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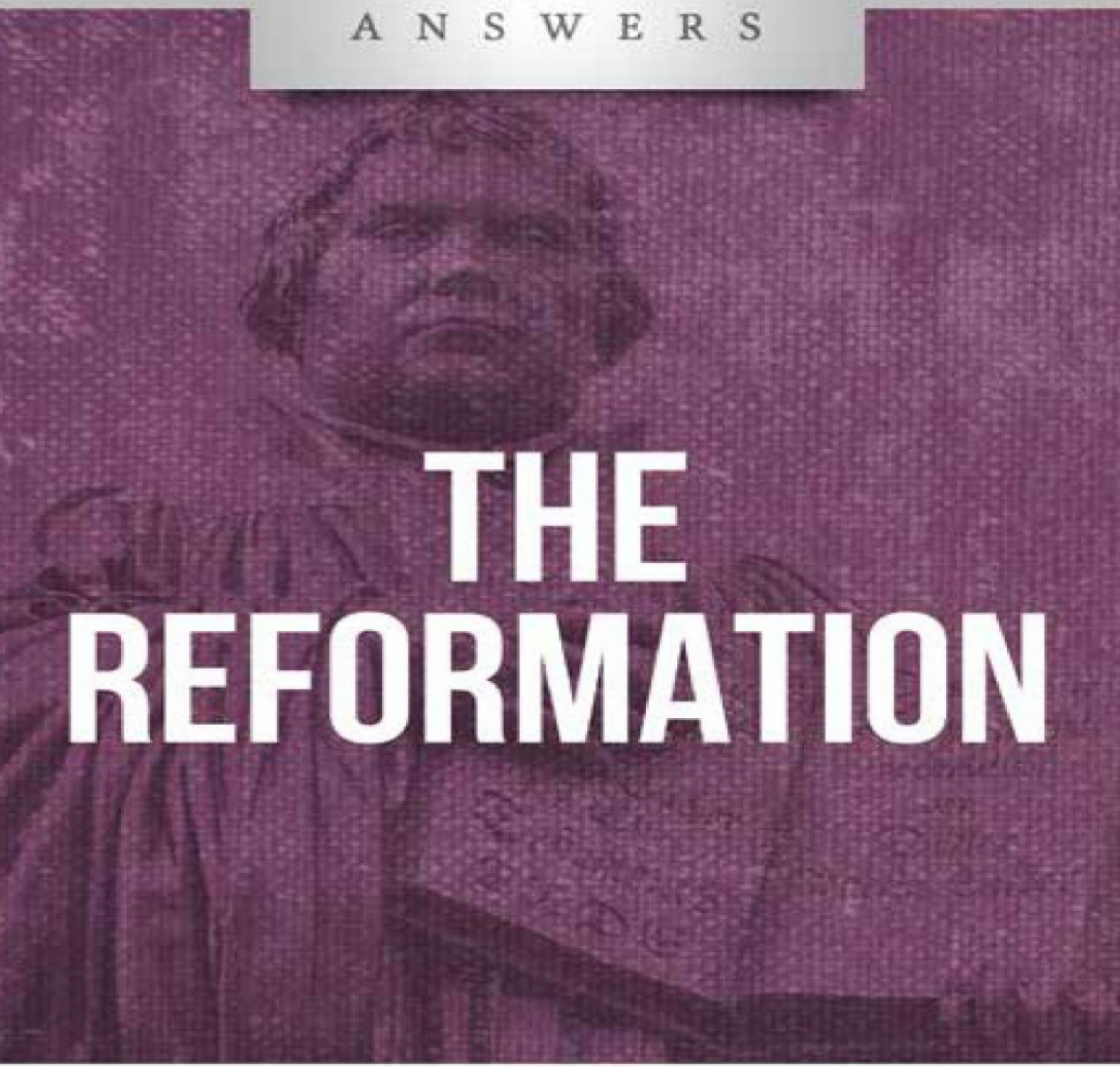

THE REFORMATION

Catholic Answers

20 Answers

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Catholic Answers Press

20 Answers: The Reformation
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Published by Catholic Answers, Inc.
2020 Gillespie Way
El Cajon, California 92020
1-888-291-8000 orders
619-387-0042 fax
catholic.com

Printed in the United States of America

978-1-68357-066-0
978-1-68357-067-7 Kindle
978-1-68357-068-4 ePub

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Men must be changed by religion, not religion by men.
—Giles of Viterbo, 1512[1]

Introduction

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) was annoyed and tired. His southern borders were under attack by the Ottoman Turks, and for the last twelve years his lands had been engulfed in religious disputation and even violence brought about by the writings and teachings of the Saxon monk Martin Luther (1480–1546). Eight years previously, the emperor had issued a condemnation of Martin Luther and his teachings and declared him an outlaw. Luther had gone into hiding and had been on the run from imperial authorities ever since.

Charles V called for the imperial Diet—an assembly of German princes and representatives of imperial towns—to meet in the town of Speyer in 1529 to discuss Luther's endeavors. He hoped the meeting would end the religious bickering. But many German rulers and territories had embraced Luther's revolt and were now persecuting the Catholic Church. The holy sacrifice of the Mass had been banned in various areas throughout the empire. This infuriated Charles. He issued an edict at the meeting in Speyer demanding unhindered celebration of the Mass. However, some nobles and the representatives of fourteen cities and towns, which had embraced Lutheranism, "protested" the emperor's decree and boldly declared that the Mass would not be celebrated in their areas. This action provided the movement with the name it has been identified with ever since: "Protestant."

The Protestant Reformation was one of the defining moments in Christian history. It shattered visible Christian unity and has helped shape the last 500 years of Western civilization. It is a historical event with wide popular recognition but little true understanding.

Modern-day Protestants and Catholics alike are hard pressed to accurately tell the story of this momentous revolution. Myths, misunderstandings, and much propaganda exist about the characters involved, the theology discussed, and the historical events themselves. This booklet provides the reader with a brief overview of the persons, doctrines, and actions of a movement that cleaved Christendom and spawned centuries of acrimony and violence among the followers of Christ.

1. What was the Reformation?

The Protestant Reformation was a religious and political revolution that swept through Christendom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The initial event is usually identified as the publication of Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* on October 31, 1517, in the city of Wittenberg in modern-day Germany (at the time Electoral Saxony). It is difficult to date the end of the Reformation. An argument can be made that it is ongoing, but the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 is a good marker, since by that time, Protestantism was firmly entrenched in the political and cultural life of Europe.

Although it is commonly known as "the Reformation," the movement was not an authentic *reform* of the Catholic Church, but rather a *revolution* against what the Church believes, what it teaches, and how it worships. The early Protestant revolutionaries, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, sought to replace the Catholic Church with what they believed was a return to a pristine manifestation of the Christian faith. A reformation operates from within, to correct abuses, to make an organization better, and to restore good habits. A revolution seeks to replace an organization with something new.

The Protestant Reformation focused on a rejection of Church (specifically papal) authority and the destruction of the entire sacerdotal and sacramental system. The movement was marked by two phases: internal and external.[2]

Initially, the Protestant movement was an internal event marked by intense religious discussions within Christendom. People expected that the disagreements would be settled and that life would continue as before. However, the religious discussions soon intertwined with political considerations, and what began as an internal movement took on larger implications. Secular rulers saw the movement as an opportunity to strengthen their authority against the Church and as a means to appropriate Church wealth. Externally, the movement developed a new and separate culture, form of worship, and way of life. The unity of the Church was shattered, and the concept of Christendom was cleaved.

Heresy produces violence, which is why it was considered both an ecclesiastical and secular crime in the sixteenth century. As with earlier heresies, violence followed the religious discussions resulting from the Reformation so that "what began as a sort of spiritual family quarrel and continued as a spiritual civil war was soon accompanied by an actual civil

war in arms."[3] Europe was engulfed in violence for a century as a result of the Reformation, and the modern world continues to suffer from the teachings that took root in the minds of men during the sixteenth century.

2. What were the factors that led to the Reformation?

The chief factors that contributed to the Protestant Reformation were the status of the papacy, secular concerns, and abuses within the Church.

The seeds of the Protestant Reformation are found in the fourteenth century, when the papacy, instituted by Christ to be a source of unity, lost prestige and respect in Christian society through a series of events.

First, Pope Clement V (r. 1305–1314), manipulated by the French king Philip IV, "the Fair" (r. 1285–1314), moved the papal residence from Rome to Avignon. The popes resided in the southern French city for seventy years. Their absence from Rome produced chaos and scandal throughout the Church.

Primarily through the efforts of St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), the pope returned to Rome, but soon after, the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) erupted, where multiple antipopes laid claim to the Chair of St. Peter. As a result, the papacy was not positioned strongly to deal with the revolution brewing in Germany in the early sixteenth century.

Resentment against the papacy grew in areas without strong central governing authority, and areas with strong rulers fell sway to nationalism. Secular rulers viewed themselves independently of the papacy and, in some cases, tried to control the Church in their territory.

Much of the discontentment with the Church in Europe also involved money. The Church's prohibition against usury and commerce on Sunday was an irritant to the merchant class. Secular rulers were envious of Church lands and wealth, and the continent-wide flow of funds to the Roman curia contributed to a growing bitterness against the authority of the papacy.

By the sixteenth century, there were also numerous ecclesiastical abuses infecting the Church. Most of these abuses were not new and had been dealt with previously, but lax leadership, especially among the popes, allowed for these issues to reappear.

Simony, or the buying and selling of Church offices, traces its origin to apostolic times, when a former magician named Simon witnessed the

conferring of the Holy Spirit by the apostles through the laying on of hands. Simon offered the apostles money in exchange for the authority and power to confer the Holy Spirit as well but was rebuked by Peter.[4] Simony has plagued the Church at various times throughout its history and was an issue at the time of the Reformation, too.

Heavy taxes, including annates, or the annual revenue from a diocese provided by a newly ordained or installed bishop to Rome, were also a source of much abuse. Bishops, in order to pay the fees, heavily indebted their dioceses through loans from banking families or participated in another abuse known as pluralism, which was holding more than one diocese. Nepotism was also an issue, especially among the so-called Renaissance popes, who stocked the Roman curia with relatives in an attempt to maintain family control over the papacy and the Church.[5]

Another ecclesiastical abuse that contributed to a weakening of Church authority was absenteeism, where a bishop did not reside in or was absent for long periods from his diocese. Absenteeism was, in part, an outgrowth of the abuse of pluralism, since a bishop cannot be in two places at once. Absenteeism was most famously illustrated in the Avignon Papacy. This abuse wreaked havoc on the sacramental life of the Church, and the Catholic faithful suffered its effects. Some dioceses did not have a resident bishop for nearly a hundred years; in one case, a bishop entered his diocese for the first time at his funeral![6] Absenteeism broke the people's connection to the Church and wounded respect for clerical authority. Bishops were seen as secular lords, and the Church as a mere secular institution to be refashioned.

Abuses were not the exclusive domain of bishops. Generally, the Catholic clergy was in a dire state, although there were exceptions. Many priests flouted their promise of celibacy and lived openly with mistresses. Additionally, training for the priesthood was not uniform throughout the Church, and many clergymen were ill-formed for the tasks of ministry.

Worse, the fourteenth-century Black Death took a heavy toll on Catholic clergy throughout Christendom, as priests suffered a higher percentage of mortality from the plague than the laity.[7] The great pestilence produced a shortage of priests, especially good ones, who died themselves while ministering to the sick. The result was a lowering of the minimum age of ordination, which contributed to a Church staffed with undereducated and

inexperienced priests, which in turn contributed to the prevalence of abuses.

Many people saw the evil of these abuses and the need for Church reform. Vernacular writers such as Dante (1265–1321), Chaucer (1343–1400), and Erasmus (1466–1536) evoked the spirit of the age by parodying the clergy in their writings. Erasmus hoped to move the Church to reform by his satirical writings, including *In Praise of Folly* (1511), by using "laughter to expose absurdity and corruption . . . to tickle the Church into reforming itself."[8]

The Church attempted a reform movement at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) called the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517). This ecumenical council produced several reform decrees, but conciliar documents require implementation by a focused pope. The Fifth Lateran Council ended only seven months before Martin Luther published his *Ninety-Five Theses*; unfortunately for Christendom, with the Renaissance popes uninterested in authentic reform, the council's efforts were too little, too late.

