

## **Chapter Twenty-eight**

### **Beginning of the Burning Times in Western Christendom**

Western Europe did not progress steadily from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. While the privileged classes enjoyed the advent of humanism, among the masses religiosity intensified. Of this the most important consequence was the Protestant Reformation. Millions of Christians abandoned their belief in the power of saints, relics, Mary, and the Church, but their devotion to other aspects of Christianity was fierce and often fanatic. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europeans by the hundred thousands died for religious reasons, Catholics burning heretics, Protestants burning witches, and both killing each other on the battlefield. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment was in part a reaction to the religious frenzy of the two preceding centuries.

### **Trade, exploration, and the first European empires**

In the fifteenth century, as the wealthy classes of Catholic Europe developed a taste for luxury goods from India and the Far East, east-west trade became very lucrative. Silk from China was highly prized, as were the spices - cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, pepper - from Sri Lanka, India, and the "Spice Islands" of Indonesia. Because most of this trade still passed through the Red Sea or overland on the caravan routes of the Hijaz, it enriched the Mamluk rulers who controlled all of Egypt and much of the Levant, and Cairo became the cultural center of the Dar al-Islam. Although menaced by the Ottomans, the Mamluks were able to hold their own until the early sixteenth century.

European merchants were eager to capitalize on trade with eastern Asia, and Spanish and especially Portuguese explorers looked for a sea-route to India that would by-pass the Mamluks as well as the Ottomans. Prince Henry the Navigator made it a Portuguese project to reach India by sailing around Africa. An immediate consequence of European contact with sub-Saharan Africa was the commencement of a slave trade: Portuguese merchants seized black Africans or bought them from Arabic slave-sellers and carried them back to Europe. In the second half of the fifteenth century the number of black African slaves bought and sold is calculated in the tens of thousands. By the seventeenth century the number was in the millions.

The African slave trade did not divert the Portuguese from their goal of reaching India. In 1488 Bartolomeu Dias managed to round the Cape of Good Hope, but his men refused to sail north along Africa's east coast. More successful was Vasco da Gama, who in 1498 became the first European to sail to India from a European port. Because Muslim merchants considered the Indian ocean their own preserve the Portuguese were in some danger and in 1510 they set up a well-fortified outpost at Bombay. This trade through the Indian Ocean marked the beginning of a Portuguese empire, with colonies in Angola and Mozambique serving as way-stations to India.

Spanish initiatives were toward the west. Having already laid claim to the Canary Islands, the Spanish envisaged reaching India by sailing directly west from the Canaries. Christopher Columbus supposed that he accomplished this in 1492 (it was not done until twenty years later), but the New World that Columbus in fact discovered gave the Spanish vast imperial opportunities and launched the Golden Age (Siglo de Oro) of Spain.

## **The inquisition in Spain and Portugal**

The maritime, military and imperial glory of Spain and Portugal in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries came at a price. Much of the momentum for these ambitions and accomplishments came from the success of the Reconquista, but that same success persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella and many of their Catholic subjects that God is pleased with those who are zealous in serving the Church, whether in peace or in war. The result for the whole of the Iberian peninsula was a Catholic fanaticism unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, and eventually an intellectual torpor in both Spain and Portugal. The Reconquista - which had begun in the twelfth century - was a war against Muslim amirs. It did not, however, originate as an attempt to eliminate Islam and Judaism from the Iberian peninsula, and for a long time the Christian kings were pleased to have Muslim and Judaeans subjects in their newly conquered territories. Toledo, as we have seen in Chapter 27, fell to Alfonso VI of Castile and León already in 1085, but even a century and a half later the city continued to be home to large Jewish and Muslim populations, and Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada proudly supervised Toledo's "School of Translations." Ferdinand III of Castile and León (ruled 1217-1252) greatly extended the Reconquista. Although he captured Cordoba in 1236 and Seville shortly thereafter, and then made Granada a vassal, Ferdinand did not attempt to Christianize the many Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of southern Spain. Ferdinand's contemporary, James I of Aragon, was solicitous for his Jewish subjects in Barcelona and other large cities.

Eventually, however, the Reconquista's objective was not only to enlarge the territories ruled by Christian monarchs but also to bring the inhabitants of these lands into the Catholic church. A turning point may have been the pogrom of 1391, which - as we have seen in Chapter 26 - began at Seville and spread to other Spanish cities. This was a grassroots episode, to which Christian rulers were either indifferent or opposed. In many of the affected cities Judaeans saved themselves from Christian mobs by agreeing to be baptized into the Church. Although most of these may have been merely nominal conversions, over the generations the converts' descendants seem to have become just as sincere in their Christianity as were the "old Christians."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, not only the converts themselves but also their descendants continued to be stigmatized as *conversos* or as *Marranos* (a term of dubious origin and meaning) and were evidently resented by many of the old Christians. Another infusion of converts from Judaism came in the 1470s, when King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile ordered their Jewish subjects either to convert to Catholicism or to relocate to special quarters, where they would be less likely to seduce Christians into becoming Judaeans. At this time the number of *conversos* must have been at least 100,000, as against three or four times that many practicing Judaeans in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Motivated evidently by complaints of the old Christians, Ferdinand and Isabella in 1480

asked authorization from Pope Sixtus IV to launch an *inquisitio* in order to root out the pseudo-converts from the genuine *conversos*. Sixtus gave the monarchs carte blanche: they could institute an inquisition, and would have general oversight and make all appointments for carrying it out. In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella completed the Reconquista by forcing the surrender of the Nasrid amir of Granada. On March 1 of that year they issued the Alhambra Decree, ordering the expulsion from Spain of all Judaeans who did not convert to Christianity by July 1. The reason for this measure, the monarchs explained, was that Judaeans were luring Christians into their religion and circumcising young Christian boys.

Muslims were temporarily spared, as the Treaty of Granada guaranteed that Muslims in the *taifa* would be permitted to practice their traditional religion. A subsequent revolt of Granada, however, gave to *los Reyes Católicos* the grounds on which to demand that Muslims too either convert to Christianity or leave Spain. That order was issued in 1502. Many Muslims did leave their homeland and move to Morocco, but others were baptized and publicly became Christians. Traditional Catholics regarded the conversion as superficial and referred to these newest Christians as *Moriscos*, or “Moorists.” Although *Moriscos* were a secondary target of the Spanish inquisition, until the rise of Protestantism the *Marranos* were far and away the principal target, accounting for approximately 95 per cent of all recorded cases in the fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth century.

In inquisitions before the thirteenth century the penalty for heresy was excommunication, and the entire business was in the hands of the Church. In the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions, as in the inquisitions against the Cathars and Waldensians, penalties went far beyond excommunication and duties were therefore shared between temporal and spiritual authorities: only the Church was competent to identify heretics, while only the kings and their agents could inflict the temporal punishment that a guilty verdict required. In 1483 Ferdinand and Isabella appointed the first Inquisitor General: this was Tomás de Torquemada, a Dominican friar who (like so many of his contemporaries in Spain) numbered conversos among his own ancestors.<sup>3</sup> Appointing several dozen inquisitors as his underlings, Torquemada divided all of Spain into sixteen districts, in each of which he set up a tribunal. A tribunal normally consisted of at least three clerics, all of whom had spent many years in the major or holy orders. The tribunals were itinerant, moving around from one city or town in the district to another. After arriving in a city the inquisitors - usually Dominican friars in the early years, and eventually Jesuits - would lodge there for several weeks or several months, until they were satisfied that they had investigated all of the charges of heresy that could be made against the residents of the town in question.

While it was contrary to Christian practice to execute Muslims or Judaeans, there was a long tradition of executing heretics. Paradoxically, therefore, the practicing Muslim or Judaeans in sixteenth-century Spain had to fear only a beating, loss of property, and deportation. As a “Christian heretic,” on the other hand, the *Marrano* or *Morisco* was eligible for the death penalty. The kind of death was again dictated by Christian tradition: for heresy the authorities tended to avoid the shedding of blood, and resorted instead to strangling the guilty persons or to burning them at the stake.

In his comprehensive book on the subject, historian Henry Kamen has shown that the number of executions in the Spanish inquisition was not so high as has been generally supposed, and that it was effective not because it was ever-present but because the fear of it was so widespread. Even though “the reverend fathers” might seldom visit a small town, and although no townspeople might be executed when they did come, nobody could feel entirely safe until they left.

The coming of the Inquisition to a town was, in principle, designed to cause fear. In his commentary on the fourteenth-century *Manual* of Eimeric, Francisco Peña in 1578 stated: “we must remember that the main purpose of the trial and execution is not to save the soul of the accused but to achieve the public good and put fear into others.”<sup>4</sup>

The inquisitors did not themselves hunt out the heretics. The tribunal depended on townspeople coming forward with accusations against their neighbors and acquaintances. The accusers were known to the inquisitors, but upon their arrest the defendants were told neither the identity of the accusers nor the substance of the accusations. Perhaps a converso had declined to eat pork when invited to a communal meal, or a family of Marranos was remarkably idle on Saturdays, or a Morisco was seen prostrating himself in prayer. The imprisoned defendant was urged, in order to receive a more lenient sentence, to confess whatever he or she had done that might have led to the arrest. Since defendants normally had no idea what the accusations were, the tendency was to confess whatever acts could conceivably have been regarded as heretical. Torture was frequently used in order to extract confessions.

After all trials had been held, the local inquisition culminated in an *auto de fe* - “act of faith” - a religious assembly in the town square. Virtually all of the town’s residents attended. Into the square filed a procession of those who had undergone trial, led by the inquisitors. The ceremony was joyful for those whom the tribunal had found innocent, as they were publicly exonerated and confirmed as devout members of the Church. For those who to one degree or another had been found guilty of heresy it was an occasion for humiliation and grief. Those whose situation was most desperate were decked out in garish jackets called *sambenitos* and wore tall conical hats. After a mass and a sermon, the verdicts - from acquittal to the death penalty - were read out to the assembled crowd. After the padres had finished it was the temporal authorities who took over, as within a day or two of the *auto de fe* they inflicted the penalties, from flogging to burning at the stake. Some mitigation of the latter sentence was possible if the guilty finally made confession to the charge: confessors were mercifully strangled before their bodies were tied to the stakes and burned. Once again, a large crowd witnessed the punishment of the heretics. By such means was even the possibility of Judaism extinguished in Spain.

Fortunately for the Spanish (Sephardic) Judaeans there were places in the east that would take them in. One of the most welcoming, as we have seen, was the Ottoman empire. Another was Poland. Jewish exiles had been welcomed in Poland during the Black Death of 1348-49, and the Polish-Lithuanian monarchs had traditionally been solicitous of their Judaeans subjects. Sigismund I (ruled 1506-48), who had a humanist education, during the 1530s freed the Judaeans from some of the last restrictions under which they were then living in Poland. Except for the

Netherlands, nowhere in western Europe would there be anything similar for a very long time. Not until 1868 did Jewish immigrants come back to Spain.<sup>5</sup>

From searching out nominal Christians who practiced Judaism or Islam in secret the Spanish inquisition broadened its mission to include the discovery of other heretics. A group of mystical Christians called the Alumbrados (“illuminated”) came under attack, and by the 1550s the inquisitors were seeking out and executing “Lutherans,” men and women who agreed with the new teachings of Martin Luther and other reformers. This latter project was almost completely successful, and prevented the establishment of Protestantism in Spain.

