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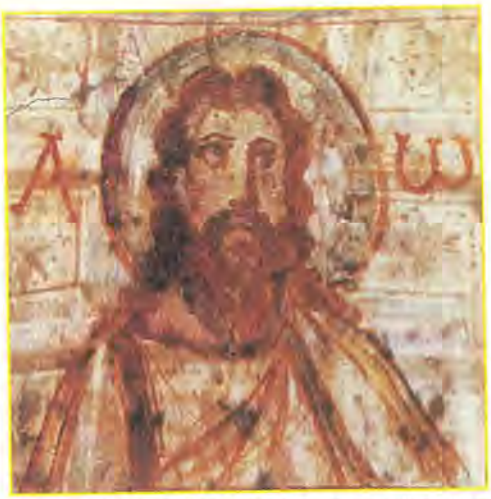

Jesus the Alpha and Omega. Fourth century wall painting from the Catacombs of Commodilla, Rome, Italy.

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Reverend Martin A. Zielinski, Ph.D.
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Author: Very Rev. Peter V. Armenio
General and Managing Editor: Rev. James Socias
Editorial Board: Rev. James Socias, Dr. Scott Hahn, Very Rev. Peter V. Armenio, Mike Aquilina, Emmet Flood
Other Contributors: Dan Cheely, Joseph Lechner, Joseph Linn, Russell Shaw, John Shine, Peter Simek
Design and Production: Marlene Burrell, Jane Heineman of April Graphics, Highland Park, Illinois

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CHAPTER 13

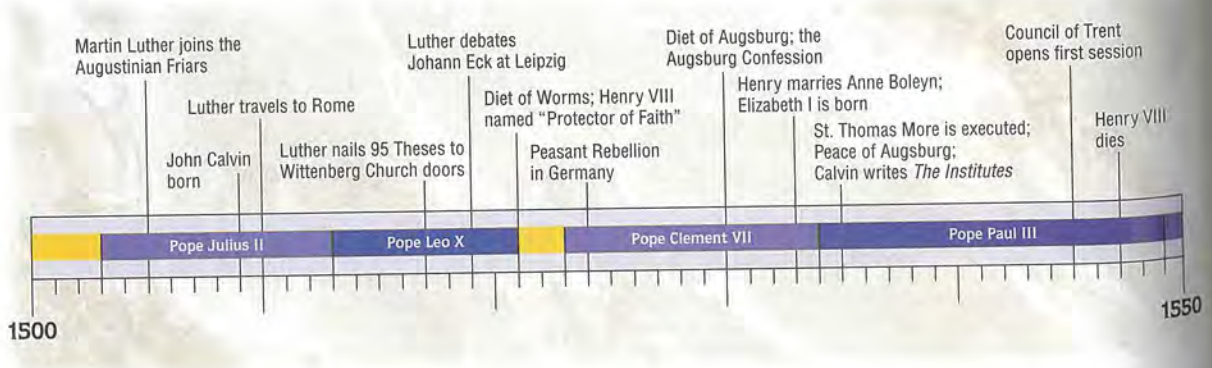
The Reformation: Protestant And Catholic

Disappointments...were bound to arise in the case of individuals or groups that viewed the problem of Christian unity in too casual and superficial a way. Many enthusiastic people, sustained by great optimism, were ready to believe that the Second Vatican Council had already resolved the problem. But the Council only opened the road to unity, committing first of all the Catholic Church; but that road itself is a process, which must gradually overcome many obstacles—whether of a doctrinal or a cultural or a social nature—that have accumulated over the course of centuries. It is necessary, therefore, to rid ourselves of stereotypes, of old habits. And above all, it is necessary to recognize the unity that already exists.

— John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*

In the middle of the sixteenth century, a series of reformers began to question the teaching of the Church, shaking the very foundations of Christendom. Many of these reformers' ideas can be traced to the earlier heresies of Jan Hus and John Wycliffe. With this new movement, heretical ideas took hold in Europe in an unprecedented way. The political chaos caused by the Hundred Years War, the breakdown of feudal loyalties resulting from the plague, and the tarnished moral authority of the papacy after years of schism and political preoccupations, created a situation ripe for rebellion. Worldliness in the hierarchy, clerical abuses, rising nationalism, and unsupervised individual preaching contributed to what would be known as the Protestant Reformation.

The legacy of this time poses one of the greatest challenges for full Christian unity. As evident from history, this challenge can be difficult and disheartening. Nonetheless, John Paul II urged all peoples "to recognize the unity that already exists" and strive for a time when Christ's Church will once again bring together all who call themselves "Christian."