3. Who was Martin Luther?

Martin Luther (1480–1546) was a Saxon Augustinian monk. He is usually credited with starting the Protestant Reformation on October 31, 1517, with the publication of his *Ninety-Five Theses*.

Luther is one of the best known and most studied persons in the history of Western civilization. Indeed, "in most big libraries, books by and about Martin Luther occupy more shelf space than those concerned with any other human being except Jesus of Nazareth."[9] His writings and actions significantly impacted the history of Christendom and the Christian faith.

The Luther family came from Thuringia (east-central Germany) and were originally of peasant stock. Martin's father, Hans, was a mine owner and operator and a member of the merchant class. Martin's parents had great ambitions for their children, especially their firstborn son, who was baptized on November 11, the feast of St. Martin of Tours (316–397), from whom he received his name.

By his own account, Martin had a difficult childhood, with verbally and physically abusive parents. In later years, Martin wrote, "My mother caned me for stealing a nut, until blood came. My father once whipped me so that I ran away and felt ugly toward him."[10]

Hans Luther did not involve Martin in the family mining business because he wanted his son to receive an education and pursue a lucrative legal career. Martin enrolled in the University of Erfurt in 1501 to pursue a bachelor's degree and was regarded as a talented and diligent student. He earned his bachelor's in 1502 and his master's in 1505.

That same year, Luther was traveling home on summer break when a violent thunderstorm enveloped him, and a bolt of lightning struck near him, knocking him to the ground in abject fear. He uttered a spontaneous prayer of supplication and protection to the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "Dear St. Anne, I will become a monk."[11]

This conversion experience prompted Luther to enter the strict order of the Augustinian monks at Erfurt, an order focused solely on intellectual and spiritual pursuits, to the exclusion of manual labor. He took his final vows in 1506, and nine months later he was ordained a priest. He was known in the monastery as an impatient, angry monk, always ready to provide his opinion, whether solicited or not.

In 1508, Luther was sent to the University of Wittenberg in Electoral Saxony to teach moral philosophy. Wittenberg was a small university town of 2,000 inhabitants sixty miles southwest of Berlin. Luther continued his studies while teaching and eventually received his doctorate in 1512.

It was in Wittenberg that Luther embraced heretical teachings, which he developed through his lectures at the university. He published his first official volley against Church teaching in 1517. Although given several opportunities (and years) to recant his heresy, Luther refused. Pope Leo X (r. 1513–1521) condemned forty-one of his teachings in 1520 and ordered him to recant and repent or be excommunicated. Luther doubled down, publishing in the same year three treatises that formed the foundation of Protestant teachings.[12] Eventually, Luther was excommunicated, and in 1521, at the Diet of Worms, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V condemned him as a heretic. Since heresy was a capital offense in the secular world, Luther went into hiding, during which time he devoted himself to translating the Bible, which already existed in vernacular editions, into a new German edition.

Luther was a self-absorbed and scrupulous man. He had difficulty celebrating the Mass, as he became overwhelmingly anxious at and frightened of being in the presence of God in the sacred liturgy, and he

suffered from an obsession over his eternal end. He frequently went to confession, sometimes for long periods of time, while in the monastery. One confessor, in a fit of exasperation over the scrupulous Luther, yelled at him, "You are a fool! God is not angry with you; you are angry with him."[13] One historian aptly wrote that Luther "would have been a troubled spirit in a tranquil age."[14] He constantly doubted his position before God, and despite frequent use of the sacrament of confession, he never felt spiritual peace.

Luther had a stupendous power of will and a strong determination to pursue an action to the end. He was a charismatic speaker, capable of dominating an audience. He also exhibited violent anger, both verbally and in writing. Verbal abuse of scholarly opponents was a mainstay of the age, but Luther took the practice to a new level: his writings are filled with crude obscenities, and he frequently used expressions of biological functions to illustrate spiritual truths.

Luther was a prodigious writer, which fueled the success of his revolution as copies of his screeds against the Church and papacy made the rounds throughout Christendom. For the rest of his life, Luther advocated for rebellion against the Catholic Church.

4. Who was John Calvin?

John Calvin (1509–1564) was a Frenchman who adopted Protestant teachings in his twenties, became a famous author, and eventually moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where he established a theocracy.

Martin Luther can be characterized as the "voice" of the Reformation, and John Calvin can be viewed as the "organizer." Calvin's main contribution to the Protestant movement was to systematize Protestant theology into a set of doctrines and provide an example (in Geneva) of a Protestant community.

The Calvin family came from the northern area of France, from "the people that have no vineyards."[15] Unlike Luther, Calvin was a member of the laity and was a scholarly and brilliant thinker. He lived a moderate life but suffered from ill health, including chronic insomnia, migraines, and stomachaches.

Calvin's father desired an ecclesiastical career for his son and sent him to the University of Paris in 1520. That year was witness to Luther's three famous treatises, and his radical writings were popular at the university.

Calvin left Paris when his father changed his mind and decided that a legal career was a better path to a prosperous life. He arrived at the University of Orléans, where he studied civil law. Calvin was known as an outstanding student and was even called upon to substitute for professors at times.

Sources differ about the exact year, but by 1531, Calvin had embraced Protestant teachings. His rejection of the Catholic faith was rooted not in monastic disgruntlement, as Luther's was, but rather in an intellectual pursuit influenced by nominalist philosophy.[16] He wrote later that he had left the Church "in order to come to Christ."[17]

Calvin fled France in 1535 after King Francis I (r. 1515–1547) issued a series of laws against heresy after Protestant propaganda attacking the Mass appeared on signs in Paris and other French cities. He settled in Basel, Switzerland, and began writing the book that brought him fame throughout Christendom: *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The book was published in Latin in 1536 (a French version followed in 1541), when Calvin was twenty-five years old. The *Institutes* was a personal confession of Calvin's Protestant faith as well as a type of catechism wherein Calvin offered Protestant commentary on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments.

Calvin intended to leave Basel and settle in Strasbourg, France, but was persuaded by a fellow revolutionary, William Farel (1489–1565), to stay in Switzerland and go to Geneva.

Geneva had recently become a fully independent, well-fortified, self-governing city-state republic, surrounded by Swiss cantons, the duchy of Savoy, and the kingdom of France. The population was about 10,000. Protestants had begun to take over the city in the early 1530s, and by the time Calvin arrived, the city had embraced the "reform" sweeping throughout Christendom.

Calvin and Farel worked together to enshrine their religious teachings in the government of Geneva, writing the *Articles on the Organization of the Church and Its Worship at Geneva* in 1537. The *Articles* mandated weekly attendance at a Protestant service. Additionally, an "overseer" was appointed for each quarter of the city to report to the head ministers on the moral faults of the citizens. The City Council adopted Calvin's restrictions on Sunday commerce so that all could attend the worship service.[18]

These religious laws were not popular with the people, and many refused to comply. Violence erupted and was directed at Calvin, who some citizens believed was a secret French agent sent to the city to sow confusion and havoc. In order to restore peace, the City Council decided to exile Calvin. His eighteen months in Geneva seemed to be a failure.

Calvin left Geneva and went to Strasbourg, where he became the pastor of a congregation and worked on a second edition of *The Institutes*. His three years in Strasbourg were fruitful: he married Idelette de Bure, a widow, who bore him two children.

Despite Calvin's departure, Geneva remained rooted in political instability, and in 1541, the City Council lifted its decree of exile against him. Calvin returned and set to work establishing a theocracy that controlled the lives of all citizens. He wrote the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, establishing a hierarchical church in Geneva, in which pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons preached the gospel, taught the faithful, and trained them in obedience. Each citizen's obedience to Calvin's teachings was recorded in a ledger under the entries of "pious," "lukewarm," and "corrupt."

Life in Calvin's Geneva was extremely restrictive. Hilaire Belloc aptly described Calvin's influence on the citizens: "He it was who began the war against *joy*."[19] Citizens could receive the death penalty for sins such as adultery, pregnancy out of wedlock, blasphemy, idolatry, heresy (from Calvin's teachings), and striking a parent (a violation of the Fourth Commandment). Calvin's theocratic government passed prohibitions against singing (except in church), dancing, staging or attending theatrical plays, wearing jewelry, playing cards or dice, and wearing makeup. There were also laws concerning the length of a woman's hair and naming children only after biblical figures.

Calvin caused a near riot when he ordered the closing of all taverns in the city. The people's reaction caused Calvin to open five government-controlled bars that were nonprofit, required saying grace before and after eating and drinking, and prohibited swearing and dancing.

Calvin's contribution to the Protestant movement was primarily focused on organization. He systematized Protestant theology in his *Institutes*, and he produced a Protestant way of life in Geneva. The city became a beacon for other Protestants in Christendom, who continued to combat the Church and

the established political order.

5. Who were the proto-Protestants?

The *proto-Protestants* were heretics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries whose teachings and actions laid the groundwork for Luther, Calvin, and other sixteenth-century Reformers. They advocated the later bedrock Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, or the belief that the only authoritative source of God's divine revelation is Sacred Scripture. These proto-Protestants also called for the reform of Church abuses and advanced various heretical opinions in an effort to undermine the Church. The two main proto-Protestants were John Wycliffe (1324–1384) and Jan Hus (1369–1415).

John Wycliffe was born in Yorkshire, England, and studied at Oxford, where he was recognized as a brilliant student. He became a professor of philosophy and theology at his alma mater. Wycliffe was a pure academic—an intellectual man who did not motivate or lead.[20] He provided the ideas and let others perform the actions.

At Oxford, Wycliffe advocated several heretical teachings in lectures and books. In terms of fundamental Catholic doctrines, he attacked the eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation. In his book *On the Eucharist*, he denied the occurrence of transubstantiation and advocated that, instead, the bread and wine remain present after the prayer of consecration. He opined that the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is not a real flesh-and-blood presence, but is symbolic. Wycliffe also condemned the veneration of the saints, indulgences, and prayers for the dead.

Heresy is extremely difficult to eradicate, and despite the condemnation of the Church, it can persist and reappear in later centuries. In addition to the above, Wycliffe proved the resiliency of heresy by advocating Donatism, originally a fourth-century heresy that advocated that the validity of a sacrament relies on the worthiness of the minister. According to the Donatists—and to Wycliffe—bishops or priests in a state of mortal sin cannot effect the sacraments.

Wycliffe's original contributions to heresy mostly involved erroneous teachings concerning the Church. He defined the Church as an "invisible transcendent society" that is neither hierarchically structured nor united to the bishop of Rome, but rather is present in all the people of Christ.[21] Moreover,

he attacked the papacy and referred to the pope as “the man of sin” and “Lucifer’s member.”[22] Wycliffe believed that the state holds supremacy over the Church and advocated for the confiscation of Church property. He also taught that the Bible is the only authoritative source of God’s divine revelation (*sola scriptura*). Finally, he denied the existence of free will, opining that man is completely subject to the will of God.[23] The Church did not ignore Wycliffe’s heretical teachings; the archbishop of Canterbury censured him in 1377.

Wycliffe gained popularity because he attacked ecclesiastical abuses and exploited latent nationalist anger at the papacy in the midst of its sojourn in Avignon.[24] Groups of Wycliffe followers, known as the *poor priests* and later as Lollards, traveled throughout England preaching his heresy. Two of his followers undertook a new translation of Scripture into English, which the Church condemned—not because it was in the vernacular (multiple English editions of the Bible existed well before Wycliffe), but because the translation was rife with error.

Wycliffe’s sovereign, King Richard II of England, married Princess Anne of Bohemia in 1382. As a result of the union, cultural and educational exchanges occurred between the two nations. Bohemian students came to Oxford to study, where they encountered the teachings of John Wycliffe. They brought these heretical teachings to Prague, where the priest, teacher, and popular preacher Jan Hus embraced and expounded upon them. Like Wycliffe, Hus began preaching against corruption in the Church and ecclesial abuses.