Portugal in its age of empire became no less hostile to Muslims and Judaeans than was Spain. What is now Portugal had been much more tolerant in medieval times, when it was controlled by the same Umayyad califs who, from their capital at Cordoba, controlled most of Spain. In this Islamic period Portugal had a growing Muslim and Jewish population, alongside a sizeable but declining number of Christians. With the breakup of the Cordoba califate in the eleventh century Christian kings of León and other lands to the north began expanding their realms across the mountains southward into Portugal. The Muslim amirs of Badajoz, Lisbon and Merida were successively defeated, and by the thirteenth century a Christian kingdom of Portugal - independent of León - had come into being. Through the fourteenth century Portugal continued to be home for tens of thousands of Judaeans (the number of Muslims steadily declined), and the early Christian kings treated their Jewish subjects well enough to keep them content. Increasing restrictions were imposed during the fifteenth century, but even in 1492 many Jewish exiles from Spain fled to Portugal.

A turn for the worse came late in 1496, as King Manuel I prepared to wed the Infanta Isabella, oldest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. The intended bride demanded that before she married Manuel he must make Portugal as purely Catholic as was Spain. He must, that is, present to his many Jewish and his few Muslim subjects the choice: either be baptized into the Catholic church, or be expelled from Portugal. Although Manuel was distressed at Isabella’s ultimatum he needed the marriage, and issued the order to his non-Christian subjects. The predictable result was that in Portugal, as in Spain, complaints were soon heard from traditional Catholics about “secret Jews” (and occasionally about *moriscos*). In 1515 King Manuel petitioned Pope Leo X for authority to launch an inquisition in Portugal, but implementation came only in the 1530s, the procedure being the same as in Spain. By the end of the sixteenth century the land was entirely Catholic: Islam and Judaism virtually disappeared, and Protestantism never got a chance to take root. The Portuguese inquisition lasted almost three hundred years, not being suspended until 1821.

## **Influences of the Renaissance in northern Europe**

Through the fifteenth century the Renaissance was mostly limited to the cities of northern Italy. In the sixteenth century literary and artistic creativity was increasingly admired by the nobility in France, Germany, the Low Countries and England. Here the principal focus of the Italian Renaissance - the “revival” of the ancient Latin literary classics and also of the art and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome - was perhaps not so important as what the Italians

themselves had produced. The wealthy classes in northern Europe were especially fascinated by the multi-faceted humanism of Italian writers and artists, from Petrarch and Boccaccio to Leonardo da Vinci and Jacopo Sannazaro (the latter's *Arcadia*, a pastoral romance published in 1504, was immensely popular all through the sixteenth century).

Among the northern European artists who were much influenced by Italian humanism were Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Lucas Cranach the Elder, and Hans Holbein the Younger. Although a Bavarian, Holbein did his best work at the court of Henry VIII in England. The "new" style of painting came to France dramatically in the reign of Francis I (1515-47). Francis greatly admired what was going on in Italy and brought to France works by Leonardo (including the *Mona Lisa*), Michelangelo, and Cellini.

Two of the greatest minds in the northern European Renaissance were Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) in Rotterdam, and Thomas More (1478-1535) in England. Both Erasmus and More were students of the Latin and Greek classics. Although they were loyal Catholics, they also recognized the corruption of the Church. The worst years of Erasmus' life were those he spent, in his late teens, in an Augustinian monastery. In his unhappiness he sought and received a dispensation from the clerical state, and for the rest of his life was a severe critic of fasting, celibacy, and other aspects of monasticism. He also assailed the venality of the lower and higher clergy. Both Erasmus and More hoped that some of the Church's ills might be reduced if priests and bishops were educated along humanist lines.

## **The Bible in Hebrew and Greek**

Of great importance for the history of Christendom was the beginning of the study of the biblical languages, especially in northern Europe. Catholic clergy had traditionally been ignorant of both Greek and Hebrew: just as Arabic was the language of Islam, so Hebrew and Greek were regarded as the languages of Judaism and of Orthodox Christianity respectively, while for Catholics the only scriptural language was Latin. Late in the fifteenth century this linguistic parochialism began to break down. At the University of Paris instruction in Hebrew began in 1470. One of the students at Paris was Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), perhaps the first German Christian to master Hebrew sufficiently to read the Old Testament in its original language. Reuchlin's *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1506) greatly facilitated the study of Hebrew among Christian scholars (Martin Luther, for example, obtained a copy of Reuchlin's manual soon after its publication). As we have seen toward the end of Chapter 27, the printing of books in Greek began in northern Italy in the 1480s and in the early sixteenth century was accelerated. Hand in hand with the production of Greek books went the study of ancient Greek in universities north as well as south of the Alps. At Oxford the teaching of Greek began in 1492. At the University of Louvain a separate corporation, the *collegium trilingue*, was in 1517 established for the study of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. The college was made possible by a bequest from Jerome Busleiden, a wealthy businessman and a collector of antiquities. Busleiden was a friend of both Thomas More and Erasmus, and it was Erasmus who did most to make the *collegium* a success. A similar college for the study of "the three learned languages" was set up at Paris in 1530.

The *editio princeps* of the Greek New Testament was published at Basle in 1516: this

edition was the great work of Erasmus, who had established his text by comparing the best and oldest Greek manuscripts that he could find.<sup>6</sup> Erasmus published a second and considerably improved edition in 1519. Printed editions of the Hebrew Bible - the Christian Old Testament - had appeared a generation earlier. In 1488 the Soncino family, Joshua and his sons Moses and Gershom, had printed the *editio princeps* of the Tanakh in the northern Italian city of Brescia. Intended for use by rabbis, the printed book was much appreciated and six years later the Soncino family issued a second edition. A more elaborate text of the Hebrew Bible was printed at Venice in 1517 by Daniel Bomberg, the Hebrew editing having been done by Jacob ben Hayyim. This was the *Mikraot Gedolot* ("Great Scriptures," its Latin title was *Biblia rabbinica*), a massive work which contained not only the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible but also the Onkelos targum (Aramaic translation) and the principal commentaries by rabbinic scholars. Bomberg was a Christian from Antwerp, but his *Mikraot Gedolot* was meant primarily for rabbis and Jewish scholars.

When Martin Luther and his collaborators translated the Bible into German they did their best to base the German translation not on the Latin Vulgate but on the Hebrew and Greek originals. Luther early acquired both Erasmus' Greek text of the New Testament and the Soncino edition of the Hebrew Bible. So also William Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English in the 1520s - unlike John Wycliffe's in the fourteenth century - was done from the Hebrew and Greek texts.

## **The witch hunts**

While a favored few northern Europeans were enjoying the fruits of the Renaissance, villagers in France, Switzerland and Germany were being frightened by witches. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were "the burning times," as devout Christians mobilized against those women and men whom they perceived to be witches or wizards, all of them in league with the Devil.<sup>7</sup> Witches and witchcraft are seldom mentioned in the Bible, but the few passages where they appear leave no doubt about what to do with them. At Exodus 22:18 God tells Moses, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."<sup>8</sup> Evidently, however, witches were not a serious problem in ancient Israel and Judah, and the Bible mentions no occasion when either a witch or a wizard was put to death. From the second century CE through the fourth magic was a major preoccupation for pagans, and they studied manuals on how to do it and how to protect themselves from it. The Christians of Late Antiquity were relatively indifferent to magic: although they believed firmly in miracles, Christians were instructed by their bishops that they had nothing to fear from magic, since Jesus had defeated the powers of Satan. During most of medieval times witches and witchcraft were not a worry in Christendom.

The indifference to witches lasted until the fifteenth century. The horrors of the Black Death of 1348-51 were generally regarded as God's punishment for a variety of sins. The recurrence of the same plague over the generations, however, persuaded some Christians that it was the work of the Devil rather than of God, and as Satanism advanced in the fifteenth century Christians were on the lookout for the Devil's agents. In the 1430s and 1440s villagers in northern Italy, Switzerland, southeastern France and southwestern Germany began to suspect that their misfortunes were the work of witches. Along with the plague itself, crop failures and the deaths of livestock were blamed on witches who practiced black magic in order to harm their

neighbors. Eventually these fears and accusations were taken seriously by two papal inquisitors, whose responsibility it was to hunt for heretics in Germany and Switzerland. The inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, tried to alert their superiors in the Dominican order to the outbreak of witchcraft, but neither the superiors nor the bishops of the Rhineland cities gave much credence to the alarms. Kramer and Sprenger then took the matter to Pope Innocent VIII, who in 1484 issued a papal bull agreeing with them that witchcraft was a menace and instructing them to hunt out the witches and turn them over to the temporal authorities. Kramer and Sprenger immediately composed and published a manual to inform inquisitors everywhere about witchcraft and prescribing the methods of eradicating it. The manual was titled the *Malleus Maleficarum* ("Hammer of witches") and was printed in 1487. Despite the papal endorsement, however, most Dominican inquisitors and most bishops were reluctant to pursue witches or even to acknowledge their existence.

The sexual dimension of witchcraft was obvious. Just as before the Flood the evil angels had lusted after the daughters of men, so demons were assumed to lust after women in western Christendom.<sup>9</sup> One widespread belief in the fifteenth century was that a woman received her powers of witchcraft as payment for submitting to the Devil's embraces. Another belief was that a witch was born of a woman who had intercourse with the Devil or with one of his evil spirits.<sup>10</sup>

The offensive against witches intensified after the Protestant Reformation. Protestants took seriously the Bible's warnings that witches were out and about, and its command that they should be seized and exterminated. In many lands witchcraft became a crime that the state punished, usually with execution. In England Henry VIII passed the first royal law against witchcraft in 1542. Although abolished temporarily by his son, Edward VI, the law was reinstated by Elizabeth I in 1563. It was made even more severe by James I in 1604, and his version remained the law of the land until its repeal in 1736. Accusations of witchcraft tended to cluster in years of plague. Some individuals were suspected of - and may indeed have been guilty of - trying to spread the plague. Those who were accused of being *engraisseurs* or *bouteurs de peste* were regarded as witches, and were routinely put to death.<sup>11</sup>

Between 1520 and 1669 six more editions of the *Malleus Maleficarum* were produced. The burning of witches continued through the seventeenth century, and it is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 persons accused of witchcraft were executed. Nineteen of these persons were hung in the village of Salem, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1692, by which time the craze was waning in Europe. Perhaps it is a coincidence that by the end of the seventeenth century outbreaks of the plague in Europe had all but ceased.

