

Protestant Reformation: a movement that began as a call to reform church teachings and practices according to the interpretations of the Bible by Martin Luther (1483-1546) that quickly spread and eventually led to wider political and social changes. The traditional narrative begins with Luther's posting in Wittenberg in Electoral Saxony on 31 October 1517 ninety-five theses contesting the offering of indulgences to raise money to build the new basilica of St. Peter in Rome. When efforts to silence him and get him to retract his views failed, he was excommunicated by Leo X and declared an outlaw of the Holy Roman Empire by Charles V in 1521. Nonetheless a variety of princes and free cities provided support for him and his ideas that centered on the three exclusionary principles: faith, grace, and scripture. In 1529 these rulers formally protested against implementing the imperial ban against Luther and religious changes and hence were known as *protestantes*. Luther had supported their suppression of the Peasants' Revolt (1524-25) and blessed their political and military leagues (Torgau [1526] and Schmalkaden [1531], united under the Augsburg Confession [1530] composed by Philipp Melancthon [1497-1560]). With assistance from the French, they proved so strong that despite a temporary imperial victory at Mühlberg in 1547, Charles V was forced to grant the Lutheran rulers official tolerance by the Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555). It attempted to freeze the confessional divisions within the Empire as of the year 1552. When the Catholic emperor Ferdinand II (1619-37) tried to roll back the gains made by Lutherans after 1552 he sparked the Thirty Years War (1618-48). It brought in France, Denmark, and Sweden on the side to the Lutherans and ended with selecting the status in 1624 as normative and granting toleration also to the Calvinists – Peace of Westphalia (1648). The Lutheran reformation spread to the Scandinavian kingdoms: Denmark, Norway, and Iceland under Christian III (1534-59) and Sweden and Finland under Gustav I Vasa (1523-60). The ideas of Luther were picked up and expanded upon by the radical Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (c. 1486-1541) in Wittenberg, Zürich, Basel, and elsewhere. The advocacy of adult baptism and of violence to install the reign of the "saints" by Thomas Müntzer (1489/90-1525) during the Peasants' Revolt and by Jan Beuckelson ["King David"] (1509-36) in Münster (1534-35) resulted in their executions. It also led in reaction to an apolitical Anabaptism under the leadership of Menno Simons (1469-1561). Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) and Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75) in Zürich, Martin Butzer (1491-1551) in Strassburg and Cambridge, Jan Łaski (1490-1560) in East Frisia, England, and Poland, and Jean Calvin (1509-64) in Strassburg and Geneva sought to eliminate the remnants of Catholicism – known as Reformed Protestantism or the Second Reformation. Their message spread -- in the Swiss Cantons by negotiations and warfare, Zwingli being killed on the battlefield. In France a series of nine civil wars (1562–98) led to the granting of toleration to the Huguenots by Henry IV (1589-1610) with the Edict of Nantes (1598), that was rescinded by Louis XIV (1643-1715) with the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1685. Resistance to the efforts of Philip II (Duke of Burgundy, 1555-98) to stamp out Calvinism erupted in the Revolt of the Netherlands (1567-1609) that resulted in the division of the lands into the Catholic southern Spanish Netherlands and the predominantly Calvinist-led northern United Provinces. Under the leadership of John Knox (c. 1505-72) a Presbyterian form of Calvinism came to dominate Scotland. In the Empire the rulers of the Pfalz in 1563 and Brandenburg in 1613 also adopted Reformed theology and polity, as did important nobles in Hungary. In England Henry VIII (1509-47) initially opposed Lutheran ideas, receiving from Leo X in 1521 the title "Defender of the Faith." But failure to obtain a papal annulment of his marriage (1509) to Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) led him to enact royal supremacy over the church in England (1534). He placed the country on a trajectory that led to the adoption of Protestant ideas by his heirs who retained

Catholic hierarchical structures but embraced a modified Calvinist theology. Edward VI (1547-53) imposed the revised Book of Common Prayer (1552) and the Forty-two Articles (1553). After an attempt by Mary I (1553-58) to restore Catholicism, Elizabeth I (1558-1603) continued the process of imposing Protestantism by having legislated the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity (1559) and the Thirty-nine Articles (1563, revised 1571). A more radical form of Protestantism eventually found a temporary home in Poland. Calvin executed in Geneva in 1553 the anti-Trinitarian Miguel Servet (1509/11-53). Lelio Sozzini (1525-62) and his nephew Fausto (1539-1604) adopted and furthered Servet's ideas. Their disciples, known as Socinians, set up headquarters in the town of Raków in 1601, but were expelled in 1660.

Modern scholarship has modified this narrative. Much of what became Protestantism had its roots in the late medieval church where reforms were already afoot. A Christo-centric spirituality known as the "Modern Devotion," a revival of scriptural and patristic scholarship using humanistic methods, a call to return to the ancient church as a model, a greater prominence given to Augustinian theology, increased preaching, challenges to papal supremacy coming from councils and kings, a reform of religious orders, and the popularity of lay confraternities – most of these trends found resonance in Protestantism. The Church on the eve of the Reformation was not in a state of grand decadence. Luther was not out to establish a new church, indeed, much of his early theology was consistent with what was being taught in German universities of the time. He merged his message with traditional German grievances against clerical and other abuses and thereby became a national hero. Instead of one Reformation begun by Luther, there were multiple reformations, varying according to locales and leadership. Among his disciples there were disagreements and only with difficulty could most finally agree on the teachings of the *Book of Concord* (1580). Some of Luther's early ideas had to be modified later when they were taken to their logical conclusions by his disciples. The authority of Scripture and one's right to interpret it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit became the authority of Luther's particular interpretations and the acceptance of certain traditions. His teachings on the Lord's Supper varied (consubstantiation, ubiquity, impanation, etc.) and disagreement on the Real Presence among his disciples caused deep divisions in the Protestant movement. His assertion of the supremacy of grace and absence of free will in the process of salvation implied a double predestination: some to salvation, others to damnation. For pastoral reasons he toned down predestination to damnation. The priesthood of the faithful and their right to choose their ministers were restricted to their right to have a voice in the choice of only trained and ordained ministers approved by the local lord who supervised the church. Elite groups manipulated the calls for reform to expand control over religious affairs and to confiscate church property. Most of the imperial free cities adopted Lutheranism after some turmoil. In smaller towns and rural villages the local territorial lord often imposed Protestantism. But changes in beliefs and practices were usually gradual, built on earlier developments, and had to overcome resistance through a systematic imposition of a confessional identity. In Scandinavia and England the process took generations to complete. The changes resulted in a more patriarchal family structure, expanded education, public welfare, and changes in church worship and polity. Due to the support of Catholic rulers who backed the work of reforming bishops, the decrees of the Council of Trent, the vigilance of the inquisitors, and the ministries of the such religious orders as the Capuchins and Jesuits, Protestantism never gained a foothold in Iberia and Italy.

Bibliography:

P. BENEDICT, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, New Haven 2002.

A. G. DICKENS and J. TONKIN, *A Historiography of the Reformation*, Cambridge MA 1985.

C. HAIGH, *The English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors*, Oxford 1993.

H. J. HILLERBRAND, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. Oxford 1996.

D. MACCULLOCH, *The Reformation: A History*, New York 2003.

R. W. SCRIBNER and C. S. DIXON, *The German Reformation*, 2nd ed. [Studies in European History], New York 2003.

Nelson H. Minnich