There were significant problems in the Church in Bohemia at the time. Clerical immorality was rampant, and there was widespread resentment against the Church, which owned nearly fifty percent of all land in the kingdom.[25] These issues along with the presence of a heavy anti-German nationalist sentiment (the kingdom was part of the German-based Holy Roman Empire) produced a rich environment for reformers and heretics.

Jan Hus studied philosophy and theology at the University of Prague, where he was appointed a professor in 1398. He rose through the university administration and became rector in 1402. He was a popular and commanding preacher. Adopting most of Wycliffe’s teachings, Hus challenged Catholic doctrine on papal authority, advocated *sola scriptura*,

and denied Sacred Tradition as an element of the Deposit of Faith. He also condemned the veneration of the saints and the granting of indulgences. Like Wycliffe, he viewed the hierarchy of the Church as ministers of Satan and denied the universal jurisdiction and primacy of the pope. Hus believed that the Church was built on the personal faith of St. Peter and that Jesus did not institute the Petrine Office.

The University of Prague condemned Wycliffe's teachings in 1403, but Hus continued to propagate them. The archbishop of Prague excommunicated him in 1410. Violence erupted in the city, and crowds burned copies of papal bulls. Hus was forced to flee the city in 1412 and stayed in the castle of a friend, where he wrote his heretical work *Treatise on the Church*.

6. What was the Radical Reformation?

This term is used to differentiate the central Reformation movement (i.e., Lutheranism and Calvinism) from elements that pursued an agenda the main Protestant leaders and groups rejected. Division was the hallmark of the Protestant movement, and the Radical Reformation illustrates that conflict was present from the beginning. Although there were many elements of the Radical Reformation, the two main groups stemmed from Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland and the Anabaptists.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) was one of ten children born into a political family. His father was the mayor of their village and desired that his children receive an education. Zwingli was sent to Basel, Bern, and Vienna for school but felt called to the priesthood. Ordained a priest in 1506, Zwingli was sent to a parish church in the village of Galrus. He also spent time as a military chaplain to Swiss soldiers. Unlike the monastic university professor Martin Luther, Zwingli spent his priesthood as a pastor of souls, dealing with the spiritual and material needs of everyday people. He met the humanist and reformer Erasmus in Basel and was greatly impacted by the meeting and Erasmus's writings, especially his 1516 translation of the New Testament.

A few years later, in 1518, Zwingli moved to Zürich, where he embraced revolution against the Church and spent the rest of his life. He preached against indulgences in 1521 and advocated *sola scriptura*. A year later, he told his congregation they did not have to obey the man-made Lenten fast, which led to the scandal of the Zürich printer Christoph Froschauer and his

twelve companions publicly eating sausages during the penitential season. Zwingli publicly cast aside his promise of celibacy in 1522 (he privately had been flouting that promise for years) when he married a widow with three children.

Zwingli was a popular preacher and motivator of men. Zürich embraced his radical teachings in 1523 and two years later officially banned the celebration of Mass. There was no university in Zürich, unlike Wittenberg, so the civil authorities and not professors led the process of revolt from the Church.

Although Zwingli was popular and his teachings received official recognition from the civil government, not everyone in Zürich agreed with them. Factions developed within the city, including a group that believed that baptism could not be administered to infants or children. This group, known as the Anabaptists, advocated adult baptism and performed "re-baptisms" on adults who embraced the Anabaptists' heretical teachings. Anabaptists also rejected military service, oath-taking, and the use of the death penalty by civil authorities. They were a community-focused group where Scripture was the rule of law, although each member was allowed to interpret Scripture as he believed.

Melchior Hoffmann, an Anabaptist leader, embraced apocalyptic ideas and preached that the Second Coming would occur in 1533 in the city of the New Jerusalem, which he identified as Strasbourg. City officials arrested him, and many of his followers were rounded up by imperial authorities and executed for heresy. The persecution prompted Hoffmann to order his remaining followers to cease adult baptisms until the Second Coming.

Hoffmann's incarceration left a leadership vacuum in the movement into which stepped the Dutchman Jan Matthijszoon (also known as Matthys). Matthijszoon believed that the Anabaptists should use violence to spread their movement, so he ordered his followers to seize the city of Münster, Germany, in 1534. He also ordered the destruction of all the city's churches and declared all material possessions to be held in common.

Matthijszoon was killed in a sortie from the city and was succeeded by Jan Beukels, or John of Leiden. John instituted even more radical teachings by declaring compulsory polygamy in imitation of Old Testament figures. John took sixteen wives, and when one wife asked permission to leave Münster, he responded by publicly cutting off her head.[26] John proclaimed himself "King

of the World" in September 1534 and even minted symbolic gold and silver coins, which were distributed throughout northern Europe.[27] John's reign was short-lived, as an allied Catholic and Protestant army recaptured Münster in 1535. He was executed the following year.

Secular authorities arrested and executed Anabaptists throughout Christendom, as their radical ideas were deemed a significant threat to society. Eventually, the Anabaptists developed into separate groups, including direct descendants known as the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites, and later branches such as the Bruderhof.

7. What was the English Reformation?

The story of the Reformation in England is very different from the events on the continent. In England, there were no firebrand university professors or philandering disgruntled priests whose heretical teachings gained popular support, creating a groundswell against the Catholic Church. Rather, in England, the revolution began as a personal act of the king because he wanted a divorce.

The story of England in the sixteenth century is crucial to an understanding of the Reformation as a whole, for if England had not fallen, the Protestant movement may not have become permanent.[28]

The Tudor family claim to the English throne was tenuous. The family came to the throne when the Welsh usurper Henry Tudor defeated King Richard III (r. 1483–1485) at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. The great Plantagenet line came to an end, and the Tudor dynasty began. Henry VII died in 1509, and his second-born son, also named Henry, became king. Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) married his brother Arthur's widow, Catherine of Aragon, in 1509. Although Catherine was Spanish, the daughter of Queen Isabel and King Fernando, she was beloved by the English people and was known for her pious, unselfish, and joyful personality.

Henry was faithful to Catherine for nearly the first decade of their marriage, but the king soon pursued other women. Most of his mistresses were content with royal attention and affection, but Anne Boleyn wanted more—she wanted to be queen. In 1527, the king met with Cardinal Wolsey (1473–1530), the archbishop of York and lord chancellor of England. Henry wanted Wolsey to acquire a declaration of nullity for his union with Catherine so he

could marry Anne. Wolsey was confident that the pope would grant the request and sent representatives to Rome to request a papal decision.

However, Pope Clement VII (r. 1523–1534) was in no position to acquiesce to the personal whims of the English king. Rome had been recently occupied and sacked by the imperial troops of Charles V. The pope barely escaped with his life to Castel Sant'Angelo. As a result, Clement was not in the mood to entertain Henry's request—especially since Catherine of Aragon was Charles V's aunt!

Rome did allow Cardinal Wolsey to initiate a marriage tribunal in England to gather evidence and provide a report to the pope, who would make the final decision. The marriage tribunal opened in May 1529 and was a unique event, as never before in European history had a reigning king and queen stood before an ecclesiastical court on the state of their marriage. All the bishops of England were present, and two, John Fisher of Rochester and Henry Standish, OFM, Conv. of St. Asaph, were the queen's counselors.

Catherine read a document protesting the trial in England and requested its transfer to Rome. Henry's case rested on his concern with marrying his brother's widow, even though Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) had granted a dispensation to allow it. Catherine maintained that her marriage to Arthur Tudor was never consummated and therefore not a valid marriage in the eyes of the Church.[29]

After the royal testimony and evidence were presented, the bishops voted on a recommendation. Of the 300 bishops in England, all but one (John Fisher) sided with the king and recommended that the pope grant a declaration of nullity. Catherine sent a formal protest of the recommendation to the pope, who suspended the tribunal and remanded the case to Rome for further study. The pope's delay in granting a quick decision led to Cardinal Wolsey's downfall.

Henry became impatient at the pope's delay; ultimately, his decision took seven years. So when Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540), one of the king's advisers, approached him with a plan to expedite the process, Henry listened. Cromwell reasoned that the king is sovereign in his lands, so why should a foreign ruler (the pope) hold such authority and power in England? Cromwell recommended that the king threaten the pope with schism unless his marriage to Catherine was annulled.

At the urging of Cromwell, Henry began the process of separating the Church in England from Rome. In 1531, the king ordered the English clergy assembled at an ecclesiastical meeting to agree to laws granting the king authority over the Church. At first, the clergy resisted, but eventually they caved under royal pressure.

That same year, Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), a former student and professor at Cambridge University, was appointed chaplain and religious adviser to Anne Boleyn. Cranmer was a secret Lutheran who ingratiated himself to the king. The following year (1532), Henry appointed Cranmer archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer then decided on his own authority to open a marriage tribunal to determine the validity of the king's marriage. He pronounced Henry's marriage to Catherine invalid and witnessed the king's "marriage" to Anne Boleyn. Cranmer did not have papal authority for his decision, and the action placed England on a dangerous path.

Clement VII issued his decision on the king's marriage in March 1534. He ruled in favor of the bond. This action greatly angered Henry since he had already "married" Anne, and their daughter Elizabeth had been born. Henry decided to settle the matter by calling Parliament to issue several pieces of legislation shortly after Clement's decision. In April, Parliament passed the Act of Succession, which indicated that the king's "marriage" to Anne was valid and that his daughter Elizabeth was legitimate and heir to the throne. The Act also stipulated that anyone who committed an exterior act against the king's marriage to Anne was guilty of high treason.

Citizens were liable to take the Oath of Succession agreeing with the contents of the act, which included a denial of papal authority. Many Catholics bravely refused to take the oath, including Sts. John Fisher (1449–1535) and Thomas More (1478–1535), who were imprisoned and eventually executed for their support of papal authority.

In November, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, which declared the king the supreme head of the Church in England. This act also required an oath, and refusal to swear it was treason punishable by death. These acts placed England in schism and separated the English from unity with the pope in Rome.

Henry continued his attack on the Church through the dissolution of the monasteries, resulting in the complete stamping out of monasticism throughout England. In 1535, there were 825 religious houses in England; by

1540, none was left.[30] Henry undertook this action as a means to weaken the Church in England and enrich himself and his friends. The king took the Church's land and redistributed the assets to his loyal supporters, after which nobles were hesitant to support reunion with Rome in the future for fear of losing their land and wealth.

At this point in time, the Church in England was only in schism and had not yet embraced heresy. Henry VIII, except for recognizing papal supremacy over the Church in England, remained faithful to the Church's doctrine. He had Parliament pass the Act of Six Articles Abolishing Diversity of Opinion in 1539 that, among other things, affirmed transubstantiation. The majority of Englishmen were still Catholic in belief and practice, but they were also loyal to their king.

8. What were the main theological teachings of the Reformers?

Generally, the Reformers attacked all aspects of Catholic doctrine and practice, but specifically, there were three main theological teachings: *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), and rejection of papal authority. The proto-Protestants Wycliffe and Hus advocated *sola scriptura* and a rejection of papal authority, but it was Martin Luther, coming later, who formulated the unique heretical teaching of *sola fide*.

Luther saw God as strict, vengeful, and full of wrath—not as a loving father, as revealed by Christ, but rather as a terrible judge who eagerly punished sinful man with fire and suffering. Luther suffered from an obsession over his eternal end: despite diligently following all the rules, regulations, and penances in the monastery, he was never satisfied concerning his salvation. He wrote, "All I knew about myself was that I was a sinner. I could not believe that anything that I thought or did or prayed satisfied God. I could not love, nay, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners."[31]

Luther received relief from his obsession over his salvation and from his scrupulosity in his interpretation of a passage in St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Luther interpreted Romans 3:28, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law," as illustrating the primacy of faith. Luther taught that although human nature is entirely corrupted and evil as a result of the original sin of Adam and Eve, through faith, man is justified

in the sight of God and can attain eternal salvation as a result, even though he remains a sinner. Through the righteous actions of Christ (his passion, death, and resurrection), man is covered with the garment of righteousness despite his sinful nature.

Catholic doctrine teaches that human nature was wounded as a result of original sin and that the relationship between man and God (and between man and woman) was broken. Christ's salvific action restores that relationship, and through baptism, man receives sanctifying grace. Human nature remains wounded so that it is inclined to sinful actions through temptations, and when man chooses sin, he breaks the relationship between himself and God. That relationship can be repaired through the grace of the sacrament of confession.

