

Tuesday Evening Series
Series #11: The Reformation: The Roots of Lutheranism & Anglicanism
Session #1: Background to Reform & Reformation Timeline
Tuesday, January 9, 2018

What was The Reformation?

The Protestant Reformation was the 16th-century religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered Catholic Europe, setting in place the structures and beliefs that would define the continent in the modern era. In northern and central Europe, reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Henry VIII challenged papal authority and questioned the Catholic Church's ability to define Christian practice. They argued for a religious and political redistribution of power into the hands of Bible- and pamphlet-reading pastors and princes. The disruption triggered wars, persecutions and the so-called Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church's delayed but forceful response to the Protestants.

Some historical factors prior to the Reformation

- The 8th & 9th Centuries saw the emergence of strong monarchs and princes in Europe. By the 10th Century, there was a revival of the Holy Roman Emperor who insisted that even the Church was under the authority of the emperor.
- The 11th Century began to experience the toppling of such theocratic monarchs in favor of religious and political power being held by the Church. Also, the prominence of the other centers of Christianity in the East declined, and Rome's prominence further increased.
- The power struggle began to yet again by the end of the 13th Century when King Philip IV of France levied a tax to clergy to help finance a war with England. When clergy appealed to Rome, Pope Boniface VIII issued a papal bull threatening excommunication to anyone who demanded or paid the tax. Philip, in turn, banned exports of gold and silver to Italy, thus threatening papal finances.
- Power struggles like the one above continued between the Pope and civil authorities. As the 14th Century progressed, the papacy fell more and more under the control of French kings. In 1309, the papacy moved to Avignon, France.
- By the 1370s, there was a movement to return the papacy to Rome, which finally occurred in 1377 under Pope Gregory XI. However, his successor, Urban VI, alienated a majority of cardinals in his attempts to free the papacy from French control. The cardinals invalidated his election and replaced him—thus, the Western Church had two popes: one in Rome and one in Avignon. Nations in alliance with France (mainly Scotland, Spain, & Naples) supported the Avignon pope, and opponents of France (England, northern Italy, Germany, Poland) supported the Roman pope. This schism lasted 30 years with a third claimant to the papacy emerging before it was over.
- By the mid-14th Century, the church was in disarray and intensified sentiments that the Church had become “too worldly.”

- John Wycliffe, an Oxford-trained English theologian, lashed out at the church's great wealth and argued that the Bible was the church's only true authority and the doctrine of transubstantiation was not scriptural.
- Jan Hus, a Bohemian professor in Prague (now Czech Republic), took up Wycliffe's ideas (although he did not reject transubstantiation) in Eastern Europe. He became entangled in the politics of a church run by three popes and was eventually imprisoned and burned at the stake.
- Cooling climates and short growing seasons caused widespread famine in Europe, and in 1348, the Black Plague would decimate Europe for three long years.
- The problem of three popes would not be resolved until the early 15th Century.
- 1440 – Gutenberg invents the printing press! This meant that for the first time, books, the Bible, and propaganda could be printed and widely distributed.
- By the 1460s, the whole Christian world was in disarray. Byzantium (Constantinople) in the East had fallen to the Muslim Ottoman Turks; the other Eastern churches were barely hanging on; Western Europe was still recovering from the collapse of the medieval papacy.
- By the 16th Century much of the territory inhabited by Eastern Christianity was under Muslim control and there was a resurgence of efforts to reclaim the Holy Land, some of which came in the form of monetary support for war efforts, in exchange for spiritual benefits (indulgences).
- Papal power continued to wane as civic monarchs exercised their authority more.
- The emergence of humanism, which promoted the re-elevation of classical ideals in art and learning hearkening back to ancient Greece and Rome—which was thought to have been corrupted by outside forces. (?the church)
 - Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) was considered the greatest of the humanists. He published a Greek text of the New Testament in 1516. He also promoted a vision of church reform that focused on a simple, Christ-centered faith with much of the physicality of Christian devotion purged away (e.g. relics, rituals, monasticism, etc...).
 - There was also an interest in re-reading the works of St. Augustine in a way that favored salvation through God's grace and the idea of the salvation of a predestined elect.