### **The accession of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor 1519-1556**

Although Ferdinand and Isabella initiated the Spanish Inquisition and for a long time were the driving force behind it, Ferdinand assured himself that the next ruler of Spain - their grandson Charles - would be no less energetic in continuing it. Descended from Europe's two leading royal dynasties, Charles became one of the most important rulers in the continent's history. In 1506, as a six-year old boy he inherited from his father, Philip of Burgundy, the throne of Burgundy and the Low Countries. Much more was soon to come. Ferdinand and Isabella were Charles' maternal grandparents, and when Ferdinand died in 1516 Charles

succeeded him as king of both Aragon and Castile and so was the first king of a united Spain.<sup>12</sup>

On his father's side, Charles was a Habsburg, and when his paternal grandfather, Maximilian I, died in 1519 Charles was chosen to succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor. The "empire" at this time was primarily a German institution. The emperor was in theory elected by the various princes of Germany. Since 1356 the number of electors had been fixed at seven. Three of these were archbishops of some of the very oldest German cities: Mainz (whose archbishop was honored as the *primas Germaniae*), Trier, and Köln, or Cologne. In addition to the three ecclesiastics, four temporal rulers were designated as electors: the count of the Palatinate, the duke of Saxony, the margrave of Brandenburg, and the king of Bohemia (where most of the population spoke Czech). The elections were in part a formality, as the position of emperor was normally passed down within a dynastic family. From the fifteenth century to the eighteenth the Habsburgs were that royal family. Despite the formality of the elections, the office of the electors was prestigious: in order to be approved by the electors, the heir-apparent customarily made important commitments to them. Throughout the empire day-to-day government lay in the hands of the local ruler or archbishop, while the emperor functioned as the executive and head of a large federal state.

At the age of nineteen Charles V therefore combined in his own person the extensive though scattered territories of the Holy Roman Empire and the flourishing and compact kingdom of Spain. To rule so vast a realm efficiently was all but impossible, and Charles chose to concentrate his attention on Spain and the Low Countries, while delegating to his brother Ferdinand the government of Austria and Germany. In 1526, at the Battle of Mohács, Louis II, king of Hungary and Bohemia, was killed by Suleiman's Turkish army, and the vacant throne of Bohemia was given to Ferdinand, along with those lands in the northern Balkans not yet under Turkish control.

Because Charles' realm almost encircled France, his natural enemy was Francis I, who ruled over France from 1515 to 1547. Francis was the first of the French kings to embrace the Renaissance - and especially the new style of Italian painting made famous by Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo - and to some extent he backed away from the militarism of his predecessors. He could not, however, avoid conflict with Charles V, and against the Holy Roman empire Francis looked for support to Suleiman the Magnificent and his Ottoman empire. Suleiman too was a natural enemy of the Habsburgs: the Ottoman empire extended through the Balkans until it met the Holy Roman empire near Belgrade, on the lower Danube. Because of their shared antagonism to the Habsburgs, Francis and Suleiman entered into negotiations, and Francis became the first Catholic king to make an alliance with an Ottoman emperor.

### **Anti-clericalism in Catholic Christendom in the early sixteenth century**

Most worshipers in Catholic Europe could not understand the Latin language in which worship was conducted. They had memorized the liturgy and so were able to make the proper responses to the cues from the priest. Following the priest's lead, they were able to join in on the Paternoster (the Lord's prayer) and the Apostles' Creed. Readings from the Gospels and the Epistles, however, to say nothing of those from the Old Testament or from saints' lives, were for the most part unintelligible, especially in those lands where the spoken language was not

descended from Latin. The only parts of worship in the vernacular were “the talks,” the *sermones*.

That the language of worship was unintelligible was not considered a great drawback, because the main form of worship was the Eucharist. The high mass on Sundays was elaborate, while the low mass on other days of the week was relatively simple, usually without music and incense. The heart of the mass was the mysterious sacrament of the Eucharist, in which the priest - often separated from the congregants by a screen and always with his back to the congregation - consecrated and “transubstantiated” unleavened bread and a chalice of wine into the body and blood of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The priest’s vestments, the sculptures and paintings in a church, the incense, the ringing of bells at important junctures in the mass, and much else contributed to making the worship service an event at which the worshipers were more spectators than participants. The mass was seen as an “unbloody” repetition of Jesus’ original sacrifice on Cavalry, and like that original sacrifice it was an instrument of salvation. Although generally only the priest drank the consecrated wine (the bread was typically distributed to all communicants), the sacrament nevertheless provided forgiveness for all who moments before had made confession of their sins. Thus were the worshipers assured that when they died their souls’ stay in Purgatory, before going on to Heaven, would not be so long as it would otherwise have been. The saving power of the mass was inherent in the ritual itself. Whether the priest was chaste and devout or a scoundrel did not determine the efficacy of the rite.

The six other sacraments were also the work of the clergy. It was the local priest who baptized the infant, heard confession of sins and dispensed absolution (the sacrament of penance), presided at a wedding, and with holy oil anointed those who were about to die. The confirmation of catechumens and the ordination of lower clergy into holy orders were sacraments reserved for the bishop to perform. Because baptism, penance, marriage, the mass, and extreme unction were valid only if performed by a cleric, it was only through the Church that a Catholic could obtain the forgiveness of his or her sins (it was God who forgave the sins, but he did so through the offices of the Church).

Although the Church and its clergy were indispensable for the laity, in many places they were also deeply resented by it. The writings of Boccaccio and Chaucer show how low were the laity’s expectations of priests in medieval Italy and England. Girolamo Savonarola became a powerful figure in Florence with his tirades against the corruption of the clergy. In 1498 Alexander VI, perhaps the most corrupt of all the Renaissance popes, saw to it that Savonarola was burned at the stake. In Germany *Pfaffenhass* - the laity’s hatred of priests - was strong enough in the early sixteenth century that many scholars have seen it as the primary cause of the Reformation.<sup>14</sup> Clerics tended to be regarded as at once avaricious and licentious. Criticism of the local priest in the countryside was relatively mild, but the clergy in a large urban church were often suspect, and bishops and popes were the subjects of biting denunciations. Anti-clericalism was usually paralleled by anti-fraternalism: diatribes against monks and, less often, nuns.

Not surprisingly, the subject of anti-clericalism in late medieval Europe is seen differently from Catholic and Protestant perspectives. Until the middle of the twentieth century the Protestant emphasis upon anti-clericalism as an important cause of the Reformation was scarcely disputed. More recently, Catholic scholars have questioned the extent and the virulence of anti-

clericalism in the decades prior to 1517, and have pointed out that both anti-clericalism and anti-fraternalism were fanned by the Protestant reformers. The subject is complicated by the fact that the Reformation was led by individuals from the clergy: both before and after 1517 many of the reformers had themselves been monks or priests.<sup>15</sup>

## Miracles, saints and the Virgin Mary

Miracles were an important part of religion in medieval and Renaissance Christendom. They were associated with the Virgin, with saints, and with relics and icons. Most prized were relics said to have been preserved from the very beginnings of Christianity - a piece of the Holy Cross, one of Jesus' baby teeth, or a veil of the Virgin - but many relics were of more recent date. Thanks to the practice of *dismembratio* - the dismembering of what was thought to be the skeleton of a saint - it was a rare church that did not have at least one bone or tooth of a saint. A steady stream of pilgrims came to pray before those relics around which many miracle stories had gathered. In the Enlightenment miracle stories tended to be discounted, but in the early sixteenth century they were still generally accepted.

This was especially the case with those miracles that were vouched for by the Church itself. Since the thirteenth century beatification and canonization of saints was exclusively the responsibility of the pope. For beatification the pope required "proof" of a posthumous miracle, and for canonization as a saint proof of two such miracles was required. The grave of a recently deceased bishop, for example, may have been frequented by mourners, some of whom invoked the bishop's soul as an intercessor in their prayers. If one of the mourners reported that his or her prayers had been miraculously answered, the inference would be that the bishop's soul was already out from Purgatory and at the throne of God. In such a case the pope would have been asked to declare the bishop a *beatus*. If his investigators found that the alleged miracle had in fact occurred, the pope would have added the bishop's name to its long list of *beati*. Verification of a second miracle would have been followed by the pope's canonization of the bishop as a saint (*sanctus*).

By the early sixteenth century the Church had canonized thousands of saints. Especially important were those from antiquity: the apostles, the women mentioned in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and the many martyrs whose deaths were described in martyrologia.<sup>16</sup> Were the saints worshiped? Theologians made a distinction between the *adoratio* accorded to the Trinity and the *veneratio* accorded to the saints,<sup>17</sup> but the average worshiper was unaware of such a distinction. The literal meaning of *adoratio*, "saying prayers to," applied as much to the saints as to the Trinity: you prayed to St. Anne or to St. Anthony in the same way you prayed to God the Father or to God the Son, and with the same results.

Recipient of the most prayers by far was neither God the Father nor God the Son but the Virgin Mary. All through the medieval period the Mother of God had received *superveneratio* in the Latin west and *hyperdouleia* in the Greek east, in recognition of her status far above all other saints. Early Muslims, unaware of the Holy Ghost, were under the impression that Mary was the third deity in the Christians' Trinity. During the fifteenth century worship of the Virgin in Catholic Christendom grew enormously with the proliferation of rosaries. Although the practice of praying the rosary had earlier antecedents, in the fifteenth century Dominican friars made it a

part of their daily devotions. Inspired by the Dominicans, many lay Catholics acquired rosaries and recited the prayers once or more times daily. At each of the small beads in a rosary the worshiper prayed the “Hail Mary,” the *Ave Maria*:

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

The small beads for the *Ave Maria* were grouped in decades, each decade separated from the next by a large bead calling for one of four texts (the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, the *Gloria Patri*, or the *Salve Regina*). With fifteen decades, at each recitation of the rosary one prayed the *Ave Maria* a hundred and fifty times.

### **The Reformation: the splintering of the Church into churches**

What is called the Reformation was both more and less than a reformation. The most conspicuous part of it was a breaking off from the Church of regional and national churches in northern Europe, and most of these churches - although not quite all - were reformed in doctrine and practice. In the months after October 31 of 1517, when he posted his ninety-five theses, Martin Luther may indeed have intended to reform the Church (that is, the Roman Catholic church). But within a very short time it was clear to him, his followers, and his opponents that the Church would not accept the reforms he urged, and that what he and his followers must do was to *leave* the Church and to create a very new and different kind of church. From this new church the entire Roman hierarchy would be excluded: direction would come not from the pope and the hierarchy but straight from the *evangelium*, the gospel. By the middle of the sixteenth century millions of Catholics had left the Church and were enlisted in one or another of the “evangelical” or Protestant churches.