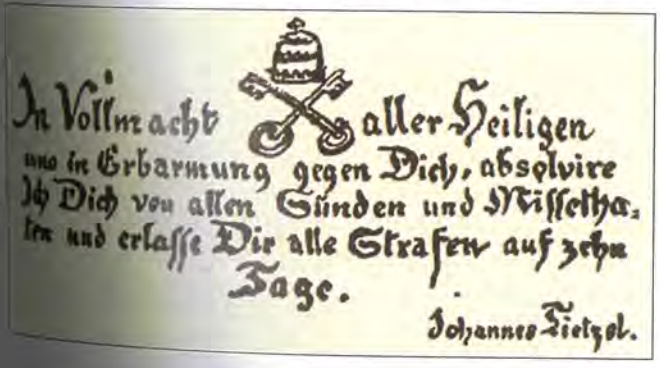


PART I

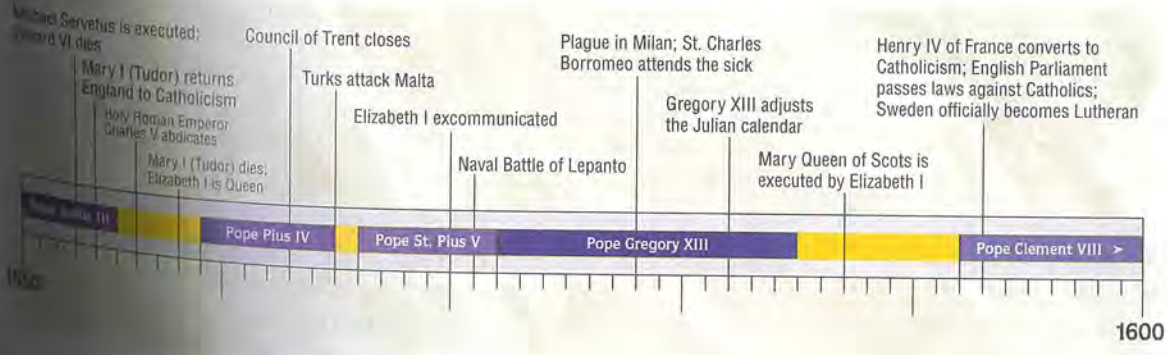
The Protestant Revolt

Reform was needed in the Church. Simony, nepotism, and the abuse of indulgences and improper veneration of relics had spread throughout Western Europe. Many clerics collected benefices for personal gain, some failed to keep their promises of celibacy and obedience, and others had been corrupted by the lure of wealth and worldliness. Along with moral character, the level of learning among parish priests had also declined. Many could neither read nor write in Latin, and superstition grew in many rural areas where ignorant peasants often resorted to witchcraft or astrology to determine the fate of their lives. Leo X (1425-1521), the reigning pope who excommunicated Luther, typified the worldly lifestyle of Renaissance Rome.

Given the moral crisis in the Church and the different vested interests among ecclesiastics, unity among the hierarchy was seriously compromised. Society was changing. Despite the advancements of the Renaissance on the Italian peninsula, in the sixteenth century, most of Europe was still primarily an agrarian society. Nonetheless, increasing divides between the nobility and the poor contributed to animosity between the classes. New monarchs emerged who undermined older feudal arrangements and consolidated their power with new taxes and centralized law. Impoverished gentry landholders began to fear loss of authority and sought ways to recover their wealth and position. As a result, various princes fought each other for their own personal aggrandizement. While this was occurring in Northern Europe, the papacy was caught up in the political intrigue of the Italian city-states and the cost of rebuilding Rome and patronizing the arts. One sad side effect of the Church's prolific patronage of Renaissance art and architecture was the increasing abuse regarding the sale of offices and indulgences. These transactions served as lucrative means of raising funds needed to pay for dazzling churches and works of art. The now infamous sale of indulgences would also provide an opportunity for a young and gifted monk to voice dissent that would snowball into a crisis of unparalleled gravity.


In Vollmacht aller Heiligen
und in Erbarmung gegen Dich, absolvire
Ich Dich von allen Sünden und Missetha-
ten und erlasse Dir alle Strafen auf zehn
Tage.
Johannes Tietzel.

An indulgence sold by Johann Tetzel, a Dominican priest, in 1517. The text reads: "By the authority of all the saints, and in mercy towards you, I absolve you from all sins and misdeeds and remit all punishments for ten days."



MARTIN LUTHER'S EARLY LIFE

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Saxony, in 1483. He was the second of eight children, and he received the customary education of his time. Luther's father had risen slightly in society, starting as a poor peasant and then a copper miner, eventually gaining some wealth and obtaining a minor elected position in his village. As a father, he was a strict disciplinarian, and he had hoped that his son would enter the field of law. However, Martin Luther would choose a very different path.

Rather than study law, Luther joined the Augustinian Friars in 1505. Legend has it that he made the decision to enter the monastery after surviving a violent thunderstorm. After a bolt of lightning crashed near the young Luther, he made a vow, promising that if he survived the storm he would dedicate his life to God. Although the importance of this event may have been exaggerated over time, similar events in Luther's early life all seem to have helped solidify a spirituality that sought comfort in God as a response to great difficulty. A serious illness during adolescence, the sudden death of a friend, a sword wound acquired in a student's duel (which had bled for a long time)—all these brought Luther face to face with the reality of death. The bolt of lightning only helped convince young Luther that his life was fragile and best spent in the monastery at the service of God. As a monk, Luther believed he could better seek perfection and forgiveness from a God who seemed indifferent to the life and death of his people.

IN THE MONASTERY

Luther took his vows and was ordained after only nine months in the monastery. He showed to be a promising scholar and lived an exemplary life as far as his piety and ascetical struggle were concerned. Luther was promoted rapidly as a professor, and after only a year and a half of formal theological studies, he was appointed to lecture at the university. But despite his success, Luther's life in the monastery was far from happy.

It was during his early years in monastic life that he had a problem with scrupulosity, the habit of imagining sin when none exists or grave sin when the matter is not serious. More and more, Luther began to see God exclusively as a righteous lawgiver and administrator of justice. Much of Luther's understanding of God's judgment and his misconception of his love and mercy—through grace—was a consequence of the severe image of God stirred up by the culture of the day, particularly in Germany. The heavy emphasis on damnation, divine justice, and the absolute necessity of contrite repentance fostered the notion of a god who would deal out abundant punishment and whose wrath towards sinners was difficult to appease. Luther wondered how much penance a sinner could possibly do before finally obtaining God's mercy.