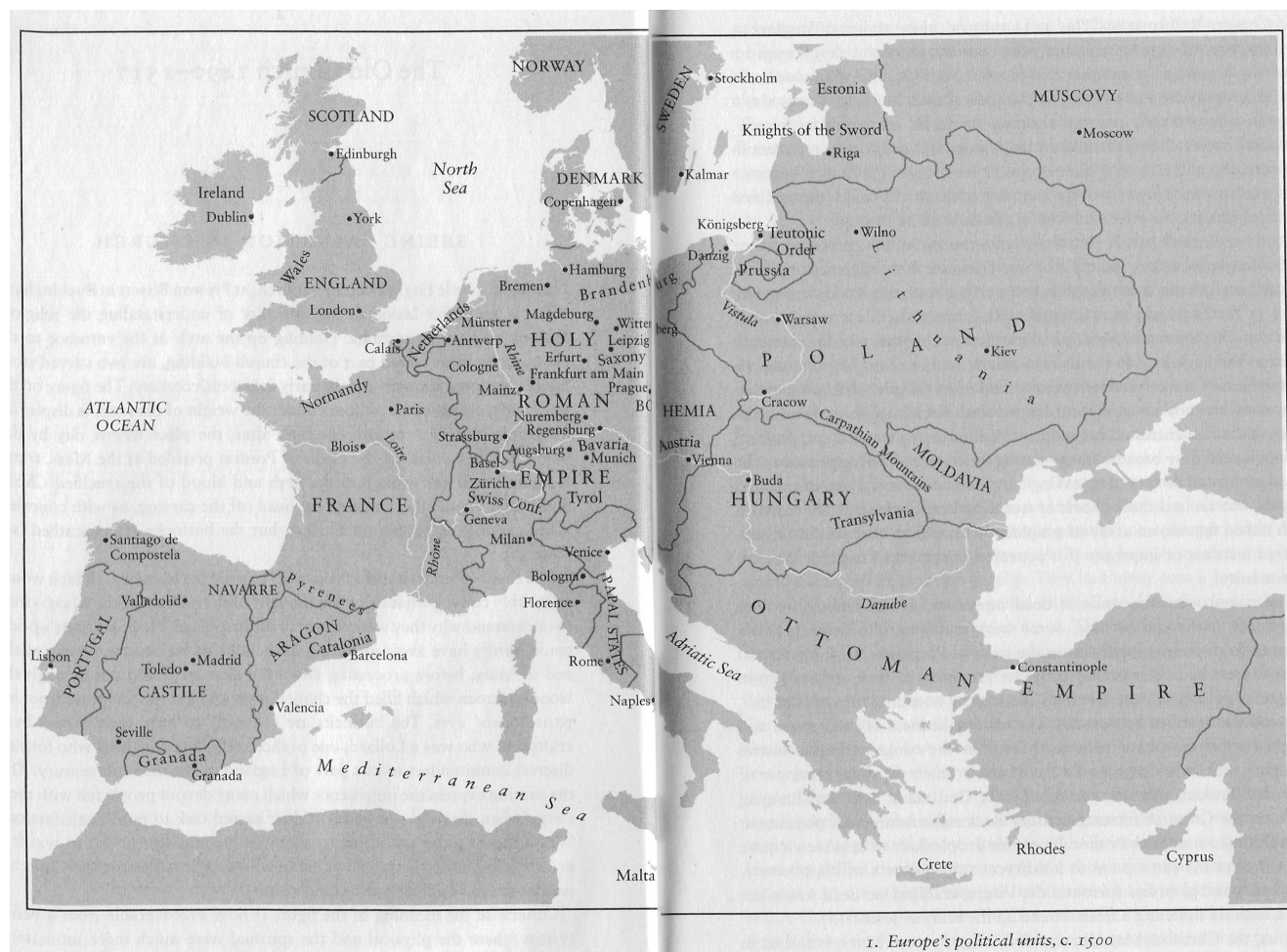
Reformation Timeline

- 1517 – Martin Luther's posts his 95 Theses on the door of Wittenburg Cathedral
- 1519 – Luther debates Johann Eck in Leipzig and argued that scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) was the basis for Christian faith and doctrine.
- 1520 – Luther outlines the doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* in a book entitled *The Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, and denied the authority of the Pope to interpret or confirm interpretation of the Bible.

- May 1521 – The Diet of Worms – Luther appeared before Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, to answer to charges of heresy. Luther refused to recant his teachings, was declared a heretic, and was excommunicated from the Catholic Church by Pope Leo X. He was smuggled to safety in the Wartburg Castle by Frederick III, Elector of Saxony.
- October 1521 – Henry VIII of England wrote his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* (Defense of the Seven Sacraments) in opposition to Luther and is rewarded with the title Defender of the Faith (*Fidei Defensor*) by Pope Leo X.
- 1522 – Luther begins a translation of the Bible into German
- 1526 – William Tyndale publishes a translation of the New Testament in English
- 1527 – Henry VIII requests an annulment from Pope Clement VII of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.
- 1529 – Luther meets Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli to discuss the issue of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Luther defends the idea of a sacramental union of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and wine, whereas Zwingli defended a view of the Eucharist as a symbol.
- 1530 – The Augsburg Confession, which outlined Lutheran theology and practice.
- 1531 – Zwingli is killed during a conflict between the Catholic and Protestant cantons of the Swiss Confederacy.
- 1533 – Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, declares the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon null and void. Henry marries Anne Boleyn.
- 1534 – St. Ignatius of Loyola founds the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) as part of the Catholic counter-reformation. In November of the same year, Henry VIII issues the Act of Supremacy, declaring him the supreme head of the Church in England.
- 1535 – St. Thomas More is executed for refusing to support the English Reformation.
- 1536 – William Tyndale is burned at the stake for heresy. John Calvin publishes his work of systematic theology in Latin. Henry VIII dissolves monasteries, convents, priories, and friaries in England, Wales, and Ireland, and seizes the land for the crown.
- 1545-1563 – Council of Trent is held to reform and clarify Roman Catholic doctrine.
- 1546 – Martin Luther dies.
- 1549 – First *Book of Common Prayer* largely through the efforts of Thomas Cranmer.
- 1555 – The Peace of Augsburg, a treaty granting tolerance to Lutherans within the Holy Roman Empire.
- 1563 – The 39 Articles of the Church of England are published, which gave a summary of Anglican doctrine and practice. Largely written by Cranmer.
- 1564 – Death of John Calvin. He is succeeded by Theodore Beza.

- 1598 – *Edict of Nantes*, granting freedom and toleration to French protestants (Huguenots).
- 1611 – Publication of the King James (Authorized) Version of the Bible. It is still the official Bible of the Church of England **and** The Episcopal Church to this day!
- 1618 – Synod of Dort, which supported Calvinism.
- 1685 – Revocation of the *Edict of Nantes* by Louis XIV, leading to the exodus of Protestants from France.

Map of Europe, ca. 1500



Resources

“The Reformation,” <http://www.history.com/topics/reformation>

“Timeline of Reformation History (1517-1685),” <http://protestantism.co.uk/timeline.html>

Robert B. Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008)

Dairmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003)