Anti-clericalism, the sacramentalism and sacerdotalism of worship, and the degeneration of the medieval and Renaissance papacy, were important factors that led many Catholics to look elsewhere for religious authority and for religion. The movements led by John Wycliffe in England and Jan Hus in Bohemia were early signals of disaffection from the Church, and of some alienation of central and northern Europe from the “Latin” world centered in Rome. Nevertheless, so broad and deep was the Church’s establishment that it was not greatly shaken by these apparently local tremors. Much changed, however, in the hundred years after Hus was burned at the stake (1415). The fall of Constantinople and the continuing expansion of the Ottoman empire was unsettling for Catholic Europe. The voyages and discoveries by Portuguese and Spanish explorers showed how much larger was the world than Europeans had imagined. The Renaissance had gathered speed in northern Italy and late in the fifteenth century had spread to northern Europe, producing such humanists as Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus. Perhaps most importantly, the invention of the printing press had made swift communication possible across Europe.

The Protestant Reformation by no means represented a weakening of religious faith. None of the reformers was skeptical of Christianity, and most complaints were that the Church was not Christian *enough*. Wycliffe and Hus, like the Cathars and Waldensians of an earlier

period, had been targets of the Church because their intense religiosity had carried them away from the Church. When Martin Luther defied papal authority he was likewise objecting to what he saw as the errors, corruption and venality of the Church's hierarchy. Once he had crossed swords with the Church's hierarchy, Luther resorted to the New Testament - which was his academic specialty - for support, citing especially the letters of Paul. This was the decisive moment for what is called "the Reformation": the substitution of the Bible for the Church as the ultimate authority for Christians. Once this alternative was available, whole communities seized upon it, especially in northern Europe. Although Luther led the way, other reformers followed close behind and many outstripped him, rejecting those doctrines and practices that they saw as unscriptural and as manufactured by the Church. Indulgences and Purgatory, the celibate priesthood, the cults of Mary, saints and relics, most of the sacraments, the institution of the papacy, and indeed the Church itself, were denounced not only as without biblical foundation but even as incompatible with the Bible.

The early sixteenth century thus saw a drastic elevation of biblical authority. Although the Bible had been read in the churches all through the Middle Ages, it had been presented to the laity only in Latin and through the filter of the clergy. Now, for the first time since Late Antiquity, it was immediately accessible to the laity. Far from signaling a return of skepticism and rational inquiry, the Reformation marked the beginning of Bibliolatry in Europe. Luther saw the intellect as the "Devil's whore," and did what he could to steer his followers away from relying on their intelligence whenever it was contradicted by the Bible. He emphasized unquestioning belief in the Bible as interpreted by Christians, and his motto was "faith alone, scripture alone" (*sola fides, sola scriptura*). What was excluded from Luther's formula was "the Church."

### **The beginnings of Luther's defiance of the Church**

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, a small town near the small city of Wittenberg, on the upper Elbe river and not far north of the present border of Germany and the Czech Republic. Although directed by his father to study law, Luther entered the Augustinian monastic order in 1505 and lived in the order's monastery at Erfurt. Two years later Luther was ordained as a priest. In 1512 he received his Doctor of Theology degree from the recently chartered University of Wittenberg, and he was immediately elected to its theology faculty. He stayed at the university for the rest of his life, becoming dean of the faculty and giving lectures on the Bible as his time and situation allowed. Despite his university appointment, Luther was not an intellectual or a man of the Renaissance: throughout his life he remained a devout and single-minded Christian, preoccupied with his soul's salvation. His one visit to Rome occurred in 1510, when he was sent there to conduct the business of seven Augustinian monasteries. Rather than being impressed with the great city's beauty and history, he was repelled by what he saw as the materialism of the Church and of the papacy. He read some of Erasmus' writings but was disappointed in them, because Erasmus relied more on human reason than on divine revelation. What Luther lacked in intellectual curiosity he made up for in courage and self-confidence. Believing that God was on his side, he was fearless in confronting the two most powerful institutions of his day: the Church, which had dominated western Europe for more than a thousand years, and the Holy Roman Empire.

Luther came suddenly to the attention of Catholic Christendom in the controversy over indulgences. Indulgences - reductions of the length of time that souls would need to spend in Purgatory - had been offered by the Catholic hierarchy for many centuries (Pope Urban had offered plenary indulgences for all those who undertook the First Crusade). By the early sixteenth century, however, the advertising of indulgences had for some time been barely noticeable. Then, in 1517 Pope Leo X (1513-21) offered indulgences to all who gave money for rebuilding the St. Peter's basilica in Rome: the larger the gift, the shorter would be the soul's stay in Purgatory. In Germany the marketing of these indulgences was especially vigorous. Albert, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg and therefore one of the seven imperial electors, had borrowed heavily in order to secure his episcopal and electoral office at Mainz. Having then to repay the loans, Albert arranged with Rome that he could keep for himself a percentage of the monies raised by the sale of indulgences. His agent in marketing the indulgences was a Dominican friar named Johann Tetzel. Many of the devout in Germany were critical of the policy and the practice, but the complaints of individuals were ignored by Tetzel and the archbishop.

In early October of 1517 Luther wrote to Archbishop Albert, protesting the sale of indulgences and inviting the archbishop to a disputation of ninety-five theses "on the power and efficacy of indulgences." Although Luther still believed in Purgatory, his theses did raise the broader question of whether the sins of souls in Purgatory could be forgiven by the sacrament of penance, a sacrament which only a cleric could perform. As for the pope's power to forgive sins through the issuing of indulgences, Luther's seventy-sixth thesis declared that the pope did not have the power to forgive even the most venial of sins (the preceding thesis noted that the pedlars of indulgences claimed that the pope had the power to forgive even so great a sin as the rape of the Virgin Mary). All that a cleric - from a priest to a pope - could do was to forgive whatever *temporal* penalties he (or the Church) had imposed on a sinner. Excommunication, for example, was such a temporal penalty, as were various forms of penance. For all believers, Luther insisted, the *eternal* penalty for sins had already been forgiven by Jesus' crucifixion. Another prominent theme in the ninety-five theses was the indecency of the Church's squeezing money from the impoverished in order to build another grandiose basilica in Rome.

Because Albert did not respond to his letter, on October 31, 1517, Luther posted his ninety-five theses - in Latin - on the door of the castle-church in Wittenberg. Such postings were not unusual: an academic often wrote out and posted theses on one subject or another, thereby inviting a disputation with anyone who wished to oppose them. Because the sale of indulgences was very unpopular in Saxony, and because Luther's position as a Doctor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg gave him much more authority than a parish priest enjoyed, Luther's posting of his theses created an immediate uproar at the university and days later throughout all of Saxony. Still, Archbishop Albert said nothing, apparently on the assumption that the Dominican Tetzel would make a sufficient response to Luther.

In 1518 Pope Leo summoned Luther to Augsburg, where he should defend himself before a cardinal. The cardinal whom Leo selected for the interview was Tommaso Cardinal Cajetan. At the diet in Augsburg Cajetan examined Luther and ordered him to recant those positions that conflicted with Church doctrine and practice. While the cardinal depended largely on his position in the hierarchy, Luther defended himself and his theses by reference to the Bible. The

assumption that Biblical authority could be used to counter the Church's authority, and that in cases of conflict between the two authorities the Bible trumped the Church, was deeply disturbing. Dislike of the Church was common enough, both at Augsburg and in much of northern Europe, that Luther's resort to biblical authority met with popular approval. The splendor of Cardinal Cajetan's vestments and retinue only added to the resentment of the Church felt by many of the bystanders at the examination.

### **The printing press, the vernacular languages, and Luther's celebrity**

The role of the printing press in the Lutheran Reformation has been comprehensively set out by Mark Edwards.<sup>18</sup> The speed with which Luther became notorious in Catholic Christendom was a result of the underlying dissatisfaction with the Church, the printing revolution, and Luther's recourse to his German vernacular. Within a few weeks of their posting his ninety-five theses were translated from Latin into German, printed, and distributed in many German-speaking cities. In the months that followed they were translated into other vernaculars and so became widely available in Europe. To offset Luther's challenge, in January of 1518 Tetzel posted a hundred and six theses of his own (in Latin) and had copies printed. The entire shipment of Tetzel's anti-theses that was sent to Wittenberg - some eight hundred copies - was appropriated by the city's university students and burned. Meanwhile, Luther wrote in German his "Sermon on Indulgences and Grace," and had it published. Greatly excited by Luther's general condemnation of the Church's "false doctrine" of justification by good works, the public demanded more, and printers soon made available scores of other writings by Luther - sermons and scriptural commentaries - in his German vernacular. Most of these pamphlets were pastoral and devotional. Luther responded to the enthusiasm of the literate German public by writing more treatises and hurrying them to the printers. During the years 1518-1525 the German press published more of Luther's writings than of all his Catholic opponents combined.

A formal Latin debate, with academic arbitrators, was not held until the summer of 1519. From July 4 to July 27 of that year, Luther debated with Dr. Johann Eck, a well-known dialectician and orator, at Leipzig. The debates ranged over indulgences, penance, Purgatory, and the papacy. At this time Luther was still seen, and still saw himself, as a reformer within the Church. By the summer of 1520, however, Luther had begun composing polemical tracts, in which he parted company with the papacy and the entire clerical establishment. Two very important treatises were *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* and *On the Freedom of a Christian*. Writing in German, in these pamphlets Luther appealed to the laity rather than to the clergy. He claimed that the popes and the curia in Rome had "perpetrated a series of frauds" on Christians, and he "called for Christendom's liberation from a papal captivity that distorted the sacraments and subordinated the laity to a clerical tyranny."<sup>19</sup> In October of 1520 Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* went still further, accusing the pope (not just the incumbent pope, Leo X, but the entire institution of the papacy) of being the anti-Christ prophesied in the Book of Revelation.

In both *To the Christian Nobility* and *Babylonian Captivity* Luther insisted upon what came to be called "the priesthood of all believers." Given the anti-clericalism in Catholic Christendom, this doctrine found immediate and widespread acceptance. Luther reduced the sacraments from seven to two (baptism and the mass), and insisted that although it was a priest's

duty to administer these two sacraments, he had no special power that made the sacraments effective: any Christian could baptize an infant or celebrate the Eucharist. Following the synoptic Gospels' description of the Last Supper, Luther insisted that the bread and wine should be distributed to the laity. Like traditional Catholics, Luther believed that in the sacrament of the mass the bread and wine somehow conveyed Jesus' body and blood to the communicant. But Luther also insisted that although the communicant's faith was strengthened by the mass, it was that faith - and not the sacrament itself - that secured for the communicant forgiveness of sins. Nor, according to Luther, did the priest play any privileged role in "transubstantiating" the bread and wine into Jesus' body and blood.