This monk would later say that during this time, the thought of God as a righteous judge who passes sentence on the weak made him increasingly angry. During these tough spiritual times, Luther said he was tempted with "evil thoughts, hatred of God, blasphemy, despair and unbelief" (quoted in Daniel-Rops, *Heroes of God: Eleven Heroic Men and Women Who Risked Everything to Spread the Catholic Faith*, 2002, p. 20). Stricken with an acute sense of his own unworthiness, he imagined that God, the all-righteous judge, would most likely withhold forgiveness and salvation from him. In turn, he began to seek comfort through intense prayer, fasting, and penance. Unfortunately for the young monk, no amount of prayer or fasting would give him relief from his internal turmoil. He would ask how weak, sinful humans could ever possibly achieve a state of grace and the necessary righteousness to win God's approval and mercy. For Luther, they obviously could not.

Despite his moral anguish, Luther's life was normal, reputable, and according to many accounts, upstanding. He was an exceptional scholar and preacher, and his efforts in both capacities won him

Martin Luther (1483-1546) painted by his friend Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1529.

popular praise and advancements within his order. His supervisor said of Luther's preaching, "God speaks through your mouth" (quoted in Daniel-Rops, *Heroes of God: Eleven Heroic Men and Women Who Risked Everything to Spread the Catholic Faith*, 2002, p. 19), and his trip to Rome in 1510 reflected the esteem with which other Augustinians had for him. Even though in later years Luther would reflect negatively on this trip to Rome, where his stay as any other pious pilgrim would consist in visiting churches, obtaining the many indulgences available through acts of penance, and climbing the Scala Santa. He would have heard rumors of ecclesiastical corruption, but probably would not have been directly exposed to any of the inner workings of the Church.

Luther's objections to the Church developed over time, and in some sense, they were all rooted in the spiritual struggles of his own soul, and not the politics of ecclesiastical life. Luther's exaggerated understanding of God as judge began to influence his conception of God's love and mercy. His own theological inclinations found a counterpart in a popular, though heretical, theologian that Luther encountered in his studies: William of Ockham. For someone like Luther, the teachings of William of Ockham offered little comfort. Ockham taught that man could not overcome sin alone, and that all meritorious human action must be willed by God. This reduced man's ability to perform good deeds. The teachings of Ockham appealed to Luther, and he began to speculate about similar theological tendencies in the writings of St. Paul and St. Augustine. These misreadings and miscomprehensions of the nature of Divine justice and man's sinfulness laid the foundation for Luther's future heresy, and in 1517, they helped fuel his distaste for the practice of selling indulgences. Outraged with the Church's teaching that indulgences, when obtained within the context of the Sacrament of Penance could help lessen or remit one's temporal punishment due to sin. His inner tensions over personal salvation and the practice of selling indulgences prompted him to write and nail the Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg.

THE NINETY-FIVE THESES

By 1517, the practice of selling indulgences was being thoroughly abused, and although indulgences helped bring many people to Penance and inspire repentance, some Church administrators became distracted by the financial benefits of these twisted transactions. At the time, the cost of maintaining the works of charity provided by the Church was becoming increasingly expensive. In addition, the massive artistic and architectural undertakings of the Renaissance were requiring more funds. Running the Church was costly, and to meet those demands, clerics and secular rulers alike started looking for additional ways to raise money.

In 1517, Albrecht of Brandenburg, Archbishop of Magdeburg, sought an appointment to the archepiscopal see of Mainz. Appointment to this position required a tax of thirty-one thousand gold ducats. Neither the bishop nor his diocese could afford the cost and so Albrecht was forced to borrow from the wealthy Fugger family at a high interest rate. In addition to this financial burden, the massive and costly construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome put a particular strain on the Church in Germany. Looking for a way to afford all of these costs, Albrecht requested that a special papal indulgence be instituted and preached throughout his realm as a means of raising money. The proceeds from the alms received in payment for the papal indulgence would be split between Rome and the archdiocese of Mainz.

Unfortunately, preaching about this indulgence brought Albrecht into direct conflict with his neighbor, Duke Frederick of Saxony. Frederick had collected a great number of relics that he put on display for the veneration of the faithful, and the duke hoped to lure large numbers of pilgrims to his city for its great feast day on November 1, All Saints Day. However, the promotion of the papal indulgence in nearby Brandenburg would draw people away from Frederick's project. This competition over the hearts and pockets of the German faithful was quite disedifying, to say the least, and was certainly deserving of criticism. On October 31, 1517, the day before the Saxon feast day, Martin Luther, a subject of Frederick, nailed to the Cathedral door ninety-five theses, attacking the sale of indulgences.

Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Church of All Saints in Wittenberg (the University's customary notice board) as an open invitation to debate his objections.

None of Luther's theses was explicitly heretical, but implicitly because they directly undermine the teaching authority of the Church. In them, Luther criticizes the use of indulgences for distracting sinners from true repentance. Luther argued that indulgences imply the forgiveness of sin through human as opposed to divine authority, and he saw this as a grave deviation. Luther questioned the validity of indulgences since the Church seemed to be usurping the authority of Christ in his role as mediator of grace and reconciliation with God the Father. Moreover, Luther started to place personal interpretation of Scripture over the teaching authority of the Church. These arguments reveal trends in Luther's thought that, in hindsight, point towards his future break with the Catholic Church.

