

**John Calvin and the Reformed Tradition**

John Calvin (1509-64) is considered with Luther the co-founder of the Protestant Reformation. Calvin was born in France, but spent most of his active life in **Geneva**, Switzerland, where he was largely responsible for reforming the religious and civic life of the city. The values and institutions were broadly “puritan.” The

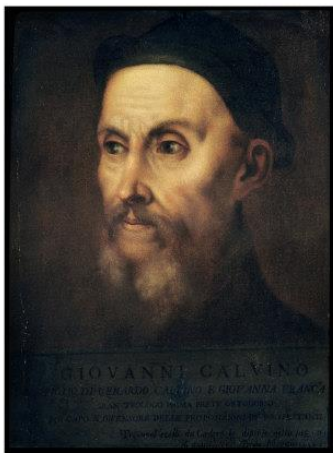
Reformed Church was ruled by **presbyters** or elders rather than bishops. He forbade public entertainments like the theater and prescribed the death penalty for adultery; laughing during a sermon and saying ill of Calvin were also

punished. He did not practice religious toleration but he followed Luther’s lead in insisting that all inhabitants practice the official religion of the community; he even had some dissenters executed. The **unitarian heretic Michael Servetus** (he denied the divinity of Jesus, something both Protestants and Catholics agreed on!) is the most infamous case; he made the mistake of fleeing to Geneva to escape persecution from Catholics; he was arrested; Calvin approved of his execution as a heretic, although he objected to his being burned at the stake, recommending beheading in its place.



**Geneva in the time of John Calvin**

He was a methodical theologian, who agreed with Martin Luther on most issues. Being a relentlessly logical and consistent thinker, he often stated common beliefs in a logically clear and thus more extreme manner; whereas Luther would hesitate to draw an extreme conclusion simply because of logic, Calvin was implacably consistent.



**Titian’s portrait of John Calvin**

The main ideas: 1) **God’s absolute sovereignty**. Men are so far below God (**total depravity**) that we can barely imagine what he is like. Calvin objected strenuously to the Catholic Church’s “domestication” of God in, for example, the Eucharist, where the Catholics have the priest summoning Christ and localizing him in one place on the altar, and then subjecting him to mastication and digestion by human stomach acids. Humans are “depraved,” incapable of nothing worthwhile without the agency of God working through them. We should not be surprised if we do not *understand* God’s plan for humanity; all we need to do is to accept his plan as imposed by **God’s will** (“men are warned by this [why certain men are damned and others not] to *seek no cause outside his will....*”); the only place for finding out what His will is is to look in holy scripture.

**Calvin’s pessimism** on human nature compared to Luther is striking. Luther often waxes eloquent on our capacity to do good for our fellow:

From faith thus flows love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing and free mind that serves one’s neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or

blame, of gain or loss.... As our heavenly father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and *each should become as it were a Christ to the other* that we may be Christs to one another....

On the other hand, Calvin has a low opinion of the results of individual human effort:

[The individual] will perceive that it [the effort] *savors of the rottenness of the flesh*, since our eagerness for well-doing is never what it ought to be but our great weakness slows down our running in the race.... We have not a single work going forth from the saints that if it be judged in itself deserves not shame as its just reward. (Both quoted from Dillenberger and Welch)

2) Salvation through **faith** alone; “faith precedes decision”. God decided from all eternity who was to be saved and who was to be damned. Calvin agreed entirely with Luther, but just emphasized the concept more. God’s election of the just is **unconditional**, having absolutely nothing to do with the merits, wishes, or actions of the individual; it is also **irresistible** in that it cannot be rejected by the individual human being; the “**perseverance of the saints**” means that the elect individual cannot lose his salvation.

Whereas Luther adhered only to single predestination (he could make no statement outside of faith), Calvin maintained **double predestination**, whereby God decided from all eternity which people are saved and which are damned; God is responsible for both, and humans do not have the right or the capacity to question his sovereign will. Calvin is very clear on this doctrine in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those he has given over to damnation.



**Geneva Bible from 1581**

A tough doctrine, but as he clearly states in his commentary on St. Paul, he thought it absolutely necessary so as to exclude any concept of merit and works from the scheme of salvation. By thus dotting his I’s and crossing his T’s, Calvin came up with a frightening and uncompromising doctrine. Bokenkotter thinks this was “**the Achilles heel of Calvinism;**” it was certainly the point at which Calvinism was most often attacked in future centuries, and it probably limited the numbers who followed the Reformed Church and Calvinism’s influence. Predestination was even abandoned by the Presbyterian Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, leading a **good Christian life** (“works”) was extremely important to Calvin. He said that good Christians would perform good works and lead strict moral lives out of gratitude to God and that everyone would know the man who is saved by what he does. Thus Christians would glorify God by the holy lives they live on earth.

(Many Christians wondered whether such a belief would lead to **antinomianism**, i.e. since a person’s fate has already been decided by God and our actions would have no impact on it, why worry about following God’s law, about following the 10 Commandments and behaving one’s self.)

**3) Interpretation of the Eucharist** among the Protestant leaders varied greatly. **Luther** maintained a belief in the real physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, although he substituted his idea of **consubstantiation** (although he did not use the term) for the Catholic transubstantiation. He asserted that when the gospel accounts say “This is my body”, it means the real physical and spiritual presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.