Luther rejected Catholic teaching concerning grace and the sacraments. For him, redemption is a passive action. Man chooses to believe in Christ in faith and is therefore justified (i.e., saved from sin). Luther wrote, "It is clear that, as the soul needs only the word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works."[32] In Luther's eyes, a life of charity, which flows from faith, is praiseworthy but does not play any role in justification.

Catholic teaching recognizes that redemption is active and requires cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. Man expresses his active participation in redemption through his faith and in works of charity.[33]

Another main teaching of the Reformers was *sola scriptura,* which is the belief that the only authoritative source of God's divine revelation is Sacred Scripture. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all embraced this heretical teaching, which predates them. This teaching rejects Sacred Tradition as an element in the Deposit of Faith and is rooted in a self-focused orientation that rejects the teaching authority of the Church (the Magisterium).

Luther lectured on Scripture and believed that he alone had the correct interpretation of the word of God. His belief in *sola scriptura* was shaped by his rejection of papal authority. Luther identified the pope as the Antichrist and wrote that "the abominable and horrid priesthood of papists came into the world from the devil. The pope is a true apostle of his master the hellish fiend, according to whose will he lives and reigns."[34]

Luther expounded on the main tenets of Protestantism in three treatises he

wrote in 1520 in response to the condemnation of his teachings by Pope Leo X. In his *Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, Luther advocated the creation of a German national church separated from Rome, identified the pope as the Antichrist, and provided his proposals for the reform of the Church. Later Reformers embraced Luther's vision of separate churches and rooted interpretive authority in the individual.

In his treatise entitled *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther set out to dismantle the Church's entire sacramental system. He denied that the sacraments are effective signs of grace by themselves. In fact, he rejected all of the sacraments except baptism and the Eucharist—although he rejected transubstantiation as well, believing that the substances of bread and wine remain after consecration.

Luther's dismal view of God impacted his view of man, with important ramifications for his teachings. He had a negative view of human nature, believing it to be thoroughly corrupted as a result of original sin. This view of humanity, which shaped Luther's understanding of justification, also led him to deny free will, which he explicated in his third 1520 work, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*. Luther taught that man's will, because of his depraved nature, is always oriented toward evil. Man cannot choose the good because his will is a slave to sin. Luther believed that the only good man can do is to have faith, and the greatest evil is unbelief.

Luther's 1520 treatises and later writings outline his heretical teachings, but they lack structure, which a movement needs to grow. John Calvin provided that structure in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. Written in the framework of a catechism, Calvin's book systematized Protestant theology and provided the ability to learn what the Reformers taught in one organized volume.

Calvin placed *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* at the heart of the *Institutes*. He also rejected papal authority and advocated individual interpretation of the word of God. The Catholic Church for Calvin was a perversion of the authentic Christian faith of the early Church, and he proposed to return the Faith to the true Church.

Calvin agreed with Luther on most major teachings, except the Eucharist and the doctrine of the elect. Calvin believed in a form of predestination wherein God pre-determines the eternal status of each soul—"eternal life is

foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others."[35]

Although each Reformer advocated his own heretical teachings, they all agreed on the three main arguments of *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, and rejection of papal authority.

9. Did the Reformers always agree with each other?

All revolutions by nature foster division and violence, and these elements were present in the Reformation from the beginning. The Reformers rebelled against the teaching authority of the Catholic Church as exercised by the Roman pontiff and the bishops united with him. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Protestant teaching was a rejection of papal authority—the very office Christ established to be a sign and source of unity in the Church. Rejecting central authority in the Church, the Reformers placed authority in the hands of the individual, allowing for private interpretation of the word of God.

Although the Reformers agreed on basic teachings such as *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, and rejection of papal authority, their interpretation of other doctrines varied greatly. One example is the Eucharist. Martin Luther advocated consubstantiation, or his belief that the substances of bread and wine do not transform at the consecration and therefore remain along with the real presence of Jesus. Ulrich Zwingli rejected Luther's interpretation and instead taught that there is no real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist; rather, it is merely a symbol. John Calvin argued that the Church focused on the wrong question—i.e., "How the body of Christ is present in the bread." Calvin saw the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation as an "unnatural monster" and instead wanted believers to focus on the self-absorbed question, "How does the body of Christ become ours?"[36]

Luther was generally viewed as the nominal leader of the Protestant movement in its beginnings, but that did not prevent other teachers and preachers from developing their own heretical opinions in opposition to Luther. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V grew exasperated with the various groups and opinions and asked the Protestants in his territory to develop a statement of their beliefs at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) represented Luther at the Diet and wrote a draft statement that he sent to Luther and various Protestant nobles. The statement became known as the Augsburg Confession, and it identified the main

elements of Protestant belief. However, not all groups agreed with the Confession, illustrating that division is the defining characteristic of Protestantism.

The Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli adopted many of Luther's teachings but modified some of them in a radical direction. He denied that the sacraments are efficacious signs of God's grace. They are not "something God did for humanity," but rather "something which humanity did for God."[37] Baptism for Zwingli indicates membership in the Church; it does not wash away original sin.

Zwingli and his followers also embraced iconoclasm, the destruction of sacred images out of a fear of idolatry. Iconoclasm was another area in which Luther and Zwingli differed—in fact, the breach between the two on this and other matters was acute. Luther publicly referred to Zwingli as a "fanatic" in 1527.[38]

An attempt to reconcile Luther and Zwingli occurred with the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529. The hope of the Colloquy, initiated by the secular ruler Philipp of Hesse, was consensus on the issue of the Eucharist. However, the two Reformers could not get past their egos, and agreement proved elusive. Luther personally disliked Zwingli, and his anger was in full display at the Colloquy. At one point, he verbally attacked Zwingli, yelling, "Pray that God will open your eyes!" (to Luther's teaching on the Eucharist).[39] Later, when news of Zwingli's death reached Luther, he remarked, "It is well that Zwingli lie dead on the battlefield. Oh, what a triumph this is, that [he has] perished. How well God knows his business."[40]

A radical group that raised the ire of both Zwingli and Luther was the Anabaptists. The movement began in Zwingli's Zürich, but its teachings were condemned. Persecution erupted against the Anabaptists when Zürich officials arrested four of their members and executed them by drowning in a river. Eventually, in 1526, they were banned from the city.[41] Luther also rejected the teachings of the Anabaptists and wrote a treatise against them entitled *On Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, in which he wrote that the Anabaptists had corrupted his idea of a priesthood of all believers by allowing anyone to preach. This was an abomination in Luther's eyes, and he viewed their preaching as the work of Satan.[42]

Perhaps the best example of the Reformers' lack of tolerance for those who

disagreed with them is presented in the case of Michael Servetus and John Calvin. Servetus (1511–1553) was a Spaniard with many gifts and interests. He was a physician and cartographer and dabbled in astronomy, meteorology, law, mathematics, and theology. He published a book entitled *Seven Books on Errors about the Trinity* in 1531 in which he denied the Trinity itself, the central doctrine of the Christian faith. The book brought attention from the Spanish Inquisition, so Servetus fled his homeland, changed his name, and moved to Paris. He eventually became the personal physician of the archbishop of Vienne.

Servetus's explorations in theology led him to write a letter to Calvin asking his opinion on three questions.[43] Calvin provided answers in accordance with his interpretation of the Faith, and Servetus disputed Calvin's ideas in a subsequent letter. Calvin once more responded and this time included a copy of his *Institutes*. Servetus was not persuaded and sent the copy of the *Institutes* back to Calvin with his commentary scribbled in the margins—along with a nasty letter in which he wrote, "That triad of impossible monstrosities [the Trinity] that you admit is God is not proved by any scriptures properly understood. This shows that your knowledge is ridiculous, nay, a magical enchantment and a lying justification."[44] Calvin was incensed and vowed to make Servetus pay for his heresy if he ever came to Geneva.

Servetus was arrested in 1553 in France on charges of heresy but escaped from prison. On his way to Italy, he inexplicably stopped in Geneva and attended one of Calvin's sermons. He was arrested, charged with heresy, and condemned by the City Council to death by burning at the stake.

Rejecting the teaching authority of the Church and placing authority to interpret divine revelation in the individual produces a multitude of theological opinions, which leads to division and ultimately indifference. The Reformation, sowing discord and disunity throughout Christendom, found its own success weakened by the constant bickering and infighting among the Reformers themselves.

Toward the end of his life, Luther bemoaned the religious indifference wrought by the movement he began: "Who among us could have foreseen how much misery, corruption, scandal, blasphemy, ingratitude, and wickedness would have resulted from it? Only see how the nobles, the burghers, and the peasants are trampling religion underfoot! I have had no

greater or severer subject of assault than my preaching, when the thought arose in me: thou art the sole author of this movement."[45]

10. Wasn't the Reformation necessary, since the Church was so corrupt?

This question forms the narrative backbone of Protestantism and serves as justification for the actions of the Reformers, which wrought centuries of disunity and violence in the Christian world. But the cleaving of Christendom brought about by the actions of the Protestant Reformers was neither good nor necessary. Although the Reformers believed they were returning the Christian faith to its pure apostolic roots, what they accomplished instead was the creation of a new Christian thing, separated from a fifteen-hundred-year lived expression of the Faith. Their revolt ultimately brought radical individualism, indifferentism, and secularization to the Western world.

There is no doubt that the Church in the sixteenth century was in need of reform in many areas of its life. The Church had suffered in the fourteenth century through a crisis in the papacy that witnessed the popes living in Avignon, France, for seventy years. When the papacy returned to Rome in 1377, a new crisis developed in the form of the Great Western Schism, which produced multiple antipopes. As a result, the papacy suffered from an acute lack of prestige and respect, which lessened the loyalty of secular rulers and eroded the people's confidence and respect. The office of the papacy was established by Christ to be a source of unity in the Church, but in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was a source of division. Moreover, the Church was plagued with various ecclesiastical abuses such as nepotism, absenteeism, and pluralism during this time period.[46]

The Church was aware of these abuses and was in the process of reforming itself before the rise of the Protestant movement. Saints like Bridget of Sweden (1303–1373) and Catherine of Siena tried to restore honor and prestige to the papacy, and people like Thomas à Kempis (1379–1471) advocated for the clergy to live holy lives. In the early sixteenth century, Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513) called the Fifth Lateran Council specifically to address abuses within the Church.

Those who support the Reformation believe the falsehood that the Catholic Church was so corrupt that it had to be replaced or shocked into significant

change. But the presence of abuses in the Church is not justification for the destructive movement wrought by Luther, Calvin, et al.—not a reformation, really, but a revolution. A reform seeks to work within an institution to strengthen it and return it to its original state or to make it more efficient. A revolution seeks to destroy an existing institution and replace it with a new creation. While saintly Catholic men and women were working diligently from within to restore the Church with new hope and confidence, the Protestant Reformers incited the shattering of the unity of Christendom.

11. What are indulgences, and did the Church sell them?

The doctrine of indulgences was the theological flash point for the eruption of Martin Luther onto the public consciousness of Christendom. While indulgences are frequently described as granting to the faithful Catholic "the remission of sins," this description is erroneous. Rather, indulgences are "the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven."[47]

Sin is a freely willed offense against God and neighbor and has the "double consequence" of eternal and temporal punishment. Mortal sin severs the relationship between God and man, which is the eternal punishment of sin (i.e., the loss of eternal communion with God in heaven). But even venial sin "entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures [the temporal punishment of sin], which must be purified either here on earth or after death in the state called Purgatory."[48] God forgives the guilt of sin through the sacrament of penance when true contrition of the penitent is present. This forgiveness satisfies the eternal punishment of sin, but the temporal punishment remains, which, through certain penitential actions (e.g., prayers, works of mercy and charity) prescribed by the Church, can be lessened (partial indulgence) or completely erased (plenary indulgence). The Church is able to grant indulgences because it is "the minister of redemption," and with the authority given it by Christ, the Church "dispenses and applies . . . the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints" to the faithful.[49]

The Church did not sell indulgences in the sixteenth century, but rather granted them to the faithful, who, having received the sacrament of confession, performed a specified act of penance, such as almsgiving. Unfortunately, less than scrupulous preachers sometimes gave the wrong

impression to the faithful, who believed they were receiving a “get out of Purgatory card” for themselves or for loved ones. It is important to recall the distinction between official Church teaching and the application of that teaching by sinful yet redeemed people in Church history. Abuses of Church teaching do not constitute Church teaching.