FROM DEBATE TO DISSENSION

Luther's posting of the Ninety-five Theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg was not, in and of itself, an action provoking scandal. It was the academic custom of the age to offer an argument in this manner and invite public debate on an issue. At first, no one came forward to argue with Luther on the subject of indulgences. In earlier years, this kind of dissent would not have spread, but due to the advent of the printing press, copies of Luther's theses were able to be printed and circulated, finding their way to the doorsteps of most of the prominent clerics and scholars in Germany. His ideas met a mixed response. The theses, which now sound unmistakably Protestant, were not immediately condemned. In fact, many students began to rally behind Luther and praise the monk's bold criticism of the abuses that detracted from the Church's spiritual mission.

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press allowed mass circulation of Luther's ideas and criticism of Rome.

Luther's criticism did, however, upset the Archbishop of Mainz who forwarded Luther's theses to Rome. At first Pope Leo X considered the critique a minor incident. Luther was summoned before the Dominican Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg who asked the theologian Sylvester Prierias to study Luther's theses and issue a rebuttal. Applying Prierias' findings, Cajetan objected to Luther's attack on the notion of merit and his questioning of the Church's infallibility. He sent a response to Luther that the pope himself hoped would settle the matter and allow the monk to fade back into obscurity.

Luther did not recant. Instead, while retaining a certain tone of respect and subordination towards the pope, he issued his *Resolution on the Virtue of Indulgences,* which restated his position on the matter. Surprised by Luther's bold reply, the Holy See responded more authoritatively. Pope Leo had the head of the Dominican order draw up an indictment that summoned Luther to Rome in order to explain his position before Cardinal Cajetan. In his efforts to drive home his theological position, the Dominican's letter, which was a strong reprimand of Luther, gave much importance to some of the points of disagreement, including the scope of papal authority. The change in tone and severity on the part of the papal representative angered Luther, who still believed that his arguments were sound. He also reacted to the harsh letter from Rome by becoming firmer in his sense of righteousness.

Rather than having Luther travel to Rome, Duke Frederick of Saxony intervened on behalf of Luther and arranged for a public debate between Cajetan and Luther in Augsburg (Germany). When Luther arrived, Cajetan instructed Luther, scolding him like a father and urging him to return to the teachings of the Church. However correct Cajetan's theology was, his fatherly method did not take into account that Luther, more than a simple wayward monk, was a celebrated theologian and considered an expert in his field. Tired of dismissals and still desiring a debate, Luther felt very much offended and did not recant.

At this point Luther still did not wish to break with the Church. He wrote a letter to Leo X, subordinating himself to the authority of the supreme pontiff and showing his desire for the problem to be resolved. Theologically, Luther was still unconvinced, and the longer his points remained unresolved, the more justified he felt in his position. At the same time, Luther was also winning popular support, which further reassured and justified the monk in his theological position. However, many of his supporters were indifferent to theology and instead wanted to merge their

In a Leipzig debate, Professor Johann Eck forced Luther to reveal the heretical content of his ideas.

own social discontent with the revolutionary spirit of the theologian. As Luther started disobeying his superiors, he became known as the ringleader for a long awaited social upheaval. For Luther, the problems were still exclusively theological, and the longer he waited for a debate, the more radical his ideas became.

Luther was finally invited to debate beginning on June 27, 1519, at Leipzig. There, many of the foremost Catholic theologians of the day met with Luther, hoping to put the matter to rest for good. Among them was Johann Eck, the well-known professor at Ingoldstagt. Eck, a master rhetorician, required Luther to expound on his positions more extensively and concretely than ever before, perhaps in much more depth than Luther had actually considered up until that time. Then Johann Eck revealed the true philosophy behind Martin Luther's thought, which led him to voice direct opposition to the Church. Luther dismissed papal supremacy, the authority of the councils, and at one point, the Epistle of St. James because that portion of Scripture disagreed with Luther's own ideas about the effectiveness of good works. Backed into a corner, Luther further committed himself to the idea of justification by faith alone and the limitations of free will.

By the end of the debate, Luther's ideas were clearly heretical. Even those scholars who had at one time sympathized with Luther's criticisms, such as the renowned humanist Erasmus, began to withdraw their support. Germany was divided into two camps: those who supported Luther and those who recognized his heresy and stood firmly with the Church. Pope Leo X issued a bull, which gave Luther two months to formally retract his opinions under threat of excommunication. He was now forced with the decision to save or split the Church.

Despite Luther's mixed emotions over the matter, he responded to the bull in a proud and aggressive manner, burning it in a bonfire along with the code of canon law. During his lecture on the following day, Luther said that the act was symbolic since it was the pope who should have been burned. Luther then wrote the pamphlet *Against the Bull of the Antichrist*, which called for an all-out rebellion against the Church. His words did not fall on passive ears, and shortly after there were disorders at Leipzig, Erfurt, and Magdeburg.

The matter now fell into the hands of the new Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who had risen to the throne in October 1520 at the age of nineteen. Threatened with revolts throughout his realm, Charles called the Diet (Assembly) of Worms in January 1521. There Luther was again questioned on his position, and when asked to retract his writings, the reformer famously retorted, "I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or the Councils,

If the Reformation began with a single event, it's possible that it was not the posting of the ninety-five theses, but the burning of the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* and the canon law by Martin Luther in 1520.

because it is clear as day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgement of error, I cannot and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me. Amen" (quoted in Oberman, *Luther*, 1992, pp. 39-40). Judgment was passed, and Luther was granted twenty-four hours of safe passage before being subject to execution. Under fear of death, Luther fled to Wittenberg. Along the journey, he was abducted by a band of knights who brought the monk to the Castle of Wartburg where he was kept in hiding under the protection of Duke Frederick of Saxony.

