COMPANION GUIDE FOR

THIS CHANGED EVERYTHING

500 Years of the Reformation

Study Materials in 14 Sessions

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Welcome to the TCE Companion Guide

This Changed Everything: 500 Years of the Reformation is a three-part documentary series produced by Christian History Institute in association with Global Story2 Films, Lathika International Film and Entertainment, and Midgett Productions. The series covers the history of the Reformation and its aftermath and offers critical analysis about its relation to important issues facing the church today. Over twenty historians, theologians, and clergy contribute their expert commentary to this project. This companion guide is designed to accompany the video series, allowing the viewer to dig deeper into the history of the Reformation and explore its contemporary implications.

This guide is flexibly designed for both individual study and small group discussion. The Digging Deeper section contains a one-page article reviewing the material from each act and providing hyperlinks to further reading from the extensive archives of *Christian History* magazine. The Discussion section consists of 7–10 questions for each act to facilitate conversation in a small group or classroom setting. The range of suggested questions is broad so leaders can choose questions that will work best for their group. This guide is designed for a 14-part curriculum, but it can easily be adapted by combining shorter segments.

Why Should I Care About the Reformation?

The Reformation is more than a fascinating period of history—it significantly impacted the formation of Western civilization. The questions reformers raised remain critical for the church today. Like the reformers, we must still discern what or who is our ultimate authority. We continue to seek understanding about what it means to be saved by grace through faith, even when we know that faith without works is dead. We persist in debating the meaning of baptism and communion, the role of Scripture and of the clergy, and the definition of the true church. We continue to struggle with the relationship between church and state. This series is not only a journey into our past but also an essential exercise for discerning how we are to live as Christians in a divided church.

In the last 500 years, the church has grown comfortable with ever-increasing divisions. While the reformers brought about desperately needed moral reform and a renewed emphasis on God's grace, they also brought up a whole new set of questions. Is a divided church in conflict with Jesus' prayer for unity, found in John 17? Can we remember what binds us together and embrace one another as one, *so that the world might believe in him?* Can we hold truth in high regard, even as we show respect for those who reach different conclusions? Are there truths worth speaking and standing for no matter what the cost?

Our Approach

Our approach is journalistic, engaging the history of the Reformation from various perspectives and asking experts to debate the issues. The experts interviewed for the series represent a wide range of Christian traditions and theological positions, including Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist traditions. Our purpose is to facilitate informed thought, prayer, discussion, and debate.

Additional Resources

Click here for a link to an extensive timeline of Reformation history.

Click here for some maps of Reformation era Europe.

The Association of Religion Data Archives provides a useful Family Tree of Christian denominations that gives an overview of how various denominations are related. The development of denominations is complex and there are disputes regarding where to place some groups within the tree; therefore, this is more of a big picture overview than an exact representation.

Setting the Scene

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples to take his message to the ends of the earth. Over the next 350 years, Christianity was transformed from a despised and persecuted sect of Judaism into the established religion of the Roman Empire. With this miraculous success came great power and a world of temptation. The political power of the church was increasingly centered in Rome and in the institution of the papacy, which helped maintain orthodoxy and kept Christianity from splintering into hundreds of sects. But by the Middle Ages, many church leaders lived lavish lifestyles marked by greed, gluttony, and promiscuity. Positions of power were bought and sold in a corrupt system built for insiders. The church held authority over every aspect of citizens' lives, including the life to come.

Calls for reform during the Middle Ages did not begin with Martin Luther. As early as the twelfth century, the Waldensian movement in France had argued for a return to what they perceived to be a more authentic Christianity. They gathered in small house-churches and made the Bible available to laypeople. The movement was eventually declared heretical, but other reform movements remained within the church's walls as monastic orders. The Franciscan Order was founded by Francis of Assisi in an effort to bring humility and spirituality back to an increasingly power-hungry and worldly church. Other orders such as the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites followed up on those efforts.