Pope Leo issued a papal bull (*Bulla contra errores Martini Lutheri*) ordering Luther to recant his teachings, but in front of a large crowd in Wittenberg Luther defiantly burned the edict. In January of 1521 Leo responded by excommunicating him. Meting out punishment for heresy was the duty of the temporal powers, and because several million people were by this point watching Luther's case it was heard by the emperor himself: Charles V summoned Luther - with a promise of safe conduct - to appear before him in a diet (formal assembly) held in Worms, a small city on the Rhine. In the towns and cities along the way from Wittenberg to Worms, large crowds turned out to cheer Luther as he traveled under escort. At the diet Luther again refused to recant, and on May 25 of 1521 the diet issued its Edict of Worms. Although Charles honored his promise of safe conduct, the edict proclaimed Luther a heretic, permitted anyone to kill him with impunity, and made it a crime for anyone to provide him with food or shelter. All along, however, Luther had the protection of Elector Frederick III, the duke of Saxony. Frederick had himself come close to being elected the Holy Roman Emperor, and so was a prince of considerable power and prestige (it was he who had established the University of Wittenberg). At Worms Frederick obtained from the diet an exception for Saxony: the edict would not be enforced there. Then, as Luther was returning from Worms to Wittenberg, Frederick sent a cavalry unit to take the reformer to safety in the elector's Wartburg castle.

## **Reading the New Testament**

During his eleven months in the castle Luther translated the New Testament into German, a printed edition of which was published at Wittenberg in September of 1522. Although the title page names Luther as the translator, the printer's name is omitted. The edition promptly sold out, as did the many editions that followed.<sup>20</sup> Woodcuts illustrating the Book of Revelation depicted the papacy as the Great Dragon and as the anti-Christ. The woodcuts were a very effective way of communicating Luther's new doctrines to illiterate peasants. Throughout Germany, for both those who could and those who could not read, Luther's translation of the New Testament set the course of the German language. The "High German" dialect spoken in Saxony was suddenly on the lips of German-speakers everywhere, no matter how strange it may have sounded in the great harbor city of Hamburg or in the lowland villages of Mecklenburg. Books in one or another German dialect had been produced for almost two generations, but Luther's New Testament and his collaborators' Old Testament were the first that were read so widely that their language established a standard. In addition to the Bible itself, Luther's many pamphlets, hymns, German mass, and his small and large catechisms helped to establish the High German of Saxony as a "national" language.<sup>21</sup>

Inspired by the enthusiasm with which the reading public in Germany greeted a

vernacular translation of the New Testament, scholars in other lands hurried to translate the scriptures into their own vernaculars. A Dutch translation of the New Testament appeared toward the end of 1522, made directly from Luther's German version. In the next year the first French translation was printed. A second Dutch translation, this one made from Erasmus' Greek edition, came out in 1524. In that same year the king of Denmark and Norway authorized a Danish translation of the New Testament.<sup>22</sup> Gustav Vasa, king of Sweden, followed suit and a Swedish translation of the New Testament was printed in 1526. At almost the same time continental printers issued the first printed edition of the New Testament in English. By 1540 even Icelandic speakers had a translation of the New Testament in their own language.

In contrast to translations protected by princes or authorized by kings, some translations were fraught with hazard. An Italian translation of the Bible - both Old and New Testaments - had been made in 1471, by Nicolao Malermi, a Benedictine monk. The Church had little objection to this fine and costly book: with its large, folio pages it was intended not for the general public but for well-to-do humanists and the higher clergy, and the translation was made from the Latin Vulgate. Very different was the Italian ("en lingua toscana") translation of the Bible done by Antonio Bruccioli and published at Venice in 1532. Bruccioli was sympathetic to Protestantism and asserted that his translation was made directly from the Hebrew and Greek. Inquisitors at Venice originally sentenced him to hang, but then reduced the sentence to banishment.

The first Spanish version of the New Testament appeared in 1543. This translation was done by Francisco de Enzinas, with help from his brother Diego. The brothers were born at Burgos ca. 1520. In the late 1530s Francisco enrolled in the Collegium Trilingue of the University of Louvain, where he became a Protestant. He then traveled south to Wittenberg, to study with Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's learned colleague. Francisco had his Spanish translation of the New Testament printed at Antwerp, dedicating the book to the emperor Carlos, whom he hoped to convert. That was a vain hope, and Charles ordered Francisco's arrest. Held in a prison at Brussels, Francisco managed to escape. His brother was not so fortunate: in 1547 Diego de Enzinas was burned at the stake in Rome.

## **The quickening pace of the Reformation**

Luther's original (1517) challenge to the Catholic hierarchy was followed within two years by anti-Church movements launched elsewhere in Saxony by the Zwickau Prophets (Nicholas Storch and Thomas M nzer) and at Zurich by Ulrich Zwingli. These reformers were more radical than Luther. They believed that they were living at the eve of the Millennium that the Book of Revelation described, and they took it as their duty to make war upon the present order of things. Storch and M nzer rejected infant baptism as yet another of the Church's innovations that had no scriptural basis, and they insisted that the only true Christians were those who had been baptized or re-baptized (hence the name "Anabaptists") after reaching the age of understanding. The Zwickau Prophets also lashed out at the entire social structure, in which the peasants had long been oppressed by princes and clergy alike. While Luther was at the Wartburg castle the Zwickau Prophets came to Wittenberg and incited crowds to violence. Frederick brought Luther back to the city briefly in 1522 to assist him in stemming the unrest, which he did. As a religious reformer but a social conservative, Luther denounced the Anabaptists.

Although quiet was restored at Wittenberg the rural population of Saxony and adjoining states followed the Zwickau Prophets, and the Peasants' War broke out in 1524. A year later the war came to an end at Frankenhausen in Thuringia, where thousands of poorly equipped and untrained peasants fell in battle against the professional troops of Frederick III and the other princes. At least for a while Anabaptist Millennialism was crushed, but the broader Reformation had just begun.

One of Luther's most publicized reforms was his abandonment of the Church's celibacy requirement for the clergy. He urged younger priests in Saxony to marry and in June of 1525 he himself married Katharina von Bora, a former nun, and proceeded to father six children. Katharina was part of an exodus from the monasteries and convents in Saxony and the surrounding German states. At the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, where Luther had spent six years of his early adulthood, many of the monks - along with their prior - had departed already in 1522. Another of Luther's far-reaching innovations was the vernacular mass. In January of 1526, by which time the mass had in many German churches already been sung in the vernacular rather than in Latin, Luther published his little pamphlet, *Deutsche Messe (German Mass and Order of Divine Service)*, stressing in his introduction that use of this mass in the churches was entirely optional, and that anyone who thought he could write a better one should do so. Three years later Luther published his "small catechism," in which he summarily set out what he considered the correct Christian doctrines on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the confession and forgiveness of sins, and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. On each of these his presentation was brief and easily memorized, so that even children and illiterate adults could know the entire catechism. Like the rest of Luther's writings, the small catechism went through multiple printings during his lifetime, and in Lutheran communions it even today remains important in the preparation for Confirmation.

### **Prussia: the first established evangelical church**

Although Frederick the Elector had put down the social unrest of the Peasants' War, he and all of Saxony were clearly following Luther away from the Catholic church and toward an "evangelical" church: a church centered on the gospel (as articulated especially by Paul). Saxony, however, was not the first state to establish an evangelical church. That distinction belonged to the Duchy of Prussia, far to the north. "Prussia" was the informal name for the land along the Baltic sea and east of the mouth of the Vistula river. In the thirteenth century the Teutonic Order of Knights had launched a crusade to Christianize the "Prussians," the various tribes in this area who spoke Lithuanian and worshiped pagan gods. By the early sixteenth century most of the Prussians had become Catholic Christians (although a few were still pagans) and spoke or at least understood the Low German dialect of the German language. The State of the Teutonic Order of Knights was by the early sixteenth century a scattering of small holdings in central and eastern Europe, the largest of which was the Prussian territory squeezed between the Vistula river and the Neman (or Nemanas) river, and surrounded on all sides by the united crown of Poland and Lithuania. Königsberg was the only large city in this Baltic state of the Teutonic Order.

When the Reformation began, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order of Knights was a young German nobleman, Albert (Albrecht) of Hohenzollern. Although on his father's side

Albert was from the House of Hohenzollern, the most distinguished in all of Germany, even more important was that on his mother's side Albert was the nephew of Sigismund I, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. In 1511 those connections had helped the twenty-one-year-old Albert be elected as the 37<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Teutonic Order of Knights, and so as the ruler of the order's little state in Prussia.

Luther's writings and his German New Testament appealed to many of the German readers in Königsberg and the smaller cities in Prussia. Albert himself was not averse to Luther's teachings and made an extended visit to Wittenberg to talk with the reformer. In 1525, on Luther's advice and with the backing of Sigismund I, Albert resigned as Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and transformed his little state north of the Vistula into the Duchy of Prussia, which he proceeded to rule as its duke (the Teutonic Order arranged for Albert to be excommunicated, and elected another Grand Master). Albert had in effect renounced his fealty to the pope and the emperor, and was now a vassal of his uncle, Sigismund of Poland and Lithuania. At the same time that Albert created the Duchy of Prussia he reformed the church in his domain along evangelical lines, confirming in their positions those clerics who welcomed the Reformation, dismissing those who did not, and replacing them with priests and bishops who followed the teachings of Luther. The Duchy of Prussia was therefore the first state to establish an evangelical church.

### **Clement VII and the sack of Rome in 1527**

While northern Europe was in a religious ferment, both the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire went about their quarrels as usual, not yet recognizing the significance and permanence of the Reformation. When Giovanni de' Medici, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, ascended the papal throne as Leo X (1513-21), he had no intentions of giving up his control of Florence. He therefore promoted his cousin, Giulio de' Medici, to the archbishopric of Florence and appointed him to the College of Cardinals. In 1523 this second Medici scion moved up to the papacy itself, as Clement VII (1523-34). The choice was approved by Francis I, king of France, but did not have the blessing of Emperor Charles V. As a result of this quarrel, Rome was sacked in 1527, by troops that nominally belonged to Charles. Involving himself and the Papal States in a war between Charles and Francis, Clement had sided with Francis. Charles sent into northern Italy a large army which defeated the French forces there, but the victorious troops were not paid. The imperial army included some German troops who were sympathetic enough to Protestantism that they welcomed the opportunity to sack Rome. They and the rest of the troops that Charles had sent into Italy - at least 20,000 of them - decided to march on Rome and get their pay by sacking the city. One of their collaborators was Cardinal Pompeo Colonna. Pompeo resented another Medici pope and joined the advancing army with troops drawn from Colonna clients in Lazio. Pope Clement VII fled for refuge to the Castel Sant' Angelo, and the city of Rome was sacked. Although it was widely condemned, this was a decisive blow for Charles against Clement, who promptly gave up his alliance with Francis and thereafter followed the emperor's lead. The entire episode seems to have played out with neither Charles nor Francis nor Pope Clement sufficiently concerned about the defections from the Church in Europe north of the Alps, and about the looming danger from the Ottoman empire (the Ottomans had defeated the kingdom of Hungary at Mohács in 1526, and clearly intended to annex the Hungarian plain).

