years.

Christian Religions in Europe, 1600



▲ Most Anglicans lived in England in 1600. What is another name for this Protestant religion?

■ In what ways did the Catholic church try to reform from within?

within the church became known as the **Counter Reformation**.

Reaffirming the Faith

To rid the church of abuses, the church also encouraged the founding of new orders, or special religious groups. Many of these were modeled after the Society of Jesus, founded by a Spanish priest named Ignatius Loyola in 1540.

Jesuits (*JEHZ oo ihts*), as the members of the order were called, took vows of poverty and obedience to the pope and fasted rigorously. The Jesuits were noted for their educational and missionary works. They worked tirelessly, spreading Catholicism in other sections of the world, to the peoples of the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

Reacting to Protestants

In addition to encouraging the spread of Catholicism, church officials tried to halt the spread of Protestantism. Their methods were often extremely harsh. For example, the officials in Rome revived the **Inquisition**—a church court to judge and convict heretics. However, this court often abused its power. Many Protestants who appeared before it were tortured. Others were sentenced to death when they refused to change their beliefs.

The church officials also established the *Index of Prohibited Books*. This list of banned books included books by Calvin and Luther.

The Counter Reformation helped to correct many church abuses. However, it could not stop the spread of Protestantism. Never again would a single religion dominate all of Europe. ■

REVIEW

- 1. FOCUS** What effect did the Reformation have on religion in Europe?
- 2. CONNECT** In what ways were the religious beliefs of Zwingli and Calvin similar to Martin Luther's beliefs?
- 3. GEOGRAPHY** Suppose you were a follower of Martin Luther living in Spain in 1600. Use the map on this page to determine where you could go to live among people who shared your beliefs.
- 4. CRITICAL THINKING** Why do you think the Anabaptists were persecuted by other Protestant groups?
- 5. CRITICAL THINKING** In your opinion, was the Counter Reformation successful? Explain your answer.
- 6. WRITING ACTIVITY** Imagine you are a 16th-century Calvinist. You have been charged with heresy and brought before the Inquisition in Rome. Write a one-minute speech to defend your beliefs.