The granting of indulgences was not new at the time of Luther. But although Church teaching on this matter was established, it did not prevent sinful persons from abusing the practice. The local Council of Clovesho in England in 747 condemned the practice of mercenary penitents, or those who offered to perform the penances of others for a fee. Church officials condemned the erroneous practice of some preachers who claimed they had the authority to forgive sins for money. Sometimes the potential for abuse was high, and preventative measures should have been taken. The penitential act of almsgiving, especially for a contribution to fund the building of public utilities (e.g., a bridge or church), was one opportunity for abuse. Although the practice of granting an indulgence for the contribution of alms for a public construction project predates the sixteenth century, it was the rebuilding of St. Peter’s basilica in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Leo X (r. 1513–1521) that raised Martin Luther’s ire.

Some preachers crossed the line on indulgences. Instead of authentically teaching the faithful, these preachers preyed on their ignorance in order to get more money. The Dominican friar Johann Tetzel, was one such preacher, and his activities in Luther’s home diocese in part spurred Luther to write his *Ninety-Five Theses*. Tetzel gave the impression that receiving an indulgence for almsgiving would free a soul from Purgatory, which is not Church teaching. There were reports that Tetzel made outlandish statements in order to increase business. Although he probably never uttered the famous phrase, “As soon as the coin in the box clinks, the soul out of Purgatory’s fire springs,” it is indicative of the general theme of his preaching.[50]

Throughout the Church’s history, practices have arisen that are abuses of official Church doctrine, but it is important to remember that those abuses are not the real teachings. The false Protestant narrative paints Luther as a just defender of the common people against the powerful and greedy Catholic Church. The historical record shows otherwise.

12. Didn’t the Reformation allow Christians finally to read the

Bible for themselves?

The standard Protestant narrative spins the yarn that the Catholic Church did not want the people to read the Bible, which is why the Church did not allow vernacular translations and why it locked Scripture with chains. The implication of this narrative is that if the people read the Bible for themselves, they would recognize that the Catholic Church's teachings are incorrect and demand that the Church change or seek to free themselves from the yoke of Rome.

After his defiant appearance at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther began his translation of the Bible into German. What is crucial in the twenty-first century to understand is that Luther's was not the first vernacular edition of the Bible in Germany. The oldest German Bible was produced in the eighth century at the monastery of Monse.[51] By the fifteenth century, there were 36,000 German manuscript Bibles circulating in Germany, and a complete vernacular German Bible appeared in 1529, five years before Luther's edition was published.[52] The Reformation did not free Scripture from the evil clutches of the Church and make it accessible to the general populace; rather, the Catholic Church did so centuries before Luther.

The first effort to publish a vernacular version of Scripture was commissioned by Pope St. Damasus I (r. 366–383), who employed his brilliant yet irascible secretary, St. Jerome (342–420), to accomplish the task. Jerome learned Greek and Hebrew in order to properly translate the word of God into the vernacular, which at the time was Latin. Jerome's new translation came less than a hundred years after the Roman emperor Diocletian initiated the Great Persecution of Christians. One of Diocletian's edicts mandated the surrender of Scripture, an event of such destruction that its memory remained with the Church long after the persecution ended.

The Church maintained a great respect and love for the sacred word, evidenced by the actions of monks to preserve it. For example, the sixth century was witness to the activity of a uniquely saintly man who renounced his worldly life to embrace an existence as a hermit. His reputation for holiness attracted followers, and soon thereafter, Benedict of Nursia founded a monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy. Benedict's monks preserved and maintained Western civilization through their painstaking work of copying ancient Greek and Roman manuscripts as well as devoting time to copying

and illustrating Scripture.

Working in the scriptoria of Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages was not easy. It took nearly a year to copy a Bible manuscript. The process was laborious and wearisome; any copying work the monk did not finish during the day had to be completed at night even in the cold winter months. Bibles were not only copied, but richly and beautifully illuminated with complex images.

Bible illumination began in the fifth century with Irish monks, who painstakingly prepared the skins of calves, sheep, or goats into vellum, which was used for the manuscripts. The famous Lindisfarne Gospels manuscript, copied and illuminated in the eighth century, was the work of one scribe who used 130 calves' skins over five years.[53]

The amount of labor and the cost to copy Bibles led to the practice of protecting the books by either locking them in containers or chaining them. This was done not to prevent usage or limit the faithful's knowledge of Scripture, but to prevent stealing.

The focus on *sola scriptura* by Protestant groups led to the myth that the Catholic Church keeps the word of God from the people in order to maintain its authority in society. In reality, the Bible comes from the Church, and the Church has guarded, interpreted, protected, and disseminated—in the vernacular—the word of God throughout its history.

13. How did the Christian world react to the Reformation?

The typical narrative of the Protestant Reformation paints a picture of widespread support for Luther's teachings, with the main opposition emanating from the Church. But that picture is only half-true. There was significant criticism, from both the Church and the state, of Luther's teachings throughout the early stages of his rebellion because heresy was viewed as both an ecclesiastical and a secular crime. Secular rulers were concerned about heresy because it produced violence and threatened the unity and stability of society. On top of these concerns, the Church, being entrusted by Christ to protect and preserve the Faith, hoped to avoid the cleaving of Christendom that comes from heresy—and did come, as Luther's case would bear out.

Obviously, Luther's revolt would have been short-lived without support,

especially from his secular ruler, Elector Frederick of Saxony. His teachings struck a chord with many sixteenth-century people, among them German nationalists and nobles angry over Roman interference and taxes. Luther's supporters also came from the ranks of university faculties, especially those who embraced the philosophy of nominalism and were opposed to scholasticism.

Luther's publication of the *Ninety-Five Theses* caused a stir in the Church and university, which was the intent. Luther sent a copy of his work to Archbishop Albert of Mainz, who forwarded a copy to Rome. Copies were also sent to other universities, and by 1518, the *Theses* were circulating throughout Germany.

Theologians in Rome examined the *Ninety-Five Theses* and determined that many were detrimental to the Faith. As a result, Luther was charged formally in July 1518 of "suspicion of disseminating heresy" and ordered to appear in Rome for a trial within sixty days. Luther refused to go to Rome, citing ill health and fear for his personal safety. Pope Leo X decided to send an envoy, Cardinal Cajetan, to Germany to meet personally with the renegade monk. Cajetan was a Thomistic scholar and former master general of the Order of Preachers. The two men met in October 1518. Cajetan approached Luther with a friendly and fatherly tone and requested that Luther recant his heretical teachings. Luther responded with obfuscation and delays, which infuriated Cajetan to the point where he lost his temper and yelled at Luther, who responded in kind. Cajetan's meeting made it clear that Luther was an obstinate heretic who had no intention of recanting.

Johann Eck, a Dominican professor at the University of Ingolstadt, was one of the first critics of Martin Luther's teachings. He highlighted the similarities between Luther's work and the heresy of the Bohemian Jan Hus. Eck proved this similarity in the famous Disputation at Leipzig in June 1519, when he debated Luther and his friend Carlstadt. Eck won both debates and successfully highlighted the inherent danger in Luther's radical ideas. The debate was so lopsided in favor of Eck that Luther never again openly debated a professional Catholic theologian.

Rome's patience with the Augustinian Saxon monk ended in 1520, when Pope Leo X promulgated the bull *Exsurge Domine*, in which forty-one of Luther's heretical teachings were condemned. Once more Luther was provided an opportunity to recant within sixty days or be excommunicated.

Luther published a reply to Leo's bull entitled *Against the Execrable Bull of Antichrist*, wherein he opined that the bull had been written by the Antichrist and was not to be obeyed. In December 1520, Luther led a group of followers to the Wittenberg waste dump, where he burned a copy of Leo's bull.

Luther's 1520 treatises sparked a multitude of individual defenders of the Church. University faculty at Frankfurt, Leipzig, Cologne, and Louvain wrote treatises against Luther. Hieronymus Emser, who personally knew Luther, wrote a retort to Luther's *An Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. Luther replied with a work in which he criticized Emser, writing, "Whoever heard more blasphemous, poisonous, diabolical, heretical, tyrannical, and stupid words than those which Emser here pours out of his poisonous hell-jaws, thus bringing a stench into heaven?"[54] The Cologne Dominican Jakob Hochstraten wrote urging the pope to defend the Faith against Luther's attacks. Augustin von Alfeld, a Franciscan professor at Leipzig, wrote a work defending the papacy against Luther's heresy, and a fellow brother of St. Francis, Thomas Murner, took issue with Luther's attack on the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Even royalty joined in the defenses against Luther. King Henry VIII of England wrote a book known as *In Defense of the Seven Sacraments* after reading Luther's work attacking them. The pope granted the title "Defender of the Faith" to the monarchs of England (which they still use) for Henry's book.[55]

St. Thomas More had little patience for Martin Luther, referring to him as "an ape, ass, drunkard, a lousy little friar, a piece of scurf, a pestilential buffoon, [and] a dishonest liar."[56]

Church authorities urged Luther to repent and made the faithful aware that his teachings were heretical and detrimental to their faith. Secular authorities also entered the fray—again, it is worth emphasizing, because heresy bred violence and division for these authorities to have to deal with. Left alone, heresy caused societal disruption and posed a security issue.

Since Luther refused to listen to the Church and rebuffed its repeated calls for repentance, Pope Leo X formally excommunicated him on January 5, 1521. The condemnation by the Church motivated Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to address the Luther problem at the Diet of Worms that same year. The emperor condemned Luther and regarded him "as a notorious

heretic,”[57] remarking, “It is certain that a single monk must err if he stands against the opinion of all Christendom. Otherwise Christendom itself would have erred for more than a thousand years.”[58]

Several last-minute attempts were made by individuals at the Diet to convince Luther to recant, since they knew that the secular penalty for heresy was death. Luther refused, and the Diet issued a condemnation forbidding anyone to harbor him and ordered his books to be burned. Given an imperial order of safe conduct, Luther was allowed to leave the Diet unmolested but was ordered not to write or preach on his way back to Wittenberg. Luther’s secular ruler, Elector Frederick of Saxony, enacted a plan to kidnap the friar (Luther was aware of the plan) on his return trip and provide refuge for him in the Wartburg Castle, where Luther lived for nearly a year, working on his German edition of the Bible.

14. Why did the Reformation succeed?

There are many factors that led to the successful revolt of the Reformers and the cleaving of Christendom. Perhaps the most important were the constitution of Germany, the avarice of the nobility, the state of the Church, the Ottoman threat, and technology.

The political constitution of Germany at the time of the Reformation played a significant factor in the success of the Protestant movement. There was no unified Germany then as it exists in the modern world. At the time of Luther, Germany was a collection of hundreds of small entities led by princes and dukes along with independent towns. The holy Roman emperor, chosen by seven electors of whom three were archbishops, nominally led this political hodgepodge.

Absent a strong national leader to serve as a counterweight to the papacy, the area was a political playground of competing interests. Resentment against foreign interference, especially from the papacy, was at an all-time high in the sixteenth century. The humanist, satirist, and German nationalist Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523) used this resentment to great effect in his various books and speeches, which influenced Luther. He wrote, “Three things are well dressed in Rome: priests, mules, and prostitutes; three things all wish for: short Masses, good coin, and a lustful life; only three things may bring Rome back to order: the severity of the princes, the impatience of all

Christians, and the harshest scourge of the Turks."[59]

Luther and von Hutten urged the nobility to rise up against the power of the papacy, and it was the nobility's greed that helped make the Reformation permanent. The Church and its bishops were large landowners in Christendom, and the wealth generated from this land became a source of resentment for the nobility. It was not just the wealth itself that irritated the nobles, but also the accompanying power and prestige. Secular rulers were focused on consolidating their hold on power in their territories, and the Church was an independent force standing in the way of absolute control.