## Trouble in Germany, the “Protestant” name, and the Ottoman attack on Vienna

That is not to say that the great powers had ignored either the Ottomans or the Reformation. When Frederick the Elector died in Saxony in 1525 he had been succeeded by his brother, John the Constant (Johann der Beständige), so called because he remained a steadfast champion of the Reformation. Charles feared that the Reformation would continue, and in spring of 1526 he called a diet at the Rhineland city of Speyer. Concerned about Ottoman aggression along the Danube, Charles V and the diet gave some leeway to the German princes to deal with the Reformation as they chose. Utilizing this relaxation of the Edict of Worms, several princes made their state churches “evangelical” rather than Catholic. Among those who did were John the Constant in Saxony, and Philip I, the Landgraf of Hesse. The reforming princes were as fearful of the Catholic emperor as they were of the Ottoman emperor, and under the leadership of John, Philip, and Duke Albert of Prussia they allied with each other - still in 1526 - in the Treaty of Torgau.

As the contagion of reform spread in Germany and Switzerland and into France, Charles V regretted his earlier leniency and called for a second diet to meet at Speyer in April of 1529. Although Charles himself could not attend, his brother Ferdinand read the emperor’s letter to the diet. The letter announced that the emperor was cancelling the edict of Speyer issued in 1526, and that henceforth the reformist innovations would no longer be tolerated. Although the rest of the diet accepted the emperor’s new edict, five princes and fourteen of the free cities in Germany responded on April 19 of 1529 with a “letter of protestation” in which they demanded not only the freedom to continue the reforms but also the lifting of the personal ban on Martin Luther. One lasting result of this *Protestation zu Speyer* was that henceforth one of the names for the reformers was “Protestants.”

In the event, neither Ferdinand nor Charles was in any position to enforce their new and rigid policy. Luther’s best known hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God” (“Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”), is often called the battle-hymn of the Reformation, but Protestantism also owes a great debt to Suleiman the Magnificent. As the second diet of Speyer was disbanding, a huge Ottoman army under Suleiman’s personal command began lumbering northward from Constantinople, intent on driving the Habsburg forces from the Hungarian plain. Suleiman was quite aware of the internal troubles of the Holy Roman Empire, and saw it as an opportunity for his own ambitions. Throughout the summer of 1529 the Habsburgs and their vassals in the Holy Roman Empire had to focus their attention almost entirely on the war with Suleiman. He reached Vienna in early fall of 1529 and besieged the city for three weeks. Many of his troops, however, died there from disease and he was forced to lead his army back to Constantinople.

In spring of 1530, eager to unify the splintered Holy Roman Empire, Charles called yet another diet, this time at Augsburg, the ancient Augusta Vindelicorum. The “Protestants” were asked to draw up a statement of their beliefs, and the result was the *confessio Augustana*, the Augsburg Confession, which remains the charter document of the Lutheran communions. Luther himself, still under the ban, did not attend the diet at Augsburg and his views were represented through his colleague, Philipp Melancthon. Although the diet was unable to reach any common religious ground, the emperor did not immediately take up arms against the Protestants. Their league, reorganized in the Treaty of Schmalkald in 1531, was by itself far too weak to deter

Charles and Ferdinand, but the specter of a second Ottoman campaign (Suleiman returned to Vienna in 1532) was an altogether different matter, as was the position of Francis I, the king of France. Francis was in the early 1530s still sympathetic to Protestantism, and it seemed likely that he would ally himself with the Protestant princes if they were attacked by the Holy Roman Empire. In any event, the empire's first military move against Protestants - the Schmalkaldic War - did not begin until June of 1546, four months after Luther's death. By that time it was far too late for the empire to stem the Reformation.

### **Luther's attacks on Judaeans**

In the early years, when his wrath was focused on the Catholic hierarchy, Luther was relatively unconcerned about Judaeans. In the last ten years of his life, however, he became their bitter enemy.<sup>23</sup> In 1532 John Frederick succeeded his father as Elector of Saxony, and soon thereafter ordered all Judaeans to leave Saxony. After that expulsion, no Judaeans could pass through the land without a letter guaranteeing safe passage. Several rabbis requested and received letters from Luther directly, but by 1537 Luther decided to refuse either to write such letters himself or to use his great influence with John Frederick to persuade the elector to issue them.

In 1543 Luther's hostility toward Judaeans and Judaism culminated in a small book, *Von den Jüden und iren* (sic) *Lügen* ("On the Jews and their Lies"). As its title suggests, the book did not present a reasoned case against Judaism, but was a violent and often obscene invective against Judaeans. Here Luther advocated burning their homes and synagogues and expelling them from German cities. Such hatred of Judaeans was not unusual in the early sixteenth century (Dr. Johann Eck, Luther's antagonist at Leipzig, published his own diatribes against "the Jews"). With the Enlightenment came tolerance, however, and by the beginning of the twentieth century anti-Jewish diatribes were seldom reprinted by the mainstream press. In the 1930s Luther's pamphlet was resurrected by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party, and was instrumental in creating the atmosphere in which the Holocaust took place.

Whereas Hitler hated "the Jews" because they were alien to "the German *Volk*," Luther's rage was religious rather than nationalist: with very few exceptions, Judaeans had not accepted his evangelical Christianity. Initially Luther had naively supposed that Judaeans were repelled from Christianity because of the corruption of the Church. When he discovered that they were equally opposed to evangelical Christianity he became furious: their obstinacy suggested that Christianity per se was wrong, which to him was unthinkable. Especially infuriating was the rabbis' interpretation of those passages in the Hebrew Bible that Luther saw as prophecies of Jesus the Messiah. In the early years of the Reformation, when Luther still hoped to convert many Judaeans to a reformed Christianity, he publicly debated these passages with rabbis. These debates too ceased in the last ten years of his life.

### **Luther's campaign against the intellect**

Also of great consequence for posterity was Luther's denunciation of reason.<sup>24</sup> On this score the difference between the Renaissance and the Reformation could hardly be sharper. By the early sixteenth century humanists had come to appreciate reason, or intelligence,

as God's greatest gift to humankind. We have noted that Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate* was in some ways a manifesto of the Renaissance. In hailing intelligence as the quality that set humans apart from the animals, Pico echoed the ancients, from Sophocles to Plotinus.

Luther, in contrast, regarded a critical intelligence as dangerous. Luther had replaced the Church with the Bible as the highest authority for Christians, and although the substitution was welcomed by many people, it made things more difficult for the rare skeptic. Much in the Bible, and certainly its most popular stories, defied reason and plain intelligence. Already in the third century Origen had seen this and got round it by recasting many of the stories as allegories. Luther, in contrast, insisted that the stories must be taken literally. Recognizing that reason (*Vernunft* in German) was incompatible with faith, Luther warned his followers that reason was a specious temptress whom they must by all means resist. This was of course not a blanket condemnation of reason: one gets under a roof in a rain, and one does not plant wheat in the sand. But when reason and the Bible are opposed, so Luther declared, we must shut down our intelligence and accept what the Bible says. As he saw it, what humankind has to work with is not reason or wisdom *per se*, but something that is by definition much lower: ours is merely "human" reason and "human" wisdom, while the Bible expresses an incomparably higher "divine wisdom." Of course the "divine wisdom" that Luther posited was in fact a human wisdom even more limited than that which had been so laboriously attained by the sixteenth century. In 1539, for example, when Copernicus' heliocentric theory - known but not yet published - was causing a great stir in much of Europe, Luther in his table-talk ridiculed the Polish astronomer. Luther's objections were based not on better science or on the superiority of the Ptolemaic or Aristotelian cosmological systems, but on the assumptions of an Israelite writer in the ninth century BC: when Joshua lengthened the day, so that the Israelites could exterminate the Amorites, Joshua had not ordered the earth to stop rotating but had clearly said, "Sun, stand thou still on Gibeon!"<sup>25</sup>

In the last sermon that Luther gave in Wittenberg, in January of 1546, he warned the congregation that "Reason is the greatest whore that the Devil has." This was a conviction that Luther had often stated in other metaphors. "Reason," he had declared, "is God's worst enemy." "Faith must kill reason." "Whoever wishes to be a Christian must pluck out the eyes of reason." "Reason and the wisdom of our flesh ruin the wisdom of God."<sup>26</sup> Such anti-intellectualism had deep roots in Christianity, reaching back through Tertullian, Tatian and other early apologists to Paul himself. But since the thirteenth century and the industry of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, most churchmen had supposed that ultimately reason and faith must be compatible. Luther very bluntly warned that they were not.

Eventually (but not yet in the sixteenth century) the clarity of these alternatives - faith versus reason - forced many educated Europeans to decide where their loyalties must lie. A minority became "fideists," but millions more preferred *Vernunft* to Christianity, whether Protestant or Catholic. Despite the intentions of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, the Reformation turned out to be an important stage in the evolution of Christendom toward modern civilization.<sup>27</sup>

## **The spread of the Lutheran church to Scandinavia**

In the kingdom of Denmark and Norway, with its royal palace at Copenhagen, Luther's Reformation won many converts. Although some of them were persuaded by word of mouth, many others were won over by what they read. Most important of the written material was of course the New Testament, rendered into Danish already in 1524. Alongside the New Testament were many writings of Luther - including his large and small catechism - that had been translated into Danish and printed. Nineteen of Luther's works were available in Danish during Luther's lifetime, some of them in several editions.<sup>28</sup>

For a time, nevertheless, Protestants in Denmark formed a minority subculture, meeting in private houses in Copenhagen and the other cities. The king who formally effected the Reformation of the Church in Denmark was Christian III (ruled from 1536 to 1559). As a prince, young Christian had been one of the spectators when Luther was tried by the emperor at the Diet of Worms. Then and there the prince was converted to Luther's understanding of Christianity. Although Christian III's break with the papacy and his imposition of an "evangelical" character upon the church in his kingdom met with some violence, by the end of his reign all of the bishops in Denmark and Norway were at least nominal supporters of the Lutheran reformation, as were most of the priests. King Christian also sponsored a translation of the entire Bible into Danish, printed in 1550.

In Sweden, as in Denmark and Norway, Luther's teachings first gained adherents in the cities, among both the clergy and the literate laity. As elsewhere, the fate of the Church in Sweden was settled by the king. King Gustav I, while formally still a traditional Catholic, encouraged the printing of a Swedish translation of the New Testament in 1526 (a Swedish Old Testament followed in 1541). Publication of the New Testament in the vernacular greatly strained Gustav's relations with Pope Clement VII, and the break came when king and pope became embroiled in a dispute over the appointment of the archbishop of Uppsala, traditionally the primate of the Swedish church, and of several lesser bishops. In 1531 Gustav appointed to the archbishopric Lars Persson (Laurentius Petri). Lars' brother Olaf had studied with Luther at Wittenberg, and both brothers were enthusiastic supporters of the evangelical reform and as such had been excommunicated from the Church. When King Gustav appointed Lars as archbishop of Uppsala the king was himself excommunicated, and the church in Sweden became de facto Lutheran.