**Ulrich Zwingli**

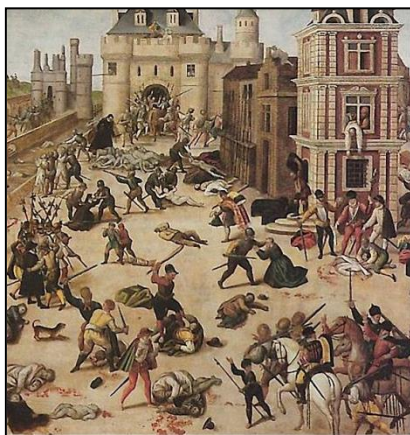
Ulrich **Zwingli** (Zurich) denied either a spiritual or physical presence in the Eucharist. He theorized that the word “is” in the gospel accounts of the Last Supper means “signifies”, not real presence. He said that Christ’s body is in heaven seated at the right hand of God and that it is absurd and blasphemous to say the Christ could be in two different places at the same time. He held that the Eucharist however as a remembrance ceremony is of great benefit to the recipient; it is a psychological experience that brought real spiritual benefits; the Anabaptists largely followed his interpretation.

[Zwingli] when you come to [the Eucharist] you need neither teeth to press the body of Christ nor stomach to receive that which you have chewed, for if you believe in him you have already partaken of him, and when ... you partake of the two elements of bread and wine, all you do is to confess publicly that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. (D&W)

**Calvin** was in the middle denying the physical presence, but asserting the **reality of Jesus’ spiritual presence** in the Eucharist. On the one hand, he rejected the Catholic position: “A God who could be summoned at clerical command, localized and dismissed by the chemistry of stomach acids.” (Bokenkotter) He also rejected Luther’s belief that Jesus could be physically present both in heaven (his resurrected body) and on earth in the Eucharist. According to Calvin, the recipient of the Eucharist experiences a true spiritual union with Jesus by the action of the Holy Spirit, who causes the soul of the believer to ascend to heaven to partake truly in the whole person of Christ.

The typical Protestant position has been probably closer to Zwingli -- to deny the physical presence and to assert the Eucharist’s spiritual significance as a remembrance ceremony.

### **Impact of Calvinism**



**St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre**

**France** in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A unified country in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Protestants (**Huguenots**) became an important minority by about 1550. The result was extensive internal conflict culminating in the infamous St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572 (3000-4000 Huguenots were massacred upon the order of the Queen), even civil war, until the choice of the Huguenot **Henry IV** to be king in 1589; he accepted saying famously “Paris is worth a mass”, suggesting that national harmony and prosperity were more important than theological orthodoxy. By the Edict of Nantes (1598) he granted the Huguenots limited toleration and even allowed them to organize local sovereignties (self-governance, fortresses, etc.). A very popular king, he was assassinated by a fanatic in 1611. The tolerance was not to last. **The Edict of Nantes was repealed by King Louis XIV in 1685**: henceforth it was illegal to be a Protestant in France; although a significant number survived in

France, many Huguenots emigrated to foreign countries.

The French were going against the tide in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century when most European countries were moving toward institutions and values of toleration. After the extreme and committed intolerance of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century **toleration emerged (in France, England and Holland) as a practical solution** to the problems created by the coexistence of more than one religious confession in a single political jurisdiction.

Calvinism had significant impact in other parts of northern Europe. Aside from many of the Swiss cantons, it was the official religion of state in the **Dutch Netherlands** (Holland) and Scotland after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Calvinists eventually formed significant minorities in Ireland (Ulster), and in England, where through the first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the **Puritans** waged a campaign to “Calvinize” the Church of England. Since they failed, many of them migrated to North America, forming Puritan communities in Massachusetts.

### The Anabaptists – Menno Simons

‘Anabaptists’ means ‘**rebaptizers**’, who followed the apparent New Testament practice of baptizing adult believers in Jesus (Acts 2: 38, where Peter says “Repent and be baptized....”) They were important in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries not so much for their numbers, but for their significance. They showed the Protestant principle of **diversity**; they were opposed to territorial, national churches; they were almost certainly a spur toward increasing **toleration** in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They were the most “radical” of the Protestant movements in that they were the most removed from the traditional practices and beliefs of Catholicism.



**Mount of Beatitudes near the Sea of Galilee**

They began with a literal interpretation of the Bible, e.g., if Jesus says in the ‘**Sermon on the Mount**’ (Mt 5) to be peacemakers (turn the other cheek), then do what He says; if there are **no infant baptisms** recorded in the New Testament, then don’t perform them; if Jesus says in Mt 19 “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”, then you had better give away your riches; if Jesus (in Corinthians 1) said of the Last Supper “do this in memory of me,” then understand that it is only a commemorative ceremony (although, as we have seen, this does not appear to be an adequate interpretation of the gospel passages describing the Eucharist). We must take seriously Jesus’ injunction to live a perfect life.



**Menno Simons**

Anabaptists were a “**gathered**” church in which adults made a voluntary decision to join the community and to be baptized; they rejected the territorial church as promoted by Luther and Calvin. In their community they saw themselves as under the influence of the Holy Spirit. They **shunned the state**, and generally refused to swear oaths to civil authority or to wage war (they were generally **pacifists**). They wanted to be left alone in their own communities in out of the way places like rural southern Germany or Bohemia to practice their religion and way of life; when living in cities, they would live and worship unobtrusively so as not to offend the sensibilities of the majority. They had high standards of behavior, and excommunicated, shunned, and **ostracized** community members who were habitual sinners and non-conformists.