Once the Reformation was in full swing, a similar pattern developed throughout Christendom. Towns allowed Protestant Reformers to preach, which led to conflict with faithful Catholics. When the Protestants gained a majority, they issued laws banning the celebration of Mass, and in some instances, iconoclasm occurred. Then the town or the major secular ruler confiscated Church property. In England, this involved the royal dissolution of monasteries. When Henry VIII redistributed Church property, he greatly enriched himself and his loyal supporters and created a new, extremely wealthy upper class. This new social stratum was beholden to the monarchy, but over time it grew more independent, to the point where it brought about the execution of King Charles I in 1649.

The land-grab of Church property throughout Christendom was one of the major factors of the success of the Reformation. Newly enriched noble families remained Protestant because they feared that a return to the Catholic faith meant the loss of their newfound wealth back to the Church.

The state of the clergy and the Church within Christendom also contributed to the success of the Reformation. The many abuses, corruption, and immoral behavior of the clergy enraged people throughout Europe. Despite the attempts of the Church to reform itself, the effects of the scandals in the papacy during the fourteenth century and the poor leadership exhibited by the Renaissance popes laid fertile ground for dissent and rebellion. The Avignon Papacy and the Great Western Schism weakened the moral authority of the papacy, and the rise of independent secular authorities limited the popes' temporal authority to command obedience.

The actions of the members of the Church are much to blame for the rise and success of the destruction of Christendom, but so is the general hatred of

the Church present since its foundation. Hatred of the Faith and the Church, which is natural and inevitable, is present simply because the Lord was hated and persecuted. The Church, as his Mystical Body, will experience the same treatment.

Another often overlooked but important factor in the success of the Protestant Reformation is the pressure faced by Charles V from the Ottoman Turks. The Ottomans were pushing against the southern imperial border, and the military situation prevented Charles from paying full attention to the heresy of Luther and the revolt of his northern German princes. A large Ottoman army even made its way to the gates of Vienna in 1529, during the height of the Protestant crisis in Germany. The Turkish siege at the gateway to Europe was broken, but the Ottomans' constant harassment was a distraction that helped the Protestant movement gain ground.

Luther believed that the Turkish threat was a just punishment from God for the sins and corruption of the Church. This belief emboldened him to continue his revolt rather than cease its progress in the midst of a serious military situation. G.K. Chesterton recognized the impact of the Reformation during the Turkish assault when he wrote, "The Reformation has been called many things, both good and bad, and there was certainly much in it both defensible and indefensible. But that is the thing about it, which I for one find it hardest to forgive. It was a Christian mutiny during a Muslim invasion."[60]

Finally, technology also played a role in the success of the Protestant movement. Johann Gutenberg developed metal movable type in the mid-fifteenth century, which greatly increased the speed and efficiency of printing. Martin Luther used this new invention to great success, as his books became bestsellers for German publishers.

Luther was a prodigious author, writing a treatise every two weeks on average for thirty years. His books equated to more than half of all the printed works in the Holy Roman Empire in 1520.[61] By 1523, his books had gone through over a thousand printings, with nearly a million copies circulating throughout Christendom.

The publishing success of Luther's books paved the way for the publication of the works of other Reformers, such as John Calvin. The Church was slow to utilize this new technology to counteract Luther's success, which ultimately helped spread the idea of rebellion throughout Europe.

15. What became of the Reformers?

John Wycliffe

In 1381, riots erupted in London, the archbishop of Canterbury was murdered, and violence spread in England. Although Wycliffe did not personally endorse the violence, his teachings were viewed as a contribution. The violence was too much for those who previously tolerated or backed Wycliffe's teachings, and support for the professor waned. He was investigated by his university and eventually dismissed. The Council of London in 1382 condemned ten propositions derived from his teachings, although Wycliffe was not mentioned by name.[62]

Wycliffe died of a stroke in 1384, but his teachings survived and found a home in Bohemia and later in Germany. The Council of Constance (1414–1418) posthumously declared him a heretic. His body was exhumed by the secular authorities and burned in 1424.

Jan Hus

King Sigismund (1368–1437) called for an ecumenical council at Constance —a city in southern Germany, near the Swiss border—in order to bring an end to the Great Western Schism and to address the border threat of the Ottoman Turks. Hus appealed to the newly convened council in 1414 concerning his teachings and arrived in Constance under an order of safe conduct. Despite the guarantee of safety, he was arrested after questioning by an ecclesiastical tribunal and held in a Dominican monastery, where he spent the next six months. The council fathers decided to charge Hus with heresy, and a trial commenced.

Hus gave a spirited and frustrating defense of himself by evading and deflecting the questions from the prosecution. For example, accused of calling the pope "Antichrist," "Hus responded that he had not said it—all he had said was that a pope who sold benefices, who was arrogant, greedy and otherwise contrary to Christ in way of life, was Antichrist."[63]

The council condemned numerous articles drawn from Hus's writings and demanded he repudiate them. Hus refused. The council also condemned *utraquism*, a teaching Hus embraced that demanded Communion under both species (host and precious blood) for the laity.

Despite repeated opportunities to recant and reconcile with the Church, Hus

persisted in his error. Declared an obstinate heretic, Hus was remanded to the secular authorities and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.

Hus's death sparked a nasty fifteen-year civil war in Bohemia. Martin Luther embraced many of Hus's teachings, and the war in Bohemia became a microcosm of the spasm of violence that engulfed all of Christendom a century and a half later.[64]

Martin Luther

Luther spent his remaining years in constant rebellion against the Church and those who disagreed with him. He wrote a treatise entitled *On Monastic Vows* in which he opined that religious vows, especially the promise of celibacy, are unfounded in Scripture and in conflict with charity and liberty. Luther personally assisted the escape of twelve nuns from a convent in 1523. Two years later, he married one of the runaway nuns, Katherine von Bora, and went on to have six children with her.[65]

Luther's radical views on celibacy and marriage led him to approve of bigamy in the case of his supporter, Philipp of Hesse. However, when Philipp's situation became public, Luther urged his friend to deny his bigamy, writing, "What harm is there in telling a good bold lie for the sake of making things better and for the good of the Christian Church?"[66]

Luther's writings stirred violent outbreaks, and in 1525, political revolution swept through Germany. Groups of peasants and free citizens (and some nobles) terrorized the land as they destroyed churches and sacred art and profaned the Eucharist. The nobles, especially those shielding him from the emperor, urged Luther to do something to stop the peasants. He published a pamphlet on May 4, 1525, entitled *Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants* and encouraged the nobility to put down the peasant rebellion with force. The violent language in his pamphlet emboldened the nobility to arms, and they attacked the rebels with vigor. By the end of the year, the rebellion was over, but at the cost of more than 100,000 peasant deaths.[67] Luther later admitted responsibility (sort of) for the massacre of the peasants, writing, "It was I who slew all the peasants in the insurrection, for it was I who commanded them to be slaughtered; their blood is on my head, but I throw the responsibility on our Lord God who instructed me to give this order."[68]

Luther's anger was directed not only at the peasants, his critics, and the Catholic Church. He also fulminated against the Jewish people. Toward the end of his life, he published a treatise entitled *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he advocated an eight-point plan to eradicate the Jews from Germany.[69] He prescribed violence, forced labor, and conversion. If those measures did not work, Luther encouraged forced expulsion of the Jewish people.

The subject of Luther's last treatise was a return to where he began: an attack on the papacy. In March 1545, Luther published *Against the Pontificate at Rome, Founded by the Devil*. In this work, he called the pope the "vicar of the devil," an "enemy of God," and "a man of sin and a child of perdition: a genuine werewolf."[70] He called for the seizure of the pope and the cardinals and railed that their "tongues should be torn from their throats and nailed in a row on the gallows tree."[71] He also wanted to curse "the pope and his supporters so that thunder and lightning would strike them, hell-fire burn them, the plague, syphilis, epilepsy, scurvy, leprosy, carbuncles, and all manner of diseases attack them."[72]

Luther fell ill in January 1546 and blamed his sickness on passing through a village with a population of Jews.[73] A month later, he suffered a stroke and died at the age of sixty-five.

Ulrich Zwingli

As Protestant teachings spread through the cantons of Switzerland, Zwingli encouraged the formation of the Christian Civic Union, which was an alliance of Protestant cantons along with the city of Strasbourg against the Catholic cantons. The Civic Union embarked on an aggressive and violent campaign of warfare against Catholic areas.

Eventually, a peace agreement was reached that centered on the ability of male citizens to determine the religion of their village by majority vote. Zwingli and his supporters were emboldened by the peace agreement and decided in 1531 to initiate an economic blockade on the Catholic Inner States of Switzerland. This aggressive action prompted Catholic rulers to form an army, which marched on Zürich. Battle was engaged on the mountain above the old Cistercian monastery at Kappel. Catholic forces routed the Protestant army, and Zwingli, attired in battle armor, was cut down and killed when his

troops made a last stand.

John Calvin

John Calvin maintained his theocratic hold on the people of Geneva until his death in 1564 at the age of fifty-four. His influence in the Protestant movement during his lifetime was maintained through his many correspondences with other Reformers throughout Europe. Additionally, he founded the University of Geneva in 1559 as a place to propagate his teachings. At the time of Calvin's death, the university boasted enrollment of 1,500 students, nearly ninety percent of whom came from outside Switzerland and as far away as Russia.[74]

Calvin viewed his students as missionaries trained to take his teachings back to their homelands. One disciple of Calvin, John Knox, established Calvinism in Scotland.

Just like Luther, Calvin reflected on his actions toward the end of his life and came to a rather ironic conclusion:

> I have taught faithfully, and God has given me grace to write what I have written as faithfully as it was in my power. I have not falsified a single passage of the scriptures, nor given it a wrong interpretation to the best of my knowledge; and though I might have introduced subtle senses, had I studied subtlety, I cast that temptation under my feet and always aimed at simplicity. I pray you make no change, no innovation because all changes are dangerous and sometimes hurtful.[75]

Calvin suffered from ill health throughout his life, which was not helped by his workaholic tendencies. He was stricken with a serious fever that affected his lungs in 1558–1559. He was barely recovered when he strained his voice preaching, which caused a violent coughing episode, resulting in a burst blood vessel in his lung.[76] His already frail health was greatly impacted by this event. Although suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, Calvin continued his frenetic workload. His ailments, poor diet, and lack of proper sleep eventually caused his death in 1564.

Calvin's body was laid in state, but there was concern over creating a cult of Calvin (akin to Catholic saints), so he was buried in a common cemetery without a headstone.[77]

16. What were the effects of the Reformation on Europe?

Heresy breeds violence, which is why secular rulers from the earliest centuries of the Church were concerned with erroneous teachings. Views on faith are not merely personal opinions, but can have a significant impact on society. The views of Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers certainly impacted many lives. Christendom was engulfed in a century of violence (1550–1650) as a result of the heretical teachings of the Reformers; nearly every major European ruler dealt with revolution and violence caused by the Protestant movement.

England

King Henry VIII died in 1547 after six "marriages" that produced only three children to survive infancy: Mary (with Catherine of Aragon), Elizabeth (with Anne Boleyn), and Edward (with Jane Seymour).

England embraced Protestant teachings and entered into heresy through the actions of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer during the reign of Henry's son, Edward VI (r. 1547–1553). Cranmer's secret Lutheranism became public in 1548 as he issued a new liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer. This liturgy removed all references to the Mass as a sacrifice. People were not pleased with the change, and riots erupted. Parliament required all citizens to attend this new liturgy and banned attendance at Mass. Cranmer also revised the Rite of Ordination in 1550, which included no mention of the priesthood as a sacred office or the conveyance of supernatural power to consecrate the Eucharist. This new ordinal broke the chain of apostolic succession in England and made Anglican orders null and void.[78]

It was Cranmer under Edward VI who led England into heresy, but it was during the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) that England, through the work of William Cecil (1520–1598), became a Protestant nation. Elizabeth was raised Protestant, and during her reign, the restoration of the Catholic faith under her half-sister Mary Tudor (r. 1553–1558) was undone. Elizabeth initiated the first state-sponsored persecution of the Catholic Church in Europe since the Roman Empire. It was illegal to be Catholic in Elizabethan England, and hundreds of faithful men and women gave their lives for the Church.