LUTHER DEVELOPS HIS THEOLOGY

Luther remained at the castle in Wartburg for one year. During this time he translated the New Testament into German and continued to develop his theories, writing his three most famous works: *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *On the Freedom of a Christian*. In these works, Luther worked out the theological principles that would become the cornerstone of Protestantism.

Martin Luther stayed at the Wartburg Castle under an alias: the Knight George. Duke Frederick had little personal contact with him and remained a Catholic.

Many of Luther's ideas were inspired by the writings of John Wycliffe, William of Ockham, and Jan Hus. These writers, who criticized the Church and downplayed man's capacity for theological knowledge and the merit of good works, appealed to Luther's pessimistic view of human nature. Luther believed that sinfulness was impossible to overcome and that man could never fully escape the deceptive attraction to sin. Since any act was essentially sinful, for Luther, good works could not play a role in perfecting the human person or obtaining God's forgiveness. Incapacitated by sin, an individual can simply have faith in God, and it is through this faith that God will grant salvation. For Luther, salvation is not a matter of perfecting oneself for God by taking advantage of his grace, but simply believing that God's mercy will ultimately grant salvation. He thought the soul will always remain corrupt, but through faith, the grace of Jesus Christ covers over sin so that one may be saved.

Luther referred to this idea of justification through faith alone as his major theological "discovery." Taking a passage from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans which reads, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'" (Rom 1:17), Luther began to believe that it is only "through faith" that one becomes righteous. In this passage, Luther thought that he finally found the answer to his scrupulosity and spiritual anguish. Righteousness, that lofty goal towards which Luther's thought rendered man incapable, was now possible through faith. Good deeds, penance, and works of charity do not contribute to righteousness. Faith alone saves a person, he concluded.

From this idea of justification through faith, Luther developed four major theological principles: *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *solo Christo* (Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Christ alone). Each of Luther's four main theological principles was conceived in reaction to what he believed were false teachings of the Church. Scripture alone (which held Sacred Scripture as the

The protection of Duke Frederick of Saxony at the Castle of Wartburg provided Luther with safeharbor to translate the Bible into German and to develop his theological principles.

sole authority on Faith and doctrine) rejected tradition's role in its close link with the Scriptures, the authority of the councils and the pope, and the idea that the Holy Spirit continues to dwell and teach through the Church. Faith alone dismissed the value of corporal and spiritual works of mercy as a means to attaining righteousness. His teaching, "grace alone," held that every good action is a direct result of God's saving grace since it is beyond human capacity to do good. Along with this principle of *sola gratia*, Luther abandoned the idea that people can freely choose to do good (although he would certainly hold that they can choose evil freely and that they sin by their own will). At the center of these three principles was *solo Christo*. Martin Luther held that Christ must be the sole content of the Scriptures, the mediator of grace, and the subject of faith. Luther objected to some books of Scripture, including the Epistle of St. James, which he considered insufficiently centered on the Person of Christ.

Luther's theology brought into question the entirety of Christian worship and practice. He attacked the sacraments, arguing that God did not need material means through which he could impart grace, so one is normally saved not through the sacraments but only by faith. He denied all but the two sacraments explicitly instituted in the Gospels, Eucharist and Baptism, but even with those, he gradually replaced the Church's teaching with his own interpretation. He maintained that after the consecration, both the substance of bread and wine together with Christ's Body and Blood are present. He used the term *consubstantiation*, explaining that Christ is present in the Eucharist in the same way heat is present in a red-hot iron. His ideas about *consubstantiation* contradict the Church's teaching that the substance of the bread and wine completely change into the Body and Blood of Christ, called *transubstantiation*, with only the accidents (or properties) remaining.

In addition to his translation of the Bible and major theological works, Luther wrote *On Monastic Vows* and *The Abolition of Private Masses* while at Wartburg. In these works, Luther virulently attacks celibacy and the monastic life. He claimed that living celibacy was an impossible burden and called for all religious to break their vows and marry. In 1525, Luther himself married an ex-nun, Katherine von Bora.

While Luther was hiding in Wartburg, the Reformation began to gain momentum. In Wittenberg, two friends and followers of Luther, Carlstadt and Melanchthon, brought extreme reforms to the university town. The Augustinian monastery saw forty members leave their order and a Franciscan monastery was attacked, its altars demolished and its windows smashed. In answer to Luther's call to marriage, Carlstadt married, and on Christmas Day 1521, Carlstadt proceeded to say Mass in German without vestments, publicly denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Luther would condemn Carlstadt and try to bring about more moderate reforms. Carlstadt, and later his successor Zwingli, would continue to push his ideas further, contributing to the eventual growth of Calvinism, as will be explained later.

Martin Luther's German Bible was the first mass produced book on the Gutenberg press. It had great impact on unifying German culture. Its language became the people's language. Regions which previously had multiple dialects now could communicate with each other.

PART IV
The Catholic Revival

In the midst of the religious revolution of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church had its own spiritual revival. Opposition to the Catholic Church during the sixteenth century was both so strong and damaging that its steady progress of reform is an indication that the Church was indeed guided by the Holy Spirit and not merely a human institution. Unfortunately, reform was delayed by war between the major Christian kings and the interference of secular rulers. Many Protestant reformers were afraid that a successful council might undermine their doctrinal changes, and they used their political and military influence to try to thwart Catholic revival. In spite of these difficulties, the Council of Trent would meet the challenge of the Protestant reformers and bring about a renewed spirit of Catholicism.