In the sixteenth century the king of Sweden also ruled Finland, and as a result the Reformation was quickly extended from Sweden across the Baltic. In the early 1550s the New Testament was translated into Finnish (not an Indo-European language). The translation was made by Mikael Agricola, priest and then bishop in the city of Turku. Turku, which was called Åbo in Swedish, lay on Finland's southwestern coast and was the only Finnish city of any size. In the 1530s the bishop of Turku had sent Mikael Agricola to the University of Wittenberg, to study with Luther and Melancthon. When the old bishop died, in 1554, Mikael was consecrated as his successor, without - of course - the pope's consent. Mikael's translation of the New Testament, along with his several other pamphlets and books (including a set of rules for the spelling of Finnish words), marked the beginning of Finnish literature.

## **The Schmalkaldic war and the Peace of Augsburg**

The war (1546-47) of Charles V against the Schmalkaldic League of Lutheran princes is often counted as the first of the wars between Catholics and Protestants. It was not, however, fought for strictly religious reasons. The war began when Maurice, the Lutheran prince of Ernestine Saxony, attacked John Frederick, the Lutheran prince of Albertine Saxony. When the Schmalkaldic League came to the assistance of John Frederick, Charles sided with Maurice and at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547 devastated the league's forces. Because the Schmalkaldic war did not much affect the northern German lands, where Lutheranism had spread widely, it had limited consequences for the religious configuration of the Holy Roman Empire.

Continuing hostilities between the empire and local Lutheran rulers eventually persuaded Charles, toward the end of his long rule, to recognize Lutheranism as a legal religion and so to make peace with the Schmalkaldic League. This was done, according to the prologue to the signed document, "in order to bring peace to the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation." The Peace of Augsburg, in 1555, introduced the principle that each of the seven electors in the Holy Roman Empire should decide for his own principality which religion - either Catholicism ("the old religion") or Lutheranism ("the Augsburg confession") - was to be the established religion. According to this principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, each of the local rulers was to give to adherents of the "other" religion time to sell their belongings and move to a principality in which theirs was the established religion.

### **Ulrich Zwingli and the beginning of the Reformation in Switzerland**

What is today Switzerland was predisposed to welcome the Reformation, because since the thirteenth century the Swiss confederation had been struggling to maintain its independence from the Holy Roman Empire. A de facto independence had been attained late in the fifteenth century, but the empire had not renounced its claims. The Reformation here began in 1522, when Ulrich Zwingli - a popular priest in Zurich's Grossmünster church - broke with the papacy and most of the city followed him. Two years later Zurich's monasteries were shut down. Zwingli supposed that everything ornate and decorative was the result of papist corruption, and so the city's churches were stripped of their ornaments, stained glass windows were broken, the mass was celebrated in the local German vernacular, and music was banned from worship. Beauty had been an ingredient of religion from earliest times: from the Bronze Age temples in Egypt and Mesopotamia to the great mosques of the Dar al-Islam and the soaring cathedrals of Christendom. But in the austerity introduced by Zwingli, and seconded by John Calvin, beauty was a distraction from the gospel.

The Reformation was thus far more radical in Switzerland than in Germany. In both places the Bible replaced the Church and the pope as the sole authority for the reformers, but Zwingli approached the Bible directly, avoiding all the commentaries and interpretations that had been produced since the third century. Luther separated himself from the Catholic church but not always from Catholic traditions. Zwingli, in contrast, wanted nothing to do with either the Catholic church or its traditions. He therefore regarded Luther as too much in thrall to Catholicism, while Luther regarded Zwingli as a fanatic.

Of the Church's seven sacraments Luther kept two - baptism and the mass (Eucharist) - but Zwingli kept only baptism. Already in 1522 Zwingli had doubts about the mass. That an

officiating priest did indeed change bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus was not only difficult for Zwingli to believe, but also difficult for him to find in the letters of Paul or in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper. Zwingli eventually concluded that the sacramental mass was merely an instrument through which for twelve hundred years the Catholic church had kept parishioners in line: the Church claimed as a sacrament and a “mystery” what Jesus had intended to be nothing of the sort. In 1525 Zwingli finally abolished the mass in his churches. In place of the sin-forgiving sacrament Zwingli conducted a commemorative ceremony, in which both bread and wine were distributed to the communicants.

Equally drastic was Zwingli’s opposition to all vestiges of the clerical hierarchy that had always epitomized the Catholic church. Zwingli not only denounced the pope but also claimed that priests - the ordained clergy - had no spiritual authority over the lay person. As an outward sign, he put aside all clerical gowns and regalia. Luther retained the ritual of ordination, even though he did not regard it as a sacrament, but Zwingli dispensed with it altogether. For Zwingli, anyone whom a congregation “called” to preach was thereby given all the authority that in the Catholic church was conferred through ordination by a bishop.

Zwingli’s radical form of Protestantism soon spread through eight of the thirteen cantons that then constituted the Swiss confederation, and by the late 1520s Zwingli was the virtual ruler of Zurich and the leader of the other Protestant cantons. It was his goal to spread the Reformation not only to all of Switzerland but throughout Catholic Christendom. In 1531, however, he was killed in battle as men of the Catholic cantons descended upon Zurich to defend “the old religion.”

## **Persecution of the Anabaptists**

Initially Zwingli had opposed infant baptism, failing to find it sanctioned in the New Testament, and so aligned himself with the Anabaptists. After a few years, however, he turned against them, recognizing that by denying the efficacy of infant baptism he was consigning to Hell virtually all Christians who had lived in the preceding thousand years. With or without Zwingli, the Anabaptists attracted many followers with their insistence that infant baptism had no biblical warrant, and that in order to go to Heaven a Christian must *decide* to be baptized. One did not become a member of an Anabaptist church until one made a profession of faith and then received baptism. The Anabaptist church was thus entirely a “church of believers.”

The doctrine meant, however, that all other Christians were bound for Hell, because as infants they had been baptized before they believed. Not surprisingly, the Anabaptists were hated not only by Catholics but also by the more moderate Protestants. Thousands of Anabaptists were put to death, many by burning but many others by drowning (the “third baptism” as their murderers joked). The persecution was often carried out by mobs, whether made up of other Protestants or of Catholics, but just as often by temporal authorities. The Anabaptists were typically a small minority, and not in charge of the machinery of state. Because of their vulnerability as an unpopular minority, the Anabaptists were among the first to call for the separation of church and state.

Persecution did not stop the growth of the Anabaptist movement. The decision to be

baptized, and then the emotional intensity of the act itself, instilled in the Christian who was re-baptized a sense of a new beginning: being “born again” both required and inspired a profound religious commitment. Far from being eliminated by the persecution, the Anabaptist movement was energized by it, the “saved” believing that their brethren who were killed had earned the ultimate crown of martyrdom. In the seventeenth century “Anabaptists” was generally replaced by “Baptists” as a name for the communion. In 1639 at Providence, Rhode Island, Roger Williams organized the first Baptist church in the New World. Williams was fanatic in his religion, but also fanatic in demanding that civil government have no authority whatever over men’s souls. The city of Providence and the colony of Rhode Island were therefore pioneers in establishing a secular state.

## **John Calvin**

The radical Protestantism that had begun with Zwingli was for a time without a clear leader, but Zwingli’s position was soon taken by John Calvin, or - to use his French name - Jean Cauvin (1509-1564). Although Calvin was born and educated in France, he spent most of his adult life in Geneva, now the westernmost city in Switzerland, and he owed much to the innovations that Zwingli had introduced at Zurich. But Calvin added much that was original.

By the late Middle Ages the general assumption in Catholic Europe was that if a person was baptized into the Church, did the Church’s bidding, and continued to receive the sacraments dispensed by the Church’s clergy, he or she went to Heaven. People contributed significantly to their salvation by what the Church identified as good works: prominent among these good works were charity, fasting, pilgrimages, virginity and celibacy, the saying of prescribed prayers (the Rosary), and performance of whatever *satisfactiones* a priest in the Confessional assigned as penance for sins committed.. When Luther was excommunicated from the Church he treated the excommunication with contempt. Many who had followed him to that point were more fearful, supposing that their souls’ salvation would be lost if they left the Church. Luther assured them that neither “good works” nor the Church were relevant to their salvation: all that was necessary was that they be baptized and believe the gospel. Entry into Heaven was entirely a gift from God - divine grace - and the Church had wrongly inserted itself and its menu of monetary gifts and good works into the process of salvation. For his teachings of “justification by faith alone” Luther found support in the letters of Paul and the writings of Augustine.

A difficulty was soon discovered in Luther’s insistence (1) that a person is saved by faith alone, and (2) that salvation is entirely a gift from God. If people are required to believe in order to get to Heaven, then they contribute considerably to their salvation. It was Calvin who solved this difficulty, by insisting that a Christian’s belief was itself a gift of God: before the Christian’s birth God had ordained that he or she would accept the gospel and be saved. A powerful speaker, Calvin preached this doctrine of predestination at Paris, Basel, Strasbourg, and then - from 1541 until his death - at Geneva. It was published in 1536 in his *Institutio Christianae religionis*, a book widely disseminated among Protestants. Calvin’s belief in the complete sovereignty of God has obvious similarities to the Muslim belief in *qadar* (compulsion), which was adumbrated in the Quran, elevated to a central doctrine by the Jabrites, and refined by al-Ashari: before time began God determined who would and who would not accept Muhammad as the Prophet. Like the Jabrites and al-Ashari, Calvin taught that God saved some people from

Hell by giving them the desire and the capacity to believe what one was required to believe in order to get to Heaven.

Although living at the height of the Renaissance, Calvin had few secular interests and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the establishing of a radically reformed church. At Geneva Calvin's religious life was intensified, because no purely civic life was possible as the city evolved into a church-state. For a long time Geneva had been ruled by the House of Savoy, an Alpine duchy, but several years before Calvin's arrival the city (trusting in its alliance with the Swiss confederation) had declared its independence. Henceforth Geneva was a republic, governed by magistrates, three councils, and a plenary assembly of the citizens. The Church in Geneva had of course been controlled by the bishop, but the bishop had been a member of the House of Savoy. Therefore, when the city emancipated itself from Savoy it also banished the bishop and aligned itself with the Protestants. At Geneva, as at any other city in the 1530s, it was assumed that a Protestant and a Catholic church could not and should not co-exist in the same city: a city ought to be unified in religion and the only question was, What kind of church should the city have? Because Geneva's most important allies in the Swiss confederation were Protestant cantons, the Genevans decided to make their church Protestant. They renounced the pope, retained only those clergy who accepted the Protestant teachings, and set up committees to monitor the citizens' beliefs and morals (the Swiss Protestants were much less tolerant than were Catholics of personal vices, such as drunkenness, dancing, gambling, wenching, and cursing).

Such was the city when Calvin arrived. He quickly was "called" to be a pastor in one of the city's three parishes, and thanks to the power of his sermons he soon came to dominate the city and its councils. Alongside the civic institutions he set up a purely ecclesiastical body, called the Consistory: the ministers of the three parishes, and a dozen elders. The Consistory had the power to excommunicate, and because there was nowhere else to go a Genevan who was excommunicated was effectively isolated in the city. If temporal punishment was required (and it often was) it was ordered by one of the city councils. One of Calvin's reforms was the provision of an elementary education, free of charge, for all the city's children (all of whom were Christian, since Judaeans had been banned from the city since late in the fifteenth century). Because the Bible was fundamental for Protestant churches, Calvin intended that every Genevan be able to read the scriptures. For more than twenty years Calvin and his Consistory ruled Geneva, the government being a theocracy based on the Bible and on Calvin's own *Institutio Christianae religionis*.