The English Reformation was something of an accident, guided and shaped

by the selfish actions of a particular family, the Tudors (save Mary, the great Catholic queen). The Tudor dynasty ended in 1603 with the death of Elizabeth, and although the Faith existed in an underground Church, for all intents and purposes, it was seen as a foreign influence—so much so that even today, it is illegal for the English monarch to be Catholic.

France

The French monarchy in the mid-sixteenth century was politically weak but popular and backed strongly by the Catholic Church. France was concerned with its Hapsburg neighbors, who controlled the Holy Roman Empire to the east and Spain to the west. The monarchy found itself in the unique position of supporting Protestants outside its borders because the revolution weakened its political enemies while vigorously opposing the movement within.

The people of France were overwhelmingly Catholic and, in some areas of the country, notably Paris, fiercely so. But despite the deep Catholic piety of the populace, Protestant teachings infiltrated France, and violence erupted in a series of religious wars from 1562 to 1598, which included the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572, where Protestants (known in France as Huguenots) were killed first in Paris and later throughout the country.

When King Charles IX died in 1574, the new king, Henry III (r. 1574–1589), tried to reach a peace settlement with the Protestants to end the bloodshed. Some groups in French society were not pleased with the king's peace overtures and concessions to the Huguenots, so in 1589, he was assassinated by Jacques Clément, a deranged monk.

Before he succumbed to his wounds, Henry III, who was childless, named Henry of Navarre (of the house of Bourbon) his successor, which was a controversial decision since Henry, baptized Catholic, had embraced Protestantism. The Catholic citizens of Paris steadfastly refused to acknowledge Henry of Navarre as king, so he besieged the city for six months. The siege brought great suffering and death to the city. King Philip II of Spain sent an army from the Spanish Netherlands to break the siege, which prompted Henry of Navarre to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Ultimately, Henry decided to renounce his Protestantism and return to the Catholic faith in order to be recognized king (as Henry IV [r.1589–1610]). Legend holds that Henry defended his decision by noting that "Paris is worth a Mass." A few years later, Henry ended the religious wars in France by

signing the Edict of Nantes, which granted unlimited freedom of conscience and granted restricted religious liberty to the Huguenots in certain areas. King Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) eventually revoked the privileges granted to the Protestant minority, in 1685.

Spain

The Protestant Reformation had no impact in Spain, which was focused on ending the centuries-long *Reconquista* (war against Muslim occupiers). Additionally, Spain was shielded from the Protestant movement because Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros (1435–1517), the confessor to Queen Isabel and the archbishop of Toledo, had begun a reform movement there in the late fifteenth century. This movement, along with the establishment of the Inquisition, helped strengthen the ties of the people to the Church and kept Spain free from the influence of Protestant heresies.

The Low Countries

Charles V ruled the Low Countries as king of Spain, but in 1555, he turned over rule of that area to his son Philip. Philip II was a great defender of the Faith and desired to preserve his territory from Protestant heresy, so when revolutionaries attacked the Church in the Low Countries in 1566, Philip reacted.

The rebellion in the Netherlands began with vicious Protestant attacks against monasteries, convents, and churches. Over a four-day period, more than 400 churches were sacked, wherein tabernacles were broken open, the Eucharist profaned, and relics of saints scattered. In one blasphemous episode, a Dutch nobleman destroyed the altar in his chapel with an axe and proceeded to feed consecrated hosts to his pet parrot.[79]

The bloody conflict in the Low Countries continued for the next eighty years (1568–1648). The end result of the violence was the breakup of the region into seven northern Protestant provinces known as Holland (the Netherlands) and ten southern Catholic provinces known as Belgium.

Germany

The country of origin for the Protestant Reformation suffered greatly from the teachings of Martin Luther. Although Charles V declared Luther an obstinate heretic at the Diet of Worms in 1521, the emperor was embroiled in conflicts with the Ottoman Turks and the French for the next twenty years

and unable to effectively combat the spread of the Reformation in Germany.

The full attention of the emperor was achieved in 1546, when Charles went to war against the Schmalkald League, a Protestant defensive alliance. Catholic forces won a significant victory at the Battle of Mühlburg in 1547, after which Charles V appropriated Julius Caesar's famous quote to give God the glory of victory: "I came, I saw, God conquered."

Peace reigned for the next few years until Protestant forces entered into an alliance with France to restart the war in 1551. After four years of indecisive fighting, a peace was again reached in 1555 at Augsburg, where it was decided that the religion of a region would be determined by the faith of the secular ruler. Known by the Latin phrase "*cuius regio, eius religio*" (whose region, his religion), the settlement was no real peace; rather, it sowed the seeds for further conflict in the next century.

Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II (r. 1619–1637) desired to restore land taken from the Catholic Church during the Protestant troubles in the sixteenth century, and religious war once more erupted in Germany. Known as the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), the conflict became international when the French under the policies of Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642) supported the German Protestant forces. Richelieu also convinced the Protestant king of Sweden, Gustav II Adolph (sometimes known as Gustavus Adolphus), one of the best generals in Christendom, to join the fight. The king turned the tide in favor of the Protestant army until he was killed at the Battle of Lützen in 1632. The bloody fighting continued for another sixteen years until a treaty was signed at Westphalia, with Protestant forces entrenched in northern Germany and Catholics in the south. The Thirty Years War was one of the most devastating wars in German history, as a quarter of the population was killed (around 4.5 million people).[80]

The Protestant Reformation permanently changed the political face of Europe. Violence is the end result of heresy, as the history of the Protestant Reformation illustrates.

17. What were the effects of the Reformation on the Christian faith?

The fruit of the Protestant Reformation is readily apparent from the thousands of different Christian groups present in the modern world in direct

contradiction to the savior's command for unity.[81] Although not the intention of the early Reformers, their teachings brought division and disharmony among the followers of Jesus. The bedrock Protestant principles of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* center religious authority on the individual, leading to the establishment of new Christian groups when disagreements arise. It is simply easier and more in keeping with individual interpretation of Scripture to found a new church than to submit to authority.

The Catholic Church suffered significant change as a result of the Protestant movement. Its political influence was severely curtailed, and it was no longer recognized as a force in the public life of Europe. The Church was viewed no longer as *the Church*, but as *a church*. This new outlook ultimately produced indifferentism (all religions are the same), religious skepticism, and secular humanism, because the authority of the Church as the guardian and interpreter of God-given objective truth was rejected.

Although the most visible effects of the Protestant movement were corporate, there were also individual effects. The Reformation isolated the soul, since it shook the corporate quality of the Christian faith as lived in the society of Christendom.[82] Luther's heresy, with its focus on the individual, destroyed Christian communion. A Christian looked no longer to the corporate authority of the Church for the truth, but rather to himself and his personal religious experience.[83]

The logical extension of this individual focus results in a change in man's object of worship. Humanity is created to worship the creator, but allowing for individual authority over the creator's revelation leads to a loss of worship of God and a worship of man or self. Once any individual man becomes his own arbiter of revelation, revelation itself becomes something malleable, and then man rejects or becomes indifferent to revelation. A loss of authentic religion produces the worship of other things, including the state, which, as the twentieth century illustrated, can produce horrific effects.[84]

The Reformation also produced a change in worldview that has led to the current secular culture of the West.[85] The medieval worldview was centered on the Church, and although Church and state were separate, and at times at odds with one another, society was united in a Christian foundation recognized by segments of the social order.

The Protestant Reformation unleashed violence on a grand scale throughout

Christendom, which forced secular rulers to contemplate how to prevent such sectarian violence from repeating. The solution was the complete separation of religion from politics and the privatization of religious belief. Faith was no longer something common to society, but was now the province of the private individual. This societal shift produced the concept of a subjective *rights-based* worldview rather than a worldview rooted in God-given objective truth. Citizens were provided the *right* to worship as they please by the state, or, in some rare cases (like the American experiment), civil government recognized the inherent religious right of citizens and guaranteed religion's free expression. The granting or recognition of religious expression to the individual from the government produces a separation of religion from the public sphere.

The unintended consequences of the Protestant Reformation are the secularization of society and an increase in religious indifferentism. These consequences produced a society and culture far removed from the Christian faith.

18. Did the Church embrace reform because of the Protestant Reformation?

The Church embraced reform not simply because of the Protestant movement ushered in by Luther and Calvin. However, it can be argued that the Reformation spurred the Church to a serious examination of conscience, which then propelled the papacy to initiate the authentic Catholic Reformation.

Efforts to reform the Church began long before the Protestant Reformation. There was a Catholic Renaissance in the Church in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, comprising a return to the early sources of the Faith and a deepening of piety generally. Small associations of faithful were created where people gathered to study Scripture and discuss theology and doctrine. This reform began in individual dioceses with reform-minded bishops and in religious orders before the official Catholic Reformation initiated and directed by the Roman pontiffs.

Popes are the leading agents of reform in the history of the Church. In the eleventh century, pious monks elected as successors of St. Peter undertook a great reform movement to combat rampant ecclesiastical abuses.[86] Likewise,

reform-minded popes led the sixteenth-century Catholic Reformation.

By outward appearances, Pope Paul III (r. 1534–1549) seemed an unlikely candidate to reform the Church. Alessandro Farnese was elected pope after the death of Clement VII. He had been a cardinal for forty years and was known as "Cardinal Petticoat" because he was the brother of the mistress of the infamous Borgia pope Alexander VI. He led a less than holy life as a cardinal, fathering four illegitimate children, but once elected to the chair of St. Peter, he laid the foundation for the Catholic Reformation.[87]

Paul outlined three stages to the Catholic Reformation: the reform of the Church in Rome and the papal curia, the calling of an ecumenical council, and the implementation of reform efforts by the papacy. Paul began the reform by ordaining dedicated reformers and men of integrity to the episcopacy and creating like-minded cardinals. He focused first on his own diocese and then on the universal Church.

The second stage of reform proved more difficult than Paul III had anticipated. There was mixed support from the major secular rulers in Christendom for an ecumenical council, and it took the pope nine years to assemble one. In the interim, Paul established a Reform Commission, which released a report in March 1537 that placed the blame for the Protestant revolt on the actions of the papacy, cardinals, and bishops. The Church recognized that the lack of leadership by the hierarchy and the toleration of abuses had led to the breakup of Christendom.

Eventually, the great reform council met in 1545 at the imperial city of Trent. Paul wanted the council to define Catholic doctrine in response to Protestant teaching, since the last official pronouncement from Rome was Leo X's *Exsurge Domine* condemning Martin Luther in 1520. The council was to restate Catholic doctrine and reform the life of the Church through disciplinary canons. The council's efforts occurred over an eighteen-year period spanning three pontificates; its work was suspended twice due to an outbreak of illness among the council fathers and the threat of a nearby Protestant army.

Ultimately, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) produced more decrees and canons by volume than the whole of the legislation of the previous eighteen ecumenical councils. The council's teachings included the reaffirmation of both Scripture and Tradition as authoritative sources of God's divine

revelation, validation of the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, and endorsement of the seven sacraments. The council also passed specific reform canons aimed at eliminating the abuses of absenteeism and pluralism. Additionally, Church teaching on indulgences were reaffirmed, with the council condemning the abuses that had arisen concerning the granting of indulgences to the Christian people. The council further mandated the establishment of a seminary in each diocese, where men could be properly formed for the priesthood. Lastly, the council called for the revision of the Roman Missal and the Liturgy of Hours and recommended the publication of a universal catechism in order to teach the Faith.

Legislation from ecumenical councils become operative in the Church through the actions of popes who make implementation of the conciliar decrees a focus of their pontificates. Pope St. Pius V (r. 1566–1572) made the implementation of Trent his top priority, earning the title "Father of the Catholic Reformation." Pius was a devout man who continued his disciplined monastic practices while pope. He began his pontificate by calling his cardinals to reform their personal lives and avoid scandal, and he removed immoral and corrupt bishops and even imprisoned those who practiced absenteeism by living in Rome instead of their dioceses. Pius promulgated the first universal catechism in 1566, which contained the teachings of Trent, so that reformers could use the book to teach the Faith and combat Protestant heresies. He approved the revision to the Liturgy of Hours in 1568. Two years later, he promulgated the new Roman Missal and stipulated its use throughout the Church, thereby bringing uniformity to the liturgy.[88]

The Catholic Reformation emphasized a clarification and restatement of Catholic doctrine, a new fervor in worship and the spiritual life, and a purified Catholic life through the extermination of abuses. The Church was unified, purified, and rejuvenated as a result of its authentic reform movement and was "more sure of its dogma, more worthy to govern souls, [and] more conscious of its function and its duties."[89]

19. How does the Catholic Church view Protestant groups today?

The Catholic Reformation brought a new vitality to the Church, which made it a priority to recover its separated flock.