Anabaptists were numerous in Switzerland (where they got in Zwingli's hair and were often viciously persecuted by him), parts of northern Germany, and Holland. There was a great variety of Anabaptists. A few of **the extremists** calling themselves "the Saints" seized control of the German town of **Münster** in 1533, and created a millenarian community (awaiting the Second Coming) where polygamy, political terror (executions of women violating the practice of polygamy), and a variety of communism were practiced. These Anabaptists were unpopular almost anywhere with mainstream religious organizations (one can sense that from the pejorative nature of their common names – "Re-baptizers", "Quakers", "Puritans", etc.), and they were repressed violently in the first part of the 16th century by both Protestant and Catholic forces. Mainstream Protestants, particularly in Switzerland, were generally more active than Catholics in the campaigns against Anabaptists.

Most Anabaptists however were like **Menno Simons** (1496-1561), a Dutch priest who converted to the Anabaptists in the 1530s and then created a large following in **Holland and Germany**. In his writings he was **opposed to infant baptism**, saying that it is nowhere mentioned in the Bible (including the letters of Paul) and that infants lack the understanding to make a genuine profession of faith. Baptism in water should be a confirmation of an individual's faith in Jesus Christ, which can come only in adulthood. The only saving fluid is **Christ's blood**, not the water of baptism; Luther and the Catholics make an "idol" out of baptismal water. Since all men are saved by the blood of Christ, infants and children will not be condemned to hell, even if they die before their baptism, but they will be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. He was a pacifist, and believed that the **only weapon of his followers was the word of God** that would prevail against the spiritual kingdom of the devil:

Christ is our fortress; patience our weapon of defense: the Word of God our sword; and our victory a courageous, firm, unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ. And iron and metal spears and swords we leave to those who, alas, regard human blood and swine's blood about alike...."

He presumably believed in non-resistance to police or military repression.

His followers, the Mennonites, were very influential through the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The **Mennonites** emphasized the value of pacifism, refusing to swear oaths, or to serve in the armed forces. Many of them emigrated abroad when they could not find peace in Europe. They went to the colony of Pennsylvania in 1683, establishing a strong presence in North America that continues today. The most old-fashioned and purist of the Mennonite groups are the **Amish** (founded by the Swiss/Alsatian Jakob Amman around 1700), who reject many aspects of modern secular culture (*vide* the black clothes, the horse and buggy, the rejection of much modern technology, etc.). The Mennonites and Amish have had much influence on American religion.

### **The English Reformation – the "Via Media (Middle Road)"**

The English Reformation was largely politically motivated; rather than come from grass roots religious movements that force the state to comply (true in part in Germany), it emanated from the **state** evoking a response in the general population. By the time of the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), it created a national church that seemed to split the difference between traditional Catholicism and continental Protestantism and that was made intentionally **"broad"** to comprehend as many varieties of Christians as possible.



**A picturesque ruined abbey in England**

In about 1520, the forces of loyalty in England to the **papacy** were relatively weak. Although there were some dissenters, Protestant forces (Luther, Zwingli, etc) found little echo in English society until the 1530s. There was however widespread dismay at the corruption in the English Church (e.g., John Colet's and Erasmus' visit to the shrine of Canterbury) and at the influence of Italians and the papacy in it; many Englishmen also resented the wealth and lack of discipline in the **monasteries**, which appeared awash in money but lacking any purpose.



**Holbein: Henry VIII**

In his break with Rome **Henry VIII** was not motivated primarily by religious considerations – he never showed much interest in Protestant ideas. He wanted a male heir that his Catholic wife, Catherine of Aragon, could not give him. Attempts to get the pope to release him from the marriage were unsuccessful due largely to the political influence of Catherine's nephew, Charles V! Henry also needed money for the treasury, and the sight of fat monasteries was too much to resist. He was also very fond of Anne Boleyn, who from every indication played her cards right in her campaign to become queen.

Henry got parliament to break with the papacy and make Henry **the head of the English Church** (*ecclesia anglicana*); those who resisted, such as Thomas More, were executed (by beheading, not by hanging, drawing and quartering). Henry was able to marry Anne Boleyn, who also did not give him a son, but only a daughter, Elizabeth. (And then....) He remained however **very Catholic**, since the Ten Articles of 1536 were very orthodox, and Henry continued to insist on **veneration of relics,**

**Purgatory, etc.** No one seemed particularly upset when he confiscated the extensive property of about 800 monasteries; he promptly squandered most of the money by distributing it to his cronies and supporters. He did authorize the translation of **the Bible into English** and its use in church services, but he resisted its widespread distribution in the English population.