### **Sanctification in Calvin's church**

In contrast to Luther, whose physical appetites were robust, Calvin was austere. He is said to have limited himself to one meal a day, and is known to have worked relentlessly during all his many illnesses. His family life brought him more sadness than joy. On the recommendation of colleagues in 1540 he married Idelette de Bure, a widow who had at least two children from her first marriage. The three children whom Idelette bore to Calvin all died in infancy, and when she herself died in 1549 Calvin did not remarry. His manner of living was abstemious throughout.

Calvin's personal contrast with Luther was mirrored in their respective communions.

Luther encouraged his followers to enjoy the pleasures to which they had become accustomed in the Catholic church. The celebration of Advent and Christmas, for example, was not only permitted by Luther (despite the absence of any biblical endorsement), but even expanded: several of today's most loved Christmas songs and carols were written by Luther. In contrast, there was no Christmas in Calvin's church, as he strove for a sobriety and piety remarkable in Christendom in any period. As had Zwingli, Calvin kept artistic representations and musical instruments out of the churches. The pulpit and the sermon were central to the frequent church services, all of which Genevans were required to attend. At home the Genevans were also expected to demonstrate their Christianity on a daily basis. Calvin insisted that truly reformed Christians - unlike Catholics - must live sanctified lives. Although the Christian was saved from Hell by belief in Jesus' atoning death and resurrection, unless this belief manifested itself in a sanctified life the belief was nothing but lip-service. Sanctification was thus the visible "living out" of one's beliefs. Although Calvin permitted moderate consumption of beer and wine in the home, he closed Geneva's taverns. The playing of cards and dice was discouraged, and the use of profane or obscene language was strictly forbidden (the coarse obscenities in Luther's *Tischreden* would in Geneva have been grounds for excommunication). Committees of elders and deacons were assigned to visit every home twice a year, in order to discover who was and who was not leading a sanctified life.

### **Capital punishment in Geneva, and the death of Michael Servetus**

Thanks to the voluminous records kept by the Consistory, the administration of justice in Calvin's Geneva is known in some detail.<sup>29</sup> Under Calvin's theocracy several hundred Genevans were sentenced to death, and more were sent into exile. In addition to predictable capital offenses such as murder and kidnaping, one could be executed for adultery, blasphemy, and witchcraft. Although Calvin has been accused of unusual zeal in the burning of witches, that charge seems unfounded. Dozens of witches were indeed burned to death at Geneva during his reign, but the numbers are scarcely different from those in other cities of sixteenth-century Christendom. In the thirty years before Calvin arrived in their city the Genevans apparently burned witches at least as frequently as they did during his years at the helm.<sup>30</sup>

Draconian though Calvin's Geneva may have seemed to traditionalists, it was a magnet for radical Protestants. Thousands who were in danger elsewhere in Europe took refuge in Geneva. For those whose views differed from Calvin's, however, the city was no haven. This was vividly demonstrated in 1553, in the case of Michael Servetus (Miquel Servet, in his native Catalan). Servetus' novel teachings were set in motion by the Reformation but went far beyond anything that the reformers had in mind. In Spain Servetus had hoped to convert Muslims and Judaeans to Christianity but for these monotheists the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was obviously unacceptable. From the reformers Servetus had accepted the principle that the Bible, not the Church, was the guide to faith, and accordingly he searched the Bible for the doctrine of the Trinity. Failing to find anything trinitarian other than I John 5:7 (now recognized as spurious) and the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19, Servetus in 1531 - at the very young age of twenty - published a book, *De trinitatis erroribus*, that proclaimed monotheism rather than trinitarianism. Twenty years later came a more widely read book, *Christianismi restitutio* (*Restoration of Christianity*). While professing that Jesus was the Son of God and redeemer of the world, Servetus argued in this book that neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit was God, and that

the doctrine of the Trinity was therefore false. This was something that neither Catholics nor Protestants could accept, and both groups regarded Servetus as a tool of Satan. Eventually Servetus fled from the Inquisition in his native Spain to Geneva, where there was a tiny community of Protestants who had read his books and admired them. But on his arrival in Geneva Servetus was on Calvin's initiative arrested and sentenced to death. Calvin may have urged that Servetus be merely beheaded, but the Consistory ordered him to be burned at the stake (March 1553).

By founding their churches on the Bible rather than on Catholic tradition, Luther and the other reformers had opened up an exhilarating but dangerous chapter in the history of Christianity. Not since the Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries had Christians been so interested in doctrinal questions. By the time that calm returned, late in the seventeenth century, Europe had been transformed, modern civilization was beginning to appear on the horizon, and several hundred thousand Catholics and Protestants had been killed in religious conflicts.

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1. This revisionist conclusion seems well-founded. See especially Netanyahu 1995; Kamen 1996; and Kamen 1997.
  2. For a lower estimate of practicing Judaeans see Kamen 1997. Estimates range as high as 800,000. See, for example, the authors cited by Stewart 2006, pp. 19 and 314.
  3. Kamen 1997, p. 138.
  4. Kamen 1997, p. 174.
  5. See Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und die Wirtschaftsleben* (1911), for the thesis that Jewish merchants and financiers developed modern capitalism, and that prosperity followed them as they were expelled from one land and found refuge in another. Sombart was highly regarded by historians and economists in his own time, but his theory has few advocates nowadays. It was to some extent a counter to Max Weber's attribution of capitalism to the Calvinists and the "Protestant ethic."
  6. Manuscript texts of the Greek New Testament were of course in weekly use throughout Greek Orthodox Christendom, but they were not of high quality. For his printed edition Erasmus recognized the need for a careful study of the variant readings in manuscripts, thereby establishing to his satisfaction what the original reading must have been. None of the manuscripts available to him, however, dated from before the 10<sup>th</sup> century.
  7. On this episode see Briggs 1996.
  8. AV. The Hebrew word used here, *mekasefa*, is in the feminine gender. A masculine parallel appears at Deuteronomy 18:10, in a list of occultists to be stoned. Cf. Leviticus 20:27.

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9. Genesis 6:1-4 tells how “the sons of Elohim” had lusted after the daughters of men. In the apocryphal Enoch literature the sons of Elohim were equated with fallen angels, followers of Satan, and so with demons.

10. On all this see Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

11. Monter 1971, p. 186, notes that the records for Geneva show that trials of witches were especially common in the “panic years” of plague: 1545, 1567-68, 1571, and 1615. The year 1530 was also remarkable for the number of *bouteurs de peste* who were put to death (Monter 1971, p. 183).

12. After the death of Isabella in 1506 Charles’ mother, Joanna the Mad, had become the nominal queen of Castile; but because of her disability Ferdinand acted as regent in his daughter’s stead.

13. The moment of transubstantiation came when the priest (after the long consecratory prayers) took into his hands first the bread and then the cup, reciting the Words of Institution, “This is my body” and “This is my blood”.

14. For a variety of views see Dykema and Oberman 1993. For further work see Francis Rapp, *L’Église et la vie religieuse en Occident à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), and especially Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Pfaffenhass und gross Geschrei: Die reformatorischen Bewegungen in Deutschland 1517-1529* (Munich 1987).

15. On the hostility to mendicant orders (and especially the Franciscans) in sixteenth-century Germany see Dipple 1996.

16. On which see Snoek 1995.

17. The Latin nouns *veneratio* and *adoratio* corresponded to the Greek δουλεία and λατρεία.

18. Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

19. Edwards 1994, p. 57.

20. The Old Testament of Luther’s German Bible was translated mostly by Philipp Melanchthon (Schwarzerd) and Matthäus Aurogallus (Goldhahn), both of whom were far more competent in Hebrew than was Luther.

21. Luther published his *Small Catechism* in 1529, for instruction of children. He had been appalled when in 1528 he toured Saxony at request of the elector, John the Constant, and found that the laity and even much of the clergy knew almost nothing of Christianity, whether Catholic or evangelical. The catechism concentrated on the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostle’s Creed. In evangelical churches children virtually memorized the *Small Catechism* before undergoing the rite of Confirmation.

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22. A Norwegian translation of the Bible was not available until 1904. Until then, Norwegians had to make do with reading their Bibles in Danish or Swedish. From 1537 until 1814 the Norwegians were ruled by Danish kings, and from 1814 until 1905 their land was united to Sweden. The printing of a Norwegian Bible coincided with the Norwegian push for independence from Sweden.
23. On Luther's *Judenhasse* see Edwards 1983.
24. On this see Kaufmann 1968, pp. 348-54.
25. Joshua 10:12. For the several versions of Luther's belittling of the Copernican theory in his *Tischreden* see Wilhelm Norlind, "Copernicus and Luther: a Critical Study," *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 273-276.
26. "Vernunft ist die höchste Hur, die der Teufel hat." "Vernunft ist Gottes ärgste Feindin." "Glaube muss Vernunft töten." "Wer ein Christ sein will, der steche seiner Vernunft die Augen aus." "Vernunft und die Weisheit unseres Fleisches verdammen die Weisheit von Gottes Wort." For citations of these passages in Luther's collected writings see Kaufmann 1968, pp. 350-51, and note 7.
27. For a vigorous denunciation of the anti-intellectualism of the early Reformation see John M. Robertson, *A Short History of Freethought, Ancient and Modern* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1906), p. 439: "The diffusion of the Bible in particular determined the mental attitude of the movement in mass. The thinking of its more disinterested promoters began and ended in Bibliolatry: Luther and Calvin alike did but set up an infallible book and a local tyranny against an infallible pope and a tyranny centring at Rome. Neither dreamt of toleration; and Calvin, the more competent mind of the two, did but weld the detached irrationalities of the current theology into a system which crushed reason and stultified the morality in the name of which he ruled Geneva with a rod of iron."
28. Grell 1995, p. 58.
29. The records are now being published. See Robert Kingdon, Thomas Lambert, and Isabella Watt, eds., *The Registers of the Consistory of Geneva at the Time of Calvin, Volume I: 1542-44* (Grand Rapids: Wm. P. Eerdmans, 2000).
30. See Monter 1971, pp. 184-86. Monter found evidence for 479 witchcraft trials in the 125 years after Calvin's arrival in the city, although conceding that evidence for hundreds of other witchcraft trials may have been lost. Although Genevans accused of being *engraisseurs* or *bouteurs de peste* were convicted at a relatively high rate, suspects of "ordinary" witchcraft were convicted at a rate of only 17%. Altogether, in the 479 recorded trials for both ordinary and extraordinary witchcraft, 132 defendants were executed. The executions were clustered in the plague-panic years of 1545, 1567-68, 1571, and 1615.