Despite his doctrinal heresy, Martin Luther pointed out a number of areas that did need to be addressed and improved within the Catholic Church. Uneducated priests, inordinate number of benefices, the abuse of indulgences, and moral and spiritual lethargy all signified a Church in dire need of reform and renewed religious zeal. The Catholic reformation was a period of revival of the Faith and an increase of religious devotion. Although the Protestant revolt intensified the Catholic desire for reform, this nevertheless was already beginning throughout the Church. Christian humanist writers such as Erasmus of Rotterdam and St. Thomas More had called upon the Church to embrace the values of the Gospel. Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros began a reform of the various religious orders in Spain and built the University of Alcala to help better educate the clergy. New orders such as the Theatines were created to address the need for an improvement in the training of bishops. Soon the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) would emerge to martial support for the pope and the Roman Church.

ADRIAN VI AND CLEMENT VII

The forerunner to the Catholic Reformation was Pope Adrian VI. The Dutch-born Adrian was the last non-Italian to be Pope before John Paul II. As bishop of Tortosa in Spain, Adrian became an associate of Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros in the Spanish reform. He was a man of impeccable morals with deep piety and a strong penitential asceticism. As pope he attempted to bring the Spanish revival to Rome. He wanted to win back the Lutherans by force of good example and dialogue. He worked tirelessly to reform the Church but tragically died only one year after his election. Though little progress was made towards reform during his short pontificate, Adrian identified the major areas that needed a change for the better, and many of his recommendations would eventually be put into practice.

Adrian's successor was Clement VII, a man of strong intellectual ability, but indecisive in action. Clement wanted to reform the clergy and religious orders, while the Christian kingdoms were looking for a response to Lutheran challenges to Catholic doctrine. In his attempt to call a council for renewal of the Church, Clement found himself stuck between political infighting of Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France. These rulers wanted to dominate any council of the Church and refused to allow bishops to attend in areas out of their control. Wars between Charles and Francis continuously delayed attempts to call an ecumenical council. In addition to the Lutheran challenge, Clement also had to deal with Henry VIII's marital situation.

PAUL III AND CALLING OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

Many credit Pope Paul III with the official start of the Catholic revival.

Alessandro Farnese became Pope Paul III in 1534. Before his election he had been a Renaissance Cardinal who loved the arts and raucous parties. Farnese underwent a late spiritual conversion and was ordained to the priesthood at age 51. He immediately began to dedicate his life to reforming the Church. For this reason, many credit Paul III with the official start of the Catholic revival. Paul III appointed exemplary cardinals and bishops to study the problems needing to be addressed, approved the Jesuit order, and launched the Council of Trent.

Paul III took strong action to begin revitalizing the Church. He excommunicated Henry VIII in 1538 for his rebellious actions and placed England under interdict. He urged the Catholic princes of Germany to unite against their Lutheran counterparts and managed to convince Charles V and Francis I to call a ten-year truce. Capitalizing on the truce as an opportunity for a council, in 1537 he appointed *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia*, a commission to study and report on needed Church reform. He chose for this commission Cardinals Gasparo Contarini as president, Gian Pietro Caraffa (the future Pope Paul IV), Jacopo Sadoleto, and Reginald Pole (almost elected pope in 1549); Archbishops Federigo Fregoso and Jerome Aleander; Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti; Abbot Gregorio Cortese; and Friar Tommaso Badia. (cf. Olin, *Catholic Reform from Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1495-1563*, 1994, p. 79) This commission established a blueprint for the upcoming Council of Trent.

There were many obstacles for Paul III in the calling of a general council. Many of his closest advisers were against a council, fearing an end to patronage and financial benefits of their positions that reform might bring. Lutheran reformers wanted acceptance of their theological positions in advance of a council. They wanted to be on equal footing with the bishops present and demanded that only the gospels be used in the deliberations and pronouncements. When it was clear they would not get their way, the Protestant League of Schmalkalden attempted to disrupt the council.

Secular rulers were also opposed to a council: Henry VIII had started his own church, Francis I did not want the French Church to lose its independence, and Charles V was afraid his subjects would react badly to a condemnation of Lutheranism. The secular princes wanted no dogmatic decrees discussed at the council and argued that only matters of discipline should be addressed. A compromise was established which agreed to have each session of the council deal with both doctrine and reform. Paul III summoned a council to meet in Mantua in 1537, but Francis I refused to allow any French Bishops to attend, and Charles V did not want the location in an Italian city outside his control. Consequently, when the Duke of Mantua could not guarantee the safety of the members, the council disbanded. It was finally agreed that the Italian city of Trent, a city under Charles V's jurisdiction, should host the council. However, war broke out again between Charles V and Francis I, and the council was delayed for another three years. Finally, on December 13, 1545, the Council of Trent opened its first session.

CHURCH'S TEACHING

Luther's theology broke away from the Church's teaching mainly in its deflated view of humanity. The Church teaches that no one can merit the *initial* grace of forgiveness and justification, this grace is granted by God at Baptism and the other sacraments. However, Catholics believe that "moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life" (CCC 2010). Works are more than mere indicators of one's faith, but free actions inspired by faith through which grace is obtained, flowing from Christ's redemptive sacrifice. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

> **The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace.... This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "co-heirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life" (Council of Trent (1547): DS 1546). The merits of our good words are gifts of the divine goodness (cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1548). "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God's gifts" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 298, 4-5: PL 38, 1367). (CCC 2009)**

Original sin does not leave man totally corrupt, as Luther believed, but rather wounds his nature. Human freedom, aided by grace, makes it possible for man to cooperate with God and to unite his personal good works to the merits of Christ, thereby meriting further grace. By Baptism Christians are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ whereby they become children of God the Father. Through this divine filiation, obtained through the goodness and mercy of God, they gain grace through good works, whereby they grow in sanctity and win graces for others as well.