The period 1547-1558 was a time of vacillation and inconsistency in English religious history. The influence of continental Protestants in England had greatly increased in the last years of Henry VIII. Edward VI, the son of Henry VIII, was a sickly teenager under the control of Protestant advisors, who favored a Protestant settlement but retained the episcopal structure. At his death he was succeeded by **Mary Tudor** ("Bloody Mary," 1553-58), the wife of Philip II of Spain (!). She tried to reestablish Catholicism in England, alienating a large part of the population by her bloody persecution of Protestant leaders (about 300 "Oxford Martyrs" were burned at the stake!); she did not however dare to order the return of confiscated lands and the reestablishment of the monasteries. The persecutions were not popular in England. (The nursery rhyme, "Mary, Mary, Quite contrary, how does your garden grow?" is reputed to refer to the religious terror under her reign; references to "Maid" and "cockle shells" may refer to instruments of torture and execution). Most public opinion was averse to more religious conflict that might degenerate into French-style civil war. Mary's death (she was childless) cut off the possibility of a Catholic revival.



**The young Elizabeth I**

## **The Elizabethan Settlement**

When **Elizabeth I** succeeded Mary in 1558, most English people were looking for a pacific solution to the religious question. Elizabeth became queen in the midst of **political instability**, with rival claimants to the throne such as the Catholic Mary Stuart ("Mary Queen of Scots"), whom

Elizabeth (reluctantly) had executed later in 1587, attempted military invasion of England by the Catholic Philip II in the 1580s (the Spanish Armada), and secret missions to England by Jesuit missionaries such as St. Edmund Campion, who was executed by Elizabeth (much against her preference, but this time by hanging, drawing and quartering). Elizabeth, who like Henry IV of France did not have strong religious convictions, sought a conciliatory settlement to the religious issue. She was popular in England, since most people seemed convinced that she was disinterested and working for the (secular and religious) well-being of England.

Elizabeth I, 1563: "We and our people -- thanks be to God -- follow no novel and strange religion, but that very religion which is ordained by Christ, sanctioned by the primitive and Catholic Church and approved by the consentient mind and voice of the most early fathers."

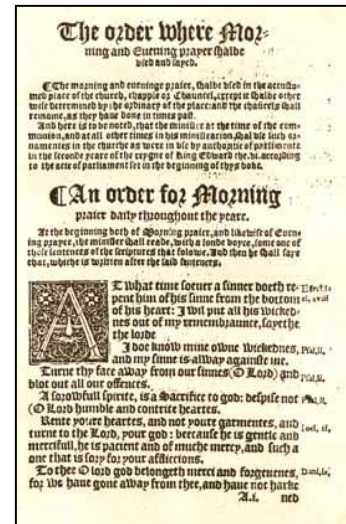
The **Elizabethan Settlement** was 1) national and territorial (all English people were expected to belong to it), 2) moderate and middle of the road (including strands of both Protestantism and Catholicism), 3) broad (not strict in enforcement of uniformity but allowing a certain diversity from parish to parish) and relatively undogmatic. It preserved the apostolic succession and the authority of the **bishops**.

Presumably because contemporaries objected to a woman being in charge of the Church, Elizabeth was proclaimed **"Supreme Governor"** of the Church of England instead of Henry's title of "Supreme Head"; "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England."

a) The **39 Articles** stated the doctrinal position of the English Church. They were moderately Protestant in content. They declared against transubstantiation (the doctrine is "repugnant to the plain words of Scripture"), relics, indulgences, and Purgatory. They asserted the **sufficiency of scripture** for salvation (VI) ("Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.").

They also proclaimed **single predestination** (God "hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation..."; the doctrine "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons") (XVII); **salvation through "Faith only"** (XI) (although "Good Works...are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ...") (XII); and John Calvin's interpretation of the presence of Jesus in the **Eucharist** ("The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner.") (XXVIII). They accepted the Old Testament Apocrypha as part of the "Canonical Books", although they are not to be used "to establish any doctrine." (VI) Services must be in English (XXIV); priests were allowed to marry (XXXII).

In any case, the Articles were intended to be a **"guide rather than a binding rule of faith."** English people were generally not persecuted for their religious beliefs, so long as they did not openly contradict the dogmatic definitions of the 39 Articles or disturb public order in England. They were considered "pious opinions fitted for the preservation of unity". (John Bramhall) Calvinist preachers in the cities were generally left alone, and they were to make a lot of trouble for the Anglican establishment in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Catholics were the exception. Elizabeth tracked down and often executed Jesuit priests such as **St. Edmund Campion**, who had been smuggled in from the continent to attend to the religious needs of remaining Catholics and perhaps to restore the dominance of the Catholic faith in England. But even



Page from 1559 edition of The Book of Common Prayer

Catholics were often left alone, if they were in the upper classes, and they worshiped quietly without being noticed by the public.

b) The new liturgy was defined by the **Book of Common Prayer** that was considerably more traditional and Catholic than previous Protestant-oriented versions under Edward. All celebrations were in English; the Bible was retranslated, resulting in the **King James Version published in 1611**. Most observers find the observances, language and music of the new church very beautiful. While there were Protestant touches – the mass was no longer a ‘sacrifice,’ and it was now celebrated at a ‘table’ rather than an ‘altar’



**Salisbury Cathedral, 13th century**

– the liturgy was quite **traditional** – priests’ vestments such as surplices, the sign of the cross, formal prayer, candles on the altar, Holy Communion distributed in the form of wafers and not common baked bread, kneeling at the communion rail to receive Holy Communion. None of this pleased the Calvinists/Presbyterians, who were dominant in Scotland and becoming more important in English cities; while momentarily remaining within the Church, they hoped to “purify” it from within and complete the “half-Reformation” that had occurred thus far. The seeds of conflict in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were thus sown.

