**The Reformation**

As the Renaissance spread throughout Europe the standard of living among Europeans greatly improved. As this happened, more people could afford to have their children receive a formal education. With more people being able to read and write, the number of individuals who read the bible increased. Many began to criticize the Catholic Church for its extravagance and for its abuses.

There were many people who felt that the practices and teachings of the Church were not consistent with the teachings found in the scriptures. The result was what historians call the Protestant Reformation.

**Martin Luther**

The Protestant Reformation began with the efforts of a German monk born in A.D. 1483. This monk’s name was Martin Luther. Luther’s parents wanted him to become a lawyer, and were sending him to law school. Deep within his heart however, Martin Luther wanted to serve God.

On a fateful afternoon, while caught out in a storm, Martin Luther was nearly struck by lightning. He felt that this was a sign that he should give up law school, and become a monk.

Shortly thereafter, Martin Luther joined a monastery in Germany, and began to dedicate his life to learning and teaching the Gospel. The more he studied, the more he felt that the Catholic Church had gone astray. He collected a list of 95 different points of doctrine where he felt that the Church was incorrect.

On October 31st, 1517, Luther wrote these 95 points of doctrine on a placard, which he nailed to the door of the Catholic Church in Wittenberg, Germany. These 95 points of doctrine were copied and sent throughout Germany, resulting in the Catholic Church losing out on the collection of money that they collected in exchange for indulgences. The sale of indulgences was one of the 95 practices that Martin Luther disagreed with. This practice allowed people to buy forgiveness for their sins.

As the money from the sale of indulgences greatly declined, Pope Leo X grew upset, and sent convoys to Martin Luther in an attempt to get him to recant his disagreement. Martin Luther refused to do so stating that he had an obligation to God to do what he felt was right.

By A.D. 1520 the Catholic Church had had enough. They declared Martin Luther a heretic, a crime punishable by death. Luther escaped and went into hiding, where he translated the Bible into German. Martin Luther founded a new religion known as Lutheranism.

**The Swiss Reformation and John Calvin**

As Lutheranism gained influence in Germany religious leaders in the neighboring country of Switzerland began a reformation of their own. Like Martin Luther, these leaders felt that the Catholic Church had grown corrupt. Unlike Martin Luther, however, these leaders wanted to establish a religious theocracy, or a government based on their religion, so that they could rule the lives of their people, and ensure that they were keeping the commandments of God.

In the mid A.D. 1500s another religious leader by the name of John Calvin began working to bring about reform in the Catholic Church. Calvin lived in Switzerland, and wanted to set up a theocracy.  By A.D. 1541 John Calvin had managed to setup his theocracy in Geneva. The city government forced all citizens to attend church several times a week, and had very strict rules about what people could and could not do.

John Calvin wrote a book, which he called *The Institutes of The Christian Religion.* This book became quite popular in his day, and would become very influential among future reformers.

Calvin’s most important teaching was that mankind could not control or change anything in this earth life. Calvin believed that everything was controlled by god, the past, the present, and the future. He called this doctrine predestination. According to this doctrine, certain people were predestined to heaven, while others were predestined to hell. They believed that an individual could do nothing to change their predestination.

As they worked to insure that their people practiced the religious teachings that were required by law, they put many people to death for various crimes against the church, such as witchcraft, or being too Catholic.

**The Church of England**

The protestant movement arrived in England after the Pope would not grant King Henry VIII the right to divorce his wife Catherine. Henry VIII wanted to produce a male heir. He feared that without an heir his nation would again be thrown into civil war. His marriage to Catherine had only produced daughters, and she was too old to bear any additional children.

After being denied the right to divorce, King Henry VIII convinced Parliament to declare the Church in England separate from that of the Catholic Church and to place himself at the head of the Church.

After becoming the head of the newly formed church, King Henry VIII granted his divorce. He then married Anne Boleyn. After she failed to produce a male heir, King Henry VIII had her executed on charges of treason. He would marry four more times and would have only one son who would rule as King Edward VI.

Edward ruled only for a short time and died in A.D. 1553. Following his death, Henry’s Catholic daughter came to the throne. Her name was Mary. Queen Mary attempted to use fear and death to bring the Catholic Church back into England. After putting many people to death, she became known as Bloody Mary.

Queen Mary was overthrown by her half-sister Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth was Protestant, and helped to strengthen the Church of England. She brought all the people together by making the Church of England more like the Catholic Church while still maintaining it as a separate church.