The contents of the Bible is considered divine revelation and therefore the word of God. Nevertheless, it is the work of man in its composition and expression of the divinely inspired teaching. "'God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more' (DV 11)" (CCC 106). Luther denied the role played by human cooperation in the transmission of divine revelation; this erroneous opinion lines up with his view of fallen humanity. The approval and explanation of Sacred Scripture is also intimately bound up with the early tradition of the Church: without the clarification of Sacred Tradition and the guiding light of the Church there would be confusion and uncertainty regarding the identification of inspired texts and its right interpretation. In summary, the traditions of the Church ultimately come from Christ through his Apostles and their successors (bishops) under the authority of the pope.

The Seven Sacraments were instituted over time by Christ as a means of salvation. Christ, who perfectly knew human nature, instituted the Sacraments to impart all the necessary graces for forgiveness, healing, conversion, and ultimately salvation. Due to Luther's attack on the Sacraments, the Council of Trent would elucidate on each Sacrament with a thorough theological explanation which would cogently and logically counteract all the erroneous ideas in circulation at the time.

Luther's original and chief criticism of the Church regarded the sale of indulgences. Indulgences concern the forgiveness of temporal punishment in Purgatory due to sins. Even after Penance, which forgives the guilt associated with sin, the penitent still needs to make reparation and undergo purification for sins committed. This can take the form of prayer, almsgiving, or corporal works of mercy. Indulgences are granted for certain good acts of piety or charitable actions. The Church teaches that through Christ's merits an individual can make reparation for sin and thereby cooperate with that grace through his willing efforts to please God. Therefore, the efficacy of

indulgences comes from Christ's redemption applied to an individual who appeals to God's mercy expressed in devotions and good actions. The abuse of indulgences, which was prevalent during Luther's time, was to preach that a monetary sum could gain such release from temporal punishment without the proper interior dispositions of sorrow for sin and efforts to follow Christ. This abuse was corrected and condemned by the Church.

Modern efforts are underway to clarify and even lessen the divide between the Lutheran and Catholic understandings of justification. In 1998 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Lutheran World Federation issued a joint declaration on justification. This joint declaration documented the similarities of belief between the two churches, and seems to have been a large step toward the mutual understanding of each side's position.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT (1545-47): SESSIONS 1-10

The Council of Trent was in session at irregular intervals for eighteen years throughout three pontificates. When the first session of Trent convened, three papal cardinal legates directed the affairs of the council: Gian Maria del Monte, Marcello Cervinni, and Reginald Pole. Over sixty bishops and fifty other theologians met to discuss the reform agenda put forward by Paul III's *Consilium* of 1537. The secretary of the council, Angelo Massarelli, later Bishop of Telese, compiled

The Council of Trent turned out to be a detailed response to all the Protestant theological positions. Council sessions were held in the Trent's Romanesque cathedral and in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. Many of the reforms and doctrinal formulations worked out over twenty-five sessions remained the framework of Catholicism until the 1960s.

A view of Trento (Trent) from Castello del Buonconsiglio. In the background is the Monte Bondone. Trent, in English, Italian *Trento*, German *Trient*, Latin *Tridentum* (the Latin form is the source of the adjective *Tridentine*) is located in the Adige river valley in the Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige. It is the capital of the region and of the autonomous province of Trento. Originally a Celtic city, Trent was later conquered by the Romans in the first Century B.C. In 1027, the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II created the Prince, Bishop of Trent, who wielded both temporal and religious powers.

a detailed diary of the events of the council. The council met in Particular Congregations where theologians and laymen discussed the topic of each session. Decisions of these Congregations would be sent to the General Congregation of Bishops for their review. Final promulgation of each topic occurred at the end of each session. All decisions were then sent to the pope for his final approval.

The first seven sessions of Trent addressed a number of doctrinal issues. The first topic dealt with the question of Sacred Scripture. Two decrees came out of the fourth session, which declared that in matters of Faith and morals, the Tradition of the Church together with the Bible is the source of Catholic belief. This session also indicated that the Latin Vulgate (originally translated into Latin by St. Jerome) was the authoritative text for Sacred Scripture and the books contained therein was the complete canonical list, though nothing was decided concerning translation of the Bible into vernacular languages.

Original sin was the second topic discussed at Trent: its nature, consequences, and its remission through Baptism. The council discredited the notion that original sin destroyed human freedom and man's ability to cooperate with grace. This led the council to begin the discussion brought up by Luther on the topic of justification. Perhaps the most divisive topic among the Germanic princes of the North, the council nevertheless took up this stormy debate with sessions of sixty-one general congregations and forty-four particular congregations. Though it is true that Christ justifies and restores each person's relationship to God the Father by his death on the Cross, the council declared that Baptism makes people "sons of God" who can freely choose to cooperate with God's salvific mission. Although Faith is a gratuitous gift, good works guided by faith are necessary for salvation.

During these sessions the council also took up the topic of the Sacraments in general and identified those seven which were instituted by Christ. They then proceeded to examine each of the Sacraments in turn. Baptism and Confirmation were the first discussed in detail by the council.

In matters of reform, the council candidly addressed abuses of clerical benefices and the need to provide better training for the clergy. Pluralism, i.e., having charge over more than one diocese, was strictly forbidden, and strict laws were devised for the appointment of bishops and the awarding of benefices.