Missionary efforts were undertaken in Lutheran and Calvinist areas in order

to return the separated brethren to the Church. St. Peter Canisius (1521–1597), a Dutchman and Jesuit, was sent to Germany to bring Lutherans back. Known as the "Second Apostle of Germany" and the Doctor of the Catechism, Canisius wrote three versions of his *Summary of Christian Doctrine* for different audiences. This handy catechism became one of the most effective tools in the Catholic Reformation. Another missionary, St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622), worked among the Calvinists in Switzerland. De Sales volunteered to work in the heavily Calvinist area around Geneva as a priest and was later ordained the bishop of Geneva—in exile, since he could not take up residence in the city. His *Introduction to the Devout Life* remains a spiritual classic. The lives of these two saints illustrate the Church's longstanding focus on reconciliation rooted in authentic truth and a desire for the reunion of those separated from the Church.

In the modern world, the Church continues the task of reuniting Protestants with the Catholic Church. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Church's focus has been on an ecumenical movement rooted in dialogue leading to greater understanding and eventual reunion between Catholics and Protestants so that the prayer of Jesus that "all may be one" will once more be operative in the world.

The Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*) explicates the Church's teaching on the people of God and their relationship with those groups separated from the one Church of Christ. Christ willed that his Church be the instrument through which the merits of his saving actions are communicated to the world; therefore, the Church, and membership in it, is necessary for salvation.[90] Catholics have an obligation to evangelize those who have not heard the Gospel and catechize those who do not share visible unity with the Church.[91]

Since there is only one Church, it is not proper to refer to Protestant groups, who do not preserve a valid episcopate and Eucharist, as "churches." Instead, the theologically correct term is "ecclesial communities."[92] Furthermore, "it is not permitted [for Christians] to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection—divided, yet in some way one—of churches and ecclesial communities; nor are they free to hold that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach."[93]

The Catholic Church continues to call the separated brethren to the one Church founded by Christ and lived in history unbroken until the sixteenth-century revolution.[94] The reunion of all Christians remains the focus of the Church.

20. How can I talk about the Reformation with my Protestant friends?

Charity is the main ingredient in any discussion with Protestants about the history of the Reformation. Catholics must approach any discussion about this time period with a recognition of the failings of certain members of the Church and the need for reform in the Church but also must be armed with the real story of this event and have confidence not to concede the false narrative of the Reformation.

Most Protestants have not read the writings of the Reformers. When confronted with quotations from the works of Luther and Calvin, et al., they may, at first, reject their authenticity, so it is important to have the sources readily available. Challenge your Protestant friends to read the writings of the Reformers themselves, not commentaries or secondary sources. Give them time to do so and to digest, and then invite them to a charitable and rational discussion about the Reformers' teachings and actions.

Always keep in mind that the point of the discussion is education, not validation. You should seek not your Protestant friends' affirmation that you are correct, but rather their education in and embrace of the truth and their eventual membership in the Catholic Church. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of your Protestant friends, and give them the space and time to ask more questions, seek more answers, and open their hearts. Winning the argument should not be the focus; rather, the goal is to lead our separated brethren into communion with the one true Church founded by Christ, the Catholic Church.

Prayer must also be the constant companion of the apologist. Pray for your Protestant friends, and pray that the Holy Spirit guide you in your discussions with them.

May the working of the Holy Spirit heal the wounds and divisions of the Reformation so that the Church may be once again visibly united on earth as we await the Savior's coming.

About the Author

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1 Quoted in Henri Daniel-Rops, trans. John Warrington, *The Catholic Reformation: Volume 1* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1964), 17.

2 See Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishing, Inc., 1991 [1938]), 99–110.

3 Belloc, *The Great Heresies*, 110.

4 See Acts 8: 9–24.

5 There were ten Renaissance popes covering the pontificates of Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455) to Leo X (1513–1521).

6 John Vidmar, O.P., The *Catholic Church through the Ages: A History* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 183.

7 Norman Cantor estimates that forty percent of priests in Christendom died from the plague. See Norman F. Cantor, *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World it Made* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 206.

8 Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners – A History of the Popes, Third Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 198.

9 John M. Todd, *Luther: A Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), xvi. Quoted in James Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 13.

10 Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand – A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: New American Library, 1950), 17.

11 Robert Herndon Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 73. St. Anne was also the patron saint of miners, the profession of Luther's father.

12 The three treatises were *An Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On Christian Liberty*.

13 Fife, 124.

14 Bainton, 110.

15 Hilaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened* (Rockford, IL: TAN

Books and Publishers, 1992 [1928]), 79.
16 Nominalism was a philosophy advocated by the Englishman William of Ockham (1287–1347) that separated faith and reason in opposition to the scholastic method. At the time of the Protestant movement, nominalism was the philosophy in favor in universities, and many of the early Reformers were adherents to its principles and opponents of scholastics.
17 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.ii.6. Quoted in T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin – A Biography* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 167.
18 Restrictions on Sunday commerce became a hallmark of Protestantism and in the United States were known as "Blue Laws."
19 Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened*, 79.
20 See Henri Daniel-Rops, trans. Audrey Butler, *The Protestant Reformation: Volume I* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1963 [1958]), 215.
21 Ibid., 217.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 215.
24 Ibid., 215–216.
25 Ibid., 220.
26 Johannes Janssen, *History of the German People at the Close of the Middle Ages*, V (London, 1910), 460–463. Quoted in Warren H. Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom – A History of Christendom, Volume 4* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 2000), 169.
27 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 206.
28 See Hilaire Belloc, *Characters of the Reformation*: *Historical Portraits of 23 Men and Women and Their Place in the Great Religious Revolution of the 16th Century* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1992 [1936]), 16.
29 Catherine maintained this position throughout her life. It is entirely plausible, as she was married to Arthur for only four months before his sudden death.
30 See Vidmar, 210.
31 Kittleson, 134.
32 Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans. W.A. Lambert, revised

by Harold J. Grimm in Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Fortress Press, 1966), 280.
33 See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993.
34 Martin Luther, *On the Abuse of the Mass* (1521) in Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, II (St. Louis, MO: 1913), 88–90; Janssen, *History of the German People*, III, 231. Quoted in Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, 56.
35 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.xxi.5. Quoted in Parker, 142.
36 Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 139. Quoted in Parker, 65.
37 MacCulloch, 148.
38 Ibid., 172.
39 Ibid., 173.
40 Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Reformation*, (New York: Image Books, 1960), 153.
41 See MacCulloch, 150.
42 Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer*, 242.
43 The three questions were the following: 1) Whether the crucified man Jesus was the Son of God and what was the manner or type of this sonship? 2) Whether the kingdom of God is in men, when it begins, and when a man is regenerated? 3) Whether baptism demands faith like the Lord's Supper, and why baptism was instituted in the new covenant?
44 *Opera Calvini*, 8, 653 & 674. Quoted in Parker, 147.
45 Janssen, *History of the German People*, VI, 276–277. Quoted in Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, 188.
46 Pluralism was an abuse wherein one man held multiple Church offices (e.g., one man being bishop of multiple dioceses).
47 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1471.
48 Ibid., 1472.
49 Ibid., 1471.
50 The phrase has a rhythmic quality in the original German: "Sobald das Geld in Kasten klingt, Die Seele aus dem Fegefeuer springt." See Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, 255.
51 Johann Michael Reu, *Luther's German Bible: A Historical Presentation Together with a Collection of Sources* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), 20.
52 Ibid., 27.

53 Peter S. Wells, *Barbarians to Angels – The Dark Ages Reconsidered* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 193.
54 Martin Luther, *The Answer to the Superchristian Book of the Goat Emser*. Quoted in Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, 607.
55 Luther was not impressed or humbled by the rebuke of the English king. He wrote a response to Henry that began, "From Martin Luther, minister at Wittenberg by the grace of God. To Henry, King of England by the disgrace of God." Luther personally attacked the king, calling him "a nit which is not yet turned into a louse, a brat whose father was a bug, a donkey who wants to read the psalter . . . a sacrilegious murderer . . . a chosen tool of the Devil, a papistical sea-serpent, a blockhead and as bad as the worst rogues whom indeed he out rivals, an abortion of a fool, a limb of Satan." Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Volume II (St. Louis, 1913), 153. Quoted in Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom*, 58–59.
56 Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of St. Thomas More* (New York, 2998), 230. Quoted in Vidmar, *The Catholic Church through the Ages*, 184.
57 Bainton, 145.
58 Ibid.
59 Fife, 510.
60 G.K. Chesterton, *The Resurrection of Rome*. Quoted in *Lepanto*, ed. Dale Ahlquist (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 85.
61 Brennan Pursell, *History in His Hands: A Christian Narrative of the West* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2011), 163.
62 Daniel-Rops, 218.
63 Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: 1967), 39–40. Quoted in Warren H. Carroll, *The Glory of Christendom: A History of Christendom, Volume 3* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1993), 488.
64 In the twentieth century, as part of his desire to purify the memory of the Church in anticipation of the third millennium of the Christian faith, Pope St. John Paul II (r. 1978–2005) expressed regret for the death of Jan Hus. See Pope John Paul II, Address to an International Symposium on John Hus, December 17, 1999. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_17121999_jan-hus.html. Accessed May 24, 2017.
65 Luther was 42, and Katherine was 26.

66 Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom,* 178.
67 Bainton, 220.
68 Hughes, 157.
69 Luther's impact on Hitler and the National Socialists in twentieth-century Germany cannot be understated. William L. Shirer commented, "It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews. Luther's advice was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering, and Himmler." William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich – A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Touchstone, 1990 [1959]), 236.
70 *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* Volume 54 (Weimar, 1883), 283–284. Quoted in Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer,* 290.
71 Janssen, *History of the German People*, VI, 272–273. Quoted in Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom,* 189.
72 Ibid.
73 Kittelson, 295.
74 Hughes, 260.
75 *Opera Calvini*, 9, 891–4. Quoted in Parker, 189–190.
76 Parker, 185.
77 Eventually, a stone was added in the nineteenth century in the spot traditionally believed to be his grave.
78 Pope Leo XIII confirmed this in *Apostolicae Curiae* in 1896.
79 See Carroll, *The Cleaving of Christendom,* 323.
80 Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), 121.
81 See John 17.
82 The thoughts on the effect of the Reformation in this paragraph are taken from Hilaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened,* 175–178.
83 Ibid.
84 Belloc made this point in 1928, years before the ascendancy of National Socialism in Germany gave witness to this truth.
85 This thesis and the following discussion are from Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintend*ed Reformation: A *Religious Revolution Secularized Society*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
86 These popes were St. Leo IX (r. 1049–1054), St. Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085), and Bl. Urban II (r. 1088–1099).
87 This time period is sometimes referred to as the "Counter-Reformation," but that is a misnomer and a Protestant term. The Church did not counter the Protestant Reformation; it engaged in an authentic reform. Additionally, the Protestant movement was not a reformation, but a revolution; therefore, there was no reformation to counter.
88 Pius allowed for the use of special diocesan liturgies different from his universal liturgy provided that they had been in use for more than 200 years. His missal, with some revisions, was the liturgy of the Latin-rite Church until the twentieth-century revision by Paul VI as a result of the Second Vatican Council reforms.
89 Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation: Volume I*, 189.
90 See *Lumen Gentium*, 14.
91 Ibid., 15.
92 *Dominus Iesus*, 17.
93 Ibid.
94 There has been a rupture in communion between the Eastern and Western churches since the mid-eleventh century, but that issue is a disagreement over the role and power of the papacy and not over fundamental doctrine. The Orthodox, unlike Protestant groups, maintain a valid episcopate and sacraments.