An early Communion service combining Catholic and Zwinglian concepts of the Eucharist show the non-dogmatic

nature of the English Church:

“The **body** of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and **eat this in remembrance** that Christ died for thee, and **feed on him in thy heart by faith**, with thanksgiving.”

This “balanced religious outlook” was confirmed by the theologian **Richard Hooker** (d.1600) and the Caroline Divines. While calling themselves Protestant, they stressed their connections with tradition, with medieval philosophy, the works of the Ancient Church fathers, and the importance of the episcopacy.

In sum “a balanced religious outlook,” a *via media* (*John Dunne*), an undogmatic broad stream designed to include as many believers as possible and thus to create peace and unity in England. Anglicans define themselves as “**Protestant and Reformed According to the Ancient Catholic Church.**”

### **After Elizabeth I – The Road to Toleration**

**Religious toleration** is a state or government allowing the practice of religions other than the established one. Toleration was obviously not a widespread practice in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when strong religious passions convinced princes like Elizabeth of England and Philip of Spain that members of opposing religions were threatening the security of their communities and that they needed to enforce religious uniformity within their national boundaries. However, already by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century religious diversity was forcing the beginnings of toleration



**Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the birthplace of religious toleration**



practices in countries like France, Holland, and England.

The English nation made several stages of **progress toward toleration** from 1603 (death of Elizabeth) to about 1830.

Despite the achievement of Elisabeth I, there was much religious conflict in the **17<sup>th</sup> century** between Puritans/Presbyterians and Church of England traditionalists until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Puritans in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century demanded reforms in the Church of England to make it (in their view) more Protestant (some of them emigrated to Holland and North America to found their own churches). Charles I and advisers such as Archbishop Laud resisted, citing **“No bishop, no king!”** (it is impossible to maintain civil authority in England unless religious authority is maintained in the church). The civil war and execution of the king in 1649, the Geneva-like “reign” of Oliver Cromwell (no dancing around the maypole, attending theatrical productions or any other kind of public enjoyments) caused again a tiring of religious conflict and a desire to find a moderate solution.

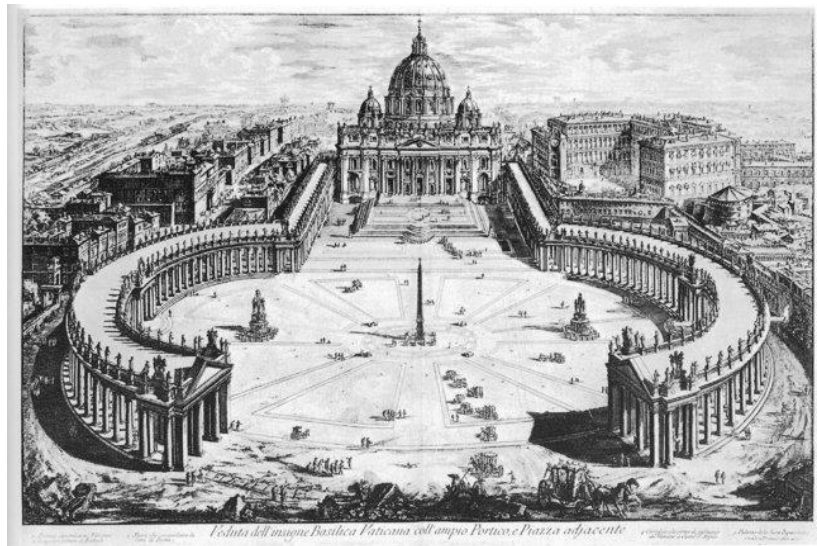


**Catholic James II was chased off the throne of England in 1688.**

**James II** (1685-88) was suspected of wanting to restore Catholicism in England, especially after the birth of a son (“Rock-a-bye baby in the treetop/When...”) James and his family were escorted out of England to live in France, while William and Mary crossed the Channel from Holland to bring about the (Protestant) **Glorious Revolution**.

The **Settlement of 1688** introduced the first formal aspects of toleration into the English constitution – the Church of England remained the official state church to whom all were expected theoretically to belong, but the **Dissenters** (most non-Anglican Protestants) were allowed to open schools and places of worship without official interference provided they remained loyal to the regime; they continued however to suffer from certain disabilities – they had to register with the authorities, they were not allowed to vote nor hold public office. Catholics in England however were still repressed with a few exceptions among the northern nobility. **Catholics in Ireland** were allowed to continue to practice their religion, but with enormous disabilities (prejudice and disadvantages) that were not removed until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

As usual in English history, England moved toward a **de facto toleration** in a step-by-step fashion. They did not do it because they thought it was a good idea theoretically, but because it seemed the best practical way to dampen down religious conflict and to strengthen their community.



**St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Great Britain officially allowed toleration of all religions with reform acts passed in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Catholic Reformation (Counter-Reformation)**

The Roman Catholic Church was “on the ropes” in the 1520s due largely to the worldliness, complacency, and corruption in the high levels of the Church; most Church leaders thought the Lutheran thing would blow over much as the heretical movements in previous centuries. Reformers both liberal (Catholic humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam and Cardinal **Cajetan** and **Gasparo Contarini** who advocated some compromise with the Protestants) and **conservatives** (rejecting any trucking with the [Protestant] agents of Satan), however, were pushing for change, and were able to move forward once reforming popes were elected.