Before the seventh session was complete, war broke out between the Emperor and the Protestant League of Schmalkalden. Plague also killed many in Trent, including the general of the Franciscan order. The cardinal legates proposed in the eighth session of Trent to move the council to Bologna for protection from war and disease. Though Paul III had not ordered the move, both Francis I and Charles V were outraged by the relocation. Due to the political interference of the secular princes, nothing further was accomplished during the ninth and tenth sessions. The council itself was temporarily closed with the death of Paul III on November 10, 1549.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT (1551-1553): SESSIONS 11-16 UNDER JULIUS III

Paul III's successor was the first cardinal legate of the council, Giovanni del Monte, who took the name Julius III. Though fearful of the growing power of the Emperor Charles V, Julius pushed for the re-opening of the council in Trent in May 1551. The council continued to undertake a detailed discussion of each of the Seven Sacraments. During sessions thirteen and fourteen, the congregations outlined the doctrines of the Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick. In addition to these doctrinal issues, the council continued its reform with further discussion on discipline of clergy regarding benefices and jurisdictional questions and supervision of bishops.

A delegation of Protestant theologians arrived in Trent demanding participation in the council. The first demand of this party was to throw out the work of the preceding sessions of the council and begin anew. They again set before the council the demand that their theological arguments be accepted as the starting point of discussion and that the subordination of the pope to the council be defined. The fifteenth session of the council began to honor the requests of the Protestants by postponing the consideration of any further issues. The appearance of the League of Schmalkalden, however, placed Trent and the members of the council in danger. Subsequently, the council was again forced to close temporarily.

PAUL IV

After the death of Julius III in 1555 and the short-lived pontificate of Marcellus II, the papacy fell to the austere reformer Cardinal Carafa who took the name Paul IV. This 80-year-old pope had been a co-founder of the Theatine order and sought to bring about internal reform throughout the Roman Curia rather than continue with the council. Paul IV was an ascetical and pious man who zealously sought to free the Church from imperial control. He recreated the inquisition in Rome to root out heresy and demanded that members of the Roman Curia give up their materialistic lifestyle. Those who refused to give up pluralistic benefices were severely disciplined. He ended the practice of collecting payment for many clerical appointments, cutting papal revenues and making it less financially lucrative to seek such appointment. He tried to stop Spanish political influence in Rome, but was soundly defeated by the armies of the new Spanish king Philip II. Paul IV also refused to recognize the elevation of Elizabeth I as Queen of England due to her illegitimacy. Although many historians have criticized Paul IV's rigid reform, his actions helped to restore the Papacy to its spiritual mission.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT (1562-1563): SESSIONS 17-25 UNDER PIUS IV

The final stage of the Council of Trent took place with the elevation of Pius IV in 1559. The major adversaries of the council were gone: Charles V had abdicated his throne in 1557, dividing his empire between his son Philip II of Spain and his brother Ferdinand of Germany. Charles then entered a monastery to live out the last years of his life. Francis I of France had died. The council re-convened in 1562, and there were nine sessions in three months. These sessions finished the discussion of the remaining sacraments with declarations on the Sacrifice of the Mass, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The council also covered the topics of veneration of saints and relics and more clearly defined the true nature of indulgences. Probably the greatest reform was accomplished during these sessions. The council established the seminary system for the education of the clergy, directly attacking the problem of ignorance among parish priests. The seminaries established liturgical guidelines insuring adequate priestly guidance and uniform practice of the Faith among the Christian faithful. A list of forbidden books was established as well as the authorization to publish a new catechism for the faithful. To help curb episcopal abuses, bishops were not permitted to be away from their diocese for more than three months, and they were urged to visit all their Churches and care for the clergy and people.


CANONES, ET DECRETA
SACROSANCTI OECVMENICI,
ET GENERALIS CONCILII
TRIDENTINI
SVB PAVLO III, IVLIO III, PIO IIII,
PONTIFICIBVS MAX.

ROMAE,
Apud Paulum Manutium, Aldi F.
M. D. LXIIII.
Cum privilegio Pii IIII. Pont. Max.

The title page of the *Council of Trent Canons*.

The Council of Trent turned out to be a detailed response to all the Protestant theological positions. Each dogmatic decree included a canon anathematizing (denouncing as accursed) those who deny the doctrine in question. The contents filled fourteen volumes addressing the major concerns brought by the Protestants regarding justification, grace, Sacred Scripture, original sin, and the Seven Sacraments. The reform that began in Rome would work its way down to the laity. All bishops were required to faithfully bind themselves to uphold the conciliar decrees.

APPLICATION OF THE TRIDENTINE REFORM

The conclusion of the Council of Trent did not bring about immediate reforms. Many secular princes refused to accept the council's statements and would not allow the publication of its decrees. It was only through the personal example and dedicated holiness of a number of particular individuals that the fruits of Trent were bought forth.

ST. PIUS V

Michele Ghislieri was elected Pope Pius V in January 1566. A Dominican monk, St. Pius spread the religious reform of Trent throughout Christendom by living in a monastic cell as pope. He fasted, did penance, and passed long hours of the night in meditation and prayer. Despite the heavy labors and anxieties of his office, his piety did not diminish. He abolished lavish feasts and the use of fancy carriages by cardinals. He visited churches barefoot and cared for the poor and sick of Rome. An English nobleman was converted to the Faith upon seeing this holy man kiss the feet of a beggar who was covered in ulcerous sores. In his bull, *In cœna Domini*, Pope St. Pius V strove for the independence of the Church and of churchmen everywhere against dominance by secular