By the late Middle Ages, some theologians argued that a growing body of traditional practices and doctrinal innovations built up over centuries had obscured and perverted the gospel message. In a world where very few had access to the Scriptures, believers were dependent on church hierarchy to interpret the faith for them. Some who were familiar with the Scriptures believed that many of the church's central doctrines had strayed from the message espoused by Jesus and his disciples.

About a hundred years before Luther was born, Englishman John Wycliffe challenged the authority of the pope and called into question the validity of some of the church's central doctrines, such as transubstantiation. About 30 years after Wycliffe's death, Jan Hus was executed as a heretic in Bohemia for daring to challenge corrupt clergy and for arguing that the true church was made up of all the elect, not simply those baptized in a given location. But whereas the Lollard movement (followers of Wycliffe) and Hussite movement were effectively suppressed, the movement Luther started in 1517 set off a firestorm that would rock the church and transform all of Europe.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 1

Episode I

Act 1: A Monk's Conscience

Martin Luther was born into a fearful and changing world. Like all children of his time, he was baptized as soon after birth as possible. This was seen as critical in an age of rampant disease and high infant mortality. The church was the center of social and spiritual life for everybody. Piety revolved around the sacraments and the veneration of saints and relics.

In a world of widespread poverty and illiteracy, Luther's family was better off than most, and his parents had high expectations for their intelligent son. Using the bulk of their resources, they steered young Martin toward Latin school followed by law school. It seems the course of Luther's life had been set for him, but a severe thunder and lightning storm—perhaps the most consequential storm in history—would radically alter his direction. Luther was caught in the storm while traveling back to university after a visit with his family. As lightning struck nearby and trees fell across his path, Luther feared death and the judgment to follow. He cried out for help to St. Anne (mother of the Virgin Mary and patron saint of miners) and promised that he would become a monk, if only his life was spared.

Within months, Luther made good on his foxhole promise and became a zealous monk of the Augustinian Order. He adhered closely to all the practices and rules of monastic life, participating in acts of self-mortification and confessing his sins once or twice every day. But Luther became increasingly tormented and, despite all his efforts, was plagued by the belief that God would not accept him. Luther's confessor (his superior in the monastery) Johannes Staupitz recognized Luther's torment and counseled him to trust God's mercy in spite of his sinfulness. Believing Luther needed to get his focus off of himself, Staupitz first sent Luther on a pilgrimage to Rome and then to study and teach theology at the University of Wittenberg.

At Wittenberg, Luther had time to study and meditate deeply on the Scriptures in preparation for his lectures. Spurred by his experiences in the monastery and by the rampant corruption he witnessed in Rome, Luther sought a deeper understanding of the Gospel message. While studying the book of Romans, one passage in particular stood out: *"For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith'"* (Romans 1:17 NIV). Luther came to understand this passage to mean that human beings are incapable of making themselves righteous in the eyes of God, but rather God saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, without any works or merits involved. This understanding of Scripture eventually led him to question many of the practices and doctrines of the medieval church.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 2

Act 2: A Monk's Conviction

Despite Jesus' radical teaching about the upside-down nature of God's kingdom—where the last are first and the first are last—the medieval church largely adopted the social and political structure of feudalism with its rigid hierarchy of privileged aristocrats at the top and powerless peasants at the bottom. The Bishop of Rome (the pope) was seen as the final authority in the church, an absolute monarch responsible only to God. Positions in the church were highly prized for the wealth and prestige they brought. Those who questioned official church teaching could be accused of heresy and subject to the death penalty. Heresy was seen as a contagion, an insidious disease that could destroy the entire community if not dealt with harshly.

But change was in the air, evidenced by the Renaissance and Christian Humanism—the latter a movement that was influenced and championed by German theologian Desiderius Erasmus. Meanwhile, the economic situation was shifting, empowering a growing middle class. The new technology of the printing press brought information to the masses including a proliferation of translations of the Bible. All of this change coincided with simmering frustration with the church's leadership.

Perhaps the pinnacle of church corruption came with the election of Pope Leo X. Leo was a son of the powerful de Medici family. He was known for his extravagant spending and poor management skills. (He is alleged to have said, "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it.") It was his scheme to sell indulgences as a way to raise money for the building of Saint Peter's Basilica that finally brought the discontentment with the papacy to a boil.