One of the most notable of the conservative reforming popes was **Pius V (1566-72; canonized 1712)**. His background was in the Italian Inquisition, and when he became pope he vigorously repressed Protestant dissent in Italy. He was also a puritanical reformer, who had Daniel of Volterra (the “**Trouserer**”) paint loincloths on Michelangelo’s male figures in the Sistine Chapel. He and many of his fellow popes pushed indefatigably to “clean up” the Church in the wake of the Reformation. He strove to end clerical simony and nepotism. In 1570 he declared Elizabeth I of England a heretic and officially released her subjects from obedience to her (to no avail). The survival and dynamism of the Church in this period owes much to the **zeal of reforming popes**. The pessimistic and fatalistic mood of **Michelangelo’s “Last Judgment”** (1535) is witness to the puritanical mindset of these reformers.



**Michelangelo’s ‘Last Judgment’**

**The Council of Trent (1545-63)**, called by another pope in previous decades, firmed up the Church in the face of the Protestant attack. There was **no compromise on doctrine**, as the Council reaffirmed Purgatory, the seven sacraments, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the importance of works and **free will next to faith in justification**:

“...in adults the beginning of that justification must proceed from the predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits on their part, they are called; that they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by **freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace**; so that, while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight.”

The Council maintained the importance of **tradition** and Church authority alongside “sola scriptura”: the Christian faith rests on “truths and rules...contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions”. They allowed only **one species** of the Eucharist, i.e., the bread, to be distributed to the laity. The conservative reformers in the Church had clearly carried

the day against the liberals: although various abuses were ended, there was virtually no sign of concession or compromise with the Protestants in the decrees of the Council; the order of the day was to reform the Church to prepare a devastating counterattack against the enemy.

The **liturgy** was organized and **regularized**. The *missale romanum* regularized the practice of the Catholic mass, making sure that it was exactly the same in all parts of the world. The mass was still in **Latin** with the priest reenacting the sacrifice of Christ on the cross with his back to the congregation; no concessions were made to the idea of the mass as a sharing of the Eucharist around the table. The weakness of the new order was the lack of participation by the laity. One result of this was the laity turning to other **devotions** (the rosary, novenas, the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, trips to **Loreto** on the east coast of Italy to visit the alleged house of the Virgin Mary, etc.) for personal piety (see Margaret Mary below).

Another result was the increasing **theatricality and sensuousness** of Counter-Reformation worship. The emphasis was on sensuous beauty – grandeur, light, color, beautiful music, painted visions of heaven, spacious interiors, etc., that are designed to “enchant” the spectator and transport him into a baroque spiritual realm. Nothing could be more in contrast with the plain, austere churches (or meeting halls) of the Protestant churches and their pared down church services emphasizing the spoken word.

The drama, sensuousness, and physicality of the Counter-Reformation style can be seen by looking at three art works. ‘**The Last Judgment**,’ painted by Michelangelo in the 1530s shows the pessimism of Michelangelo in his Counter-Reformation mood, his sense of the power of the Church standing in for the authority of Jesus, and the work of Daniel of Volterra, the “Trouserer.” **St. Peter’s Basilica**, constructed in several stages between 1505 and about 1670, is the quintessence of the Roman Counter-Reformation style in architecture. **Gianlorenzo Bernini** designed the colonnade of St. Peter’s Square, the baldacchino standing over the main altar and St. Peter’s throne behind the main altar. The style is monumental, impressive, ornate, “over the top,” not at all Protestant. Bernini also executed the famous statuary group “**St. Theresa in Ecstasy**,” located in the Cornaro Chapel, in which St. Theresa swoons with an ecstatic expression on her face as a sweet smiling angel drives an arrow into her chest (the dart of divine love).

“I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it.”  
(From Theresa’s *Autobiography*)

The parallel with sexual ecstasy is unmistakable. Meanwhile, to the side of the statue there is a high relief of the Cornaro family, who watch the spectacle. Truly inspired baroque theater.



**Bernini's 'St. Theresa in Ecstasy'**

The **spirituality of the Tridentine Catholic Church** was **authoritative, traditional, sensuous** (statues, colors, incense, music, disappearing ceilings, etc.), **and popular** (designed to appeal to uneducated workers and particularly peasants); as compared to the emphasis on the Word (reading the Bible,

preaching, etc.) and the simpler, more austere surroundings of most of the Protestants. Judging by the history of the Church in this period, the strategy was a great success.

The Counter-Reformation was quite serious about improving the **education of the clergy**. Each diocese was required to operate a seminary (for the training of priests). The Church got more serious about requiring a knowledge of Latin (to be able to celebrate the mass and say the breviary), to learn moral theology and thus how to conduct effective confessions and give advice to their parishioners, and to live virtuous lives (priests were less inclined to “live in sin” with women, etc.). Although perfection is out of reach in this world, the quality of the Catholic clergy definitely improved as a result of the Counter-Reformation.

The Catholic Reformation insisted on **authority** and dogma rather than discussion, tolerance and negotiation. The papacy reestablished the **Italian Inquisition**, which was quite effective in rooting out heresy and Protestant movements in Italy (and harassing good Catholics who were “rocking the boat”); it was not as extreme and bloodthirsty as the Spanish Inquisition. The popes also established the ‘**Index of Forbidden Books**,’ which drew up a list of books that Catholics were not allowed to read unless they were officially sanctioned Catholic scholars; in the beginning books of Mohammed, Boccaccio, Machiavelli and Erasmus were included. The Counter-Reformation did not embrace freedom of speech and open discussion.



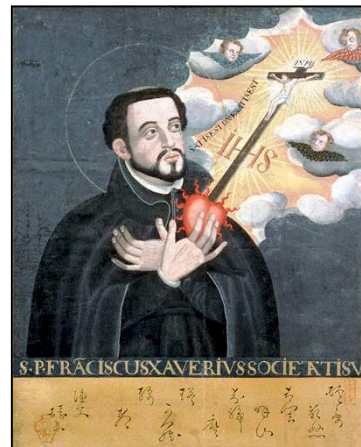
**St. Ignatius of Loyola**

was little emphasis on austerity and true Franciscan-style poverty. They caught on immediately, and there were approximately 2000 Jesuit priests ordained by 1556, the year of Ignatius’ death!

One of the early (short-term) successes of the Jesuits was their **missionary activity in Japan**. St. Francis Xavier, the “Apostle of the Indies,” began the Jesuit mission to the East, particularly to Japan. His successor was Alessandro Valignano, who was convinced that the Japanese would make a great Christian nation. He was a firm “**accommodationist**” asserting that Europeans must adapt of Japanese customs and not vice versa. Valignano concealed the sign of the cross as much as possible and got his priests to wear silk (instead of rough cloth) so as not to offend the sensibilities of the Japanese upper classes (of course this opened him up to charges of betraying his apostolic mission by living in luxury). He worked through the wealthy and powerful as the most effective way of converting the Japanese. He

## The Jesuits

The **Jesuits**, the quintessential product of the Catholic Reformation, were founded by **St. Ignatius of Loyola**, the “bantam sized ex-soldier,” and “God-intoxicated soul.” He had mystical tendencies, and he wrote a famous book, “**The Spiritual Exercises**” that has been used extensively as a spiritual handbook ever since. He founded the Jesuits in Montmartre in 1534, and they were approved by the pope in 1540 despite the machinations of Ignatius’ opponents. Their motto was “Ad majorem Dei gloriam,” (to the greater glory of God). Their emphasis was **obedience**, with a special oath of obedience to the pope to go anywhere their services were needed in defense of the one true Church, to obey their superiors “just like a corpse” born to its burial, and to believe the black you see in front of you is white, if the hierarchical church requires it; they were organized in pseudo military style under a general into provinces; there



**St. Francis Xavier**  
‘Apostle of the Indies’

was a great **admirer of Japanese culture**: he insisted that his missionaries learn the Japanese language, and he founded seminaries in Japan so as to create native Japanese priests; some think that the seminaries were organized according to Buddhist principles of education.

Valignano was very successful, particularly in Kyushu, the south part of Japan; there were perhaps as many as **700,000 Japanese Christians** just after 1600. The shogun however turned against the Christians after the unification of Japan at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Japanese government bitterly repressed the Christian movement by a **violent persecution**, in which as many as 6000 Japanese Christians were martyred. All the missionaries were expelled. Christianity virtually disappeared from Japan by the 1640s.

(The Jesuits had also successful missionary settlements in **South America**, (*reducciones*), where they succeeded for close to a century in protecting native Indian populations against commercial and political exploitation by secular authorities. The Jesuits were expelled and the reductions destroyed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.)



The Jesuits were even more influential in **Europe**. They organized themselves as a kind of military order under the command of the pope to fight the forces of Protestantism with preaching, influence and education; they were known as “the shock troops of the papacy”. The Jesuits organized the best **high schools** (*collèges*) in Catholic Europe to influence the upper and middle classes; even anti-clerical luminaries like Voltaire (18<sup>th</sup> century) were educated in Jesuit schools and they avowed the high quality of the education received there.

#### **Ruins of a Jesuit Mission in Paraguay**

The Jesuits also set out to influence the powerful by serving as their **confessors**. There they practiced **casuistry**, reasoning on moral issues designed to justify necessary means to serve the interests of the Church. In extreme cases Jesuits were believed to have advised Catholic princes to assassinate Protestant leaders – you have to break eggs (lives) to serve a good cause (defeat of Protestantism). Usually casuistry dealt with more trivial issues of personal behavior, such as drinking wine, whether you have to follow all the laws of the Church like fasting and abstinence, or to what extent accommodations like wearing silk robes and downplaying the symbol of the cross were allowed in foreign missions – Jesuit opponents called these practices “la morale relâché (laid-back ethics)” or possibilism (if you can find a single argument in favor of a disputed practice, then go ahead and do it!). These practices caused opponents like the Jansenists to accuse Jesuits of worldliness (interest in power and wealth) and hypocrisy.

The Jesuits, who were smart, numerous and militant, were the most effective weapon of the Catholic Church in its counter-attack against Protestant forces in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were largely responsible for the self-renewal and dynamism of the Church in this period.

#### **Saints of the Catholic Reformation**

**More Saints:** The dynamism of the Catholic Reformation is shown by the large number and variety of **Saints** in this period of the Church (there had been very few in the Renaissance period). Saints were particularly holy people who had been loyal to the Church and performed some significant service to it. They were



**St. Theresa of Avila**

**canonized** after their death by a long judicial-like process conducted by papal authorities. Once canonized, saints were considered worthy of veneration and they were potential intercessors with the Lord.

Counter-Reformation saints tended to be **doers and achievers**, entrepreneurs and interesting personalities. **Theresa of Avila** (Spain, 16<sup>th</sup> century) was perhaps the greatest mystical saint of the Counter-Reformation period. No domestic wallflower, she was resourceful and aggressive in her career: she addressed her nuns:

My daughters, I want you to be strong men. If you do all that is in you, the Lord will make you so manly that men themselves will be amazed at you.

Throughout her life she developed a four-step method of ascent of the soul to God, until the perfect fourth stage – “devotion of ecstasy or rapture” – that brought the mystic into a painful yet intensely pleasurable union with God that lasted about a half an hour and was followed by a “swoon-like weakness” and finally an awakening from the trance in tears (the ecstatic phase of the experience was portrayed in the following century by the Italian artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini in his famous “St. Theresa in Ecstasy”). She was also an activist reformer who founded as many as 17 new convents in Spain.



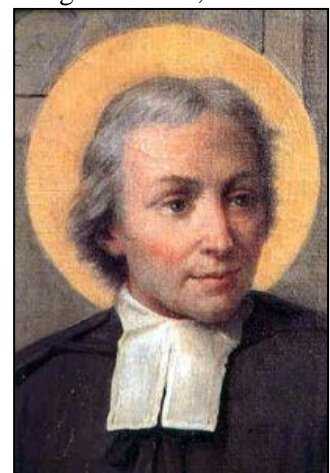
**The Sacred Heart of Jesus**  
Catholic homes in Europe and the USA.

**St. Margaret Mary Alacoque** (France, 17<sup>th</sup> century) was also a mystic (she claimed to have been visited several times by Jesus) and devotional saint very popular in her time and later; she popularized the practice of extreme “austerities,” inflicting discomfort and pain on one’s self until she became paralyzed in order to make more real her experience of the pain and suffering of Jesus on the cross. She was largely responsible for popularizing the devotion to the **Sacred Heart of Jesus** that emphasized contemplation of the physical and spiritual sufferings of Jesus symbolized by an image of his sacred heart. The devotion remained popular until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century with pictures of the Sacred Heart hanging in many

**St. Pius V**, who was pope from 1566 to 1572, was the quintessential pope of the Counter-Reformation. He was a man of great personal integrity and sufficient holiness; he believed in **authority and discipline**, and promoted the Inquisition in order to pursue Protestant heretics; of man of stringent morals, he hired painters to cover frontal nudity in the Sistine Chapel; he excommunicated “heretics” like Elizabeth I of England, when she solidified the Protestant nature of the Church of England.

**St. Carlo Borromeo** (16c Italy), the **Archbishop of Milan**, was a great **pastoral** saint who worked for the reform of the clergy in the Diocese of Milan and for education; he was the founder of CCD (Confraternity of Christian doctrine that taught the rudiments of the Catholic faith to children). He had no qualms about exercising the full authority of his office to bring reform to his diocese.

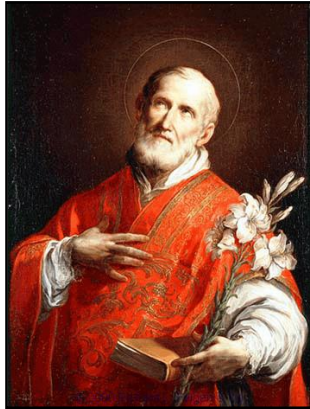
**St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle** (17c and 18c France) was the French founder of the **Christian Brothers**, whose mission was **education of the urban poor** and working classes; he is still well-known through the Christian Brothers schools. He emphasized the instruction of the urban poor, as opposed to the Jesuits, who stressed higher education in behalf of the



**St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle**  
Founded Christian Brothers

social elite of Catholic countries. He is generally credited with having founded the first normal school (teaching training college) in Reims, France in 1685. "To touch the heart of your pupils is the greatest miracle you can perform." Jean-Baptiste de la Salle was canonized in 1900.

**St. Philip Neri** (16c Italy) was a popular and attractive saint interested mostly in the **lay apostolate** (education and guidance of young lay men through getting together for prayer, singing and discussion of Scripture and other spiritual issues) and in charitable work among the sick and poor in the city of Rome. He founded the famous **Oratory**, a place where lay people met to perform devotional, charitable and



**St. Philip Neri**

recreational activities (among them music); the organization soon drew to have branches in many cities in Italy, France, and England. He also founded an Oratory for the use of priests. He was known for his wit and humor and the unaffected simplicity (not- poverty) of his lifestyle: "A joyful heart is more easily made perfect than a downcast one."

The **sheer number and energy** of saints in this period demonstrate the spiritual dynamism of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Whereas most saints in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were from Spain and Italy, they became more common in France in the following century. They **varied** a lot in nature: from the practical activism of the Jesuits, to the (sometimes excessive?) ecstatic mysticism of the mystics, to the gentleness and devotion and the improvement of the real world of Philip Neri and Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. The Catholic Church has not known such a large number of vigorous saints since that time. There were to be numerous saints in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they were of a more passive and devotional nature. The Counter-Reformation was a heroic period in the history of the Catholic church.