Source: kidspast.com

**The Catholic Church responded to the Reformation with the Counter Reformation. What was this and why did the Catholic Church feel the need to respond?**

The Catholic Counter [Reformation](http://www.essortment.com/catholic-counter-reformation-15546.html) was the church's response to the events of the [Protestant Reformation](http://www.essortment.com/catholic-counter-reformation-15546.html). Thousands of people flocked to the new Protestantism, leaving the Catholic Church behind. The Catholic Church decided to try to reform the church from within.

At first, it left the response to reformers in the hands of individuals, such as Ignatius Loyola. He was an ordinary clergyman who had trained as a soldier. His goal was to give birth to a new religious order, which combined the intellectual distinction of humanism with a reformed Catholicism. His hopes were that this new order would appeal to powerful political and [economic](http://www.essortment.com/catholic-counter-reformation-15546.html) groups. Thus, he founded the Society of Jesus in 1534, with the purpose of preaching and winning over new converts to the church. They became the Jesuits and dedicated themselves to teaching, constantly stressing the importance and power of preaching.

The Jesuits believed that it was essential for Christians to be united and they believed that Protestant theology was flawed. The [Protestants](http://www.essortment.com/catholic-counter-reformation-15546.html) believed in Predestination, which offered salvation to the educated and wealthy laity. Technically, the poor were included, as well. But what about the other side? A person might suffer a lifetime of suffering and despair tormented by the horror of inevitable damnation. In the face of this frightening view of the future, the Jesuits offered people hope. They proposed a religious rebirth based on tradition, ceremony and the ability of the priest to offer forgiveness.

In order to gain as much strength as possible for their movement, the Jesuits sought positions as confessors to rulers and princes. Then, using their influence, they urged them to use their power and energies to strengthen the church in their regions.

By the 1540's, more than twenty years after the Reformation began, it was clear that a Catholic Counter Reformation was underway. This Counter Reformation accepted the need for reform, but did not attack the traditional hierarchy and authority of the church. Instead, they turned aggressive and hostile towards the Protestants. The Inquisition, which had been in existence for many years, expanded its activities. Wherever Catholic jurisdiction prevailed, unrepentant heretics--i.e. Protestants--were subject to death and imprisonment.

Many of the Catholic leaders and reformers were aware of the abuses and problems, which had prompted Martin Luther to leave. But, instead of breaking with the doctrinal and spiritual authority of the pope and the clergy, they continued with their attempts to change the church from within. In order to do this, the church studied and redefined its doctrines according to the Council of Trent, which met in 1545. The Council of Trent continued to work for the reform of the Catholic Church until 1563. Church  doctrine was modified and unified, many of the corrupt practices of the church, such as the selling of indulgences, were abolished and the pope was given full and final authority in all Church matters. The Council of Trent also issued a mandate that the church would be the final judge of the Bible and demanded that all texts be taken literally, wherever possible. The intention of the mandate was to make things as clear as possible to church members at a time when the new Protestants were already separating into different branches and there was much confusion.

There was also a repressive side to the Counter Reformation. In addition to the expansion of the Inquisition, censorship was enforced through an Index of Prohibited Books. The Catholic Church wanted to prevent the spread of Protestant ideas.

The policies of the Counter Reformation (enlightened education, the building of churches, powerful preaching, censorship and oppression) were very successful. Thousands of people returned to a Catholic Church. It wasn't the same Catholic Church, though. It was continuing to change and grow and would continue to do so for many years to come.

Source: essortment.com

**Questions for Homework (to be answered in complete questions):**

1. Why did many Protestants want to reform the Catholic Church? Identify at least two specific complaints that Protestants had against the Catholics.
2. What did Martin Luther do to protest against the Catholic Church? Did he originally intend to start a new religion? Explain your answer.
3. How did the Catholic Church respond to Luther’s protest?
4. What is a theocracy? What were some of the rules in Calvin’s theocracy in Switzerland?
5. What was John Calvin’s most important belief?
6. Why did King Henry VIII want to start the Church of England?
7. How did Queen Elizabeth bring unity to England?
8. What was the Catholic Counter-Reformation?
9. Who were the Jesuits? What did they teach and how did the gain power?
10. How did the Catholic Church treat Protestants in the Inquisition? What happened to many Protestant books?
11. What did the Council of Trent accomplish?