While serving as a professor at Wittenberg, Martin Luther caught wind of a traveling preacher named Johann Tetzel who was sent by his bishop, Albert of Brandenburg, to sell indulgences in order to raise money for both the bishop and the pope. His pitch came complete with a stage show meant to convict parishioners about the perils of purgatory. He preached that, for a donation, one could shorten or even eliminate time in purgatory for oneself or a loved one. Appalled by this crude manipulation, Luther could not remain silent. In response he wrote and posted his famous 95 theses, condemning the sale of indulgences. If not for the printing press, his act may have gone largely unnoticed outside the local community. But Luther's words soon spread far and wide until finally they reached the eyes of Pope Leo X himself.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 3

Act 3: A Monk's Courage

Although the 95 theses mainly addressed the practice of selling indulgences, they also hinted at some of Luther's new theological understandings. Luther began to expound on these ideas with his students and fellow monks. He taught that Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) should be the basis of church doctrine, thus calling into question the tradition through which the church interpreted Scripture. Luther denounced as unscriptural any doctrine that implied that salvation could be earned by partaking in the sacraments. He also taught that all believers are priests and have direct access to God's grace. The heart of Luther's teaching was that those who trust in Christ have no reason to fear God's judgment. God freely gives salvation to all who believe because Christ's righteousness is given (or imputed) to them by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*).

Luther's teaching was provocative, and before long the pope sent his emissary, Johann Eck, to debate him. Eck painted Luther as a heretic in the mold of Jan Hus who was executed a century earlier. Luther did not back down. He was strident and sometimes foul, using colorful insults against his opponent. Luther's colleague and fellow priest, Philipp Melancthon, was a strong supporter of Luther's cause, but his style was more moderate.

Luther's intransigence led to a papal bull (or letter), ordering the monk to recant or face excommunication. But Luther still refused to back down. On the contrary, he publicly threw the papal bull into a bonfire! Pope Leo X was left with no choice but to excommunicate the renegade monk, a sentence that would lead to execution. However, the pope needed the cooperation of Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, in order to execute Luther. In these changing times, such cooperation was not assured.

In 1521, Emperor Charles V invited Luther to yet another debate, this time at the Diet (or Assembly) of Worms, the legislative assembly of the empire. Luther was invited to a so-called debate, but he found himself confronted with a final demand: "Recant or face the consequences!" Under threat of execution, Luther boldly stood for his understanding of Scripture. The assembly condemned Luther but could not yet arrest him, since the emperor had promised Luther safe passage back to Wittenberg, but Luther was now an outlaw, which meant anyone could kill him without consequences.

It seemed Luther would suffer the inevitable fate of countless heretics before him except for the dramatic last minute intervention of Prince Frederick, the Elector of Saxony. Frederick changed the course of history by sending troops to intercept Luther and take him to Wartburg Castle, where he was given sanctuary. Luther was in a sort of protective custody, and although he despised his confinement, he used his time wisely, translating the New Testament into the German language. Luther spent ten months in the castle, only coming out of hiding after the death of Pope Leo X.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 4

Act 4: A Monk's Counterpart

At roughly the same time that Martin Luther was leading a reform movement in Germany, accomplished scholar and priest Huldrych Zwingli was starting his own movement in Switzerland. While serving as a priest at Zurich's Cathedral, Zwingli became increasingly convinced that the church had gone astray. Like Luther, Zwingli rejected the absolute authority of the pope and held to Scripture alone, but Zwingli's reading of Scripture led him in some different directions than his German counterpart.

Zwingli championed many innovations in the church. He believed the church's official lectionary of weekly readings limited the congregation's ability to understand the Scriptures. Instead, he practiced expository preaching through one book of the Bible at a time. One of Zwingli's biggest acts of defiance was to reject the church's teaching on priestly celibacy, and in 1522, he secretly married a local widow, Anna Reinhard. (Luther likewise rejected celibacy, marrying Katherine von Bora in 1525.) The Reformer's stance against mandatory celibacy for clergy would lead to a revolution in Western society's beliefs about marriage. Zwingli was eventually censured for his actions and removed from his position, but not for long. Like Luther, Zwingli found that many of the common people and their rulers were sympathetic to his ideas.

After some debate, the Zurich city council decided to adopt Zwingli's reforms. They replaced the traditional Mass with a simpler worship service. Since Zwingli rejected any practice not specifically endorsed by Scripture, the Zurich Church removed all statues and ornamentation and banned music from the services. These radical departures from the traditions of the church, along with Zwingli's willingness to take up arms to defend his cause, led Luther to label Zwingli a zealot.

As Zwingli's ideas spread across Switzerland, battle lines were drawn as some Swiss cantons (states) adopted the new Reformation principles while others remained loyal to Rome. Politics intervened again when Emperor Charles V issued the Edict of Toleration, allowing the Reformation to spread unhindered throughout the Holy Roman Empire. But toleration would not last long, and three years later the edict was suspended at the Diet of Speyer. The princes who supported the Reformation protested this ruling and unwittingly gave birth to a new name for their movement . . . *Protestant*.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 5

Act 5: A Monk's Competition

A decade after the start of the Reformation, the Protestant movement split into two streams, Lutheran and Reformed. The leaders of each were at odds, harshly criticizing each other's methods, practices, and interpretations of Scripture.

When Martin Luther first proclaimed *sola scriptura* he thought there was one obvious interpretation of Scripture that all reasonable people would agree upon, but Zwingli proved him wrong. Luther risked his life speaking out against traditions and doctrines that he believed contradicted Scripture and perverted Christ's message. But for Zwingli, Luther hadn't gone far enough, and was still beholden to "superstitions" of the Roman Church. Luther's response was to accuse Zwingli of heresy.

Such division is exactly what the Catholic leadership expected. They argued that without the teaching tradition of the church, Christian unity could not be maintained. Without Rome's authority, there was no mechanism for settling disputes other than breaking away and starting independent churches. Personalities and culture played a role in Protestant schism, but the central issue dividing the movement was the proper understanding of the Eucharist or Communion—ironically, a word that literally means "sharing in common."

The Catholic Church taught that the words Jesus spoke to his disciples at the Last Supper, "Take, eat, this is my body given for you," were to be understood literally (see Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19). The mystery of bread and wine transformed in substance into the flesh and blood of Christ during the Mass is called transubstantiation. Martin Luther modified this doctrine by teaching that Christ was truly present in, with, and under the Communion elements even though the substance of the elements does not change. Luther's teaching is called consubstantiation. Zwingli horrified Lutherans and Catholics alike by regarding the Eucharist as a purely symbolic meal in memory of Christ's sacrificial death. Zwingli's memorialism was a profound commemoration, but he read Christ's words as a metaphor. The practice that Jesus initiated—at least in part to demonstrate his unity with his disciples and their unity with each other—had now become the greatest cause of disunity among 16th-century reformers.

Some leaders, including Philip of Hesse, a German nobleman who supported Luther, recognized the danger of a fractured Protestant movement. In 1529, Hesse arranged a meeting in Marburg, Germany with Luther, Zwingli, and their respective cohorts. He hoped the Marburg Colloquy would settle the disputes between the two camps and increase the Reformation's chances of success. Though they reached agreement on most issues, the two sides could not agree on the Eucharist. The chance to unite the movements was lost, and a pattern of contention and schism was set for the future of the movement.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 6

Episode II

Act 1: The King

The Reformation spread quickly across the European continent; however, it did not immediately take firm hold in England, despite the efforts of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale. King Henry VIII, staunchly Catholic, had written a scathing critique of Luther's 95 theses, for which the pope granted him the title, "Defender of the Faith." But the good relationship between Henry and Rome would soon change dramatically.

Henry's father had come to power through a long struggle between two noble families who contended for the throne, and he was committed to securing the Tudor dynasty through a male heir. With special permission from Pope Julius II, Henry married his sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, after the death of her husband Arthur (Henry's older brother and the original heir to the throne). But seventeen years into Henry and Catherine's marriage, they had produced only one child, a daughter named Mary. Desperate for a male heir, Henry turned to a vivacious and ambitious young woman named Anne Boleyn. Henry petitioned the new pope, Clement VII, for permission to divorce Catherine. But, the pope was caught in a complicated political quandary, and so he stalled . . . for years. Despite the efforts of English Cardinal Thomas Wolsey on Henry's behalf, the papal annulment did not seem to be coming. Frustrated, King Henry and his advisors declared that the English monarch—not the Roman pope—was the rightful head of the Church in England. In response, the pope excommunicated Henry. Now the head of his own church, Henry appointed Thomas Cranmer archbishop, and Cranmer soon annulled Henry's marriage to Catherine, allowing him to marry Anne.

Despite his political break with Rome, Henry's own doctrine and religious practices remained largely Catholic. However, several strong supporters of the Reformation surrounded the King, including Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Cromwell (Henry's chief minister), and even Anne Boleyn. Cranmer and Cromwell took advantage of Henry's pragmatism and lust for power to steer him in directions that ultimately benefited the Reformation. Henry installed English-language Bibles in all the churches for nationalistic reasons—he didn't want his people relying on the Roman (Latin) Bible. He also closed England's numerous and powerful monasteries and redistributed their land and treasure, thus enriching the royal coffers and strengthening his political position. Anyone who dared to protest Henry's actions was tortured and executed.

But Henry's troubles were not over. He still had no male heir as Queen Anne Boleyn had given birth to one daughter, Elizabeth, and then miscarried a son. Once again, Henry looked for a better prospect, and his eye landed on lady-in-waiting Jane Seymour. Henry decided to rid himself of another wife. He accused Anne Boleyn of adultery and had her beheaded. Henry was then free to marry Jane Seymour, the third of his six wives.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 7

Act 2: The Radicals

Like Pope Leo X and Martin Luther before him, Huldrych Zwingli also faced an uprising in his ranks. Once again, the conflict revolved around the interpretation of Scripture and just how far the Reformation should go. As radical as Zwingli's changes were, there were some in his community who thought he had not taken things far enough, including his own students, Felix Manz and Conrad Grebel. Using Zwingli's own interpretive formula, they rejected the practice of infant baptism because they could not find clear examples of it in the New Testament. Manz and Grebel were concerned that automatic entry into the church at birth led to nominal faith. For them, baptism was an adult choice made by those who were serious about their commitment.

The church had baptized infants since at least the second century. The medieval church taught that the sacrament of baptism brought spiritual rebirth and adoption into God's family, although sins committed later in life would require acts of penance. Luther and Zwingli both continued the practice of infant baptism, but their teaching about it differed from Catholic teaching. Zwingli viewed baptism as akin to the Old Testament practice of circumcision, a mark of entrance into the covenantal community but not a means of salvation in and of itself. Baptism was also a sign of citizenship. When infants were baptized, their names were officially recorded by the state. Rejecting baptism was tantamount to sedition. When the Anabaptists (meaning "re-baptizers") refused to have their children baptized and began to baptize each other as adults, they were marked for persecution by Catholics and Protestants alike.

Anabaptists also had other radical interpretations of Scripture that led to their persecution. While some used violence and even led the bloody Münster rebellion, many Anabaptists taught pacifism. Looking to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), they believed Christians should never participate in war or violence, even against the Muslim Turks who threatened to invade Europe. Furthermore, Anabaptists rejected the idea of a rigid church hierarchy. They promoted a looser and more democratic structure where members had a say in matters relating to the church.

Zwingli condemned the Anabaptists as heretics, and the Zurich city council took action to quash the growing movement. Although Anabaptists drew on many key Reformation ideas, they believed the reformers had not gotten to the core of the problem: the intertwining relationship between church and state.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 8

Act 3: The Irony

Ever since the Roman Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the 4th century, the church and state had an increasingly cooperative relationship within European Christendom. Anabaptists argued that the church must go back to the model of the early church in order to avoid the influence of worldly power. Anabaptists also challenged automatic church membership through infant baptism, insisting individuals ought to be free to choose church membership as adults. In doing so, they paved the way for two concepts at the heart of democratic societies today: the separation of church and state and religious liberty.

On the contrary, Zwingli viewed the state's power as an asset to the Reformation. The Zurich city council agreed with him that the Anabaptists had to be stopped. They forbade Anabaptist groups from meeting and insisted they have their children baptized. In defiance, a group of Anabaptists met in the home of Felix Manz and baptized each other as adults. Zurich's government then expelled the Anabaptist leaders and fined their followers. As the movement continued to spread, the state resorted to harsher tactics, imprisoning and even executing Anabaptists, often with the reformers support and approval. Many Anabaptists were peasants, and persecution drove them even further down the economic and social ladder. They took seriously the words of Jesus that the world would hate his followers. For Anabaptists, persecution was a sign that they were living up to Jesus' command, "Take up your cross and follow me."

Martin Luther's view of the Anabaptists was initially moderate, but as the movement grew, he too supported persecution. First Zwingli and now the Anabaptists proved that interpretation of the Bible and agreement among Christians would not be simple. But if the Reformation unleashed abundant schism, it also unleashed now cherished concepts such as individual liberty, freedom of conscience, and freedom of association.

The non-hierarchical nature of the Anabaptist movement led to a diversity of Anabaptist groups, each with its own interpretation of Scripture. One group that promoted the overthrow of the political authorities through violence took over the city of Münster, Germany, believing they were ushering in the second coming of Christ. Joint Protestant and Catholic forces retook the city. These extremists contributed to even more persecution for the larger body of Anabaptists, who were considered guilty by association. One Anabaptist leader, Menno Simons, who gave his name to the Mennonite Church, was appalled by the violence at Münster and worked tirelessly through his writing and teaching to make pacifism a central tenet of most Anabaptist groups.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 9

Act 4: The Counter-Reformation

The church is always reforming itself in some sense, and the late Middle Ages had seen significant reform activity in response to the church's growing corruption. Within the Italian Reformation, a group known as the Spirituali gained some traction in high ranks of the church during the 16th century. Influenced by early church fathers as well as the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, the Spirituali, led by Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, emphasized personal spiritual renewal through God's grace which comes by faith. They also emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers and desired to work towards reunification with the Protestants.

In 1537, Pope Paul III gave Contarini permission to set up a reform commission, which uncovered widespread moral corruption within the church. Though the pope never implemented the commission's recommendation, he did allow the formation of the Jesuit Order by Ignatius of Loyola. Jesuits helped to confront clerical abuses, reinvigorated spirituality in the church, and ironically, were instrumental in slowing or halting the spread of Protestantism in some areas of Europe, as many people were drawn back to a reinvigorated Catholic Church.

In 1541, Emperor Charles V convened the Colloquy of Ratisbon, a series of meetings between leading Protestants and Catholics for the purpose of discussing reunification. The two sides achieved some agreement, including a mutually agreed upon formulation of justification by faith. The group's final document was presented to the pope and to Martin Luther, but both rejected it. The Colloquy failed, and Cardinal Contarini died shortly thereafter. The tide was turning as more conservative leaders of the Catholic Church asserted their dominance.

The Roman Inquisition began in 1542 to root out heresy. By the time it ended, some 800 people were executed including many Protestants. It was in this atmosphere that Pope Paul III convened the Council of Trent (1545–1563). The Council was intended to address corruption and deal conclusively with the arguments of the Protestant reformers. It condemned greedy clergy and banned the sale of indulgences. It also called for more clerical education, regulated devotional practices to make them conform to church teaching, and called for a standardization of the liturgy. Some council members—including Cardinal Reginald Pole, a member of the Spirituali—were sympathetic to the views of the reformers. While the council was still in progress, Pole lost the papal election of 1550 by just one vote! In the end, the Council rejected the central doctrines of the Reformation as they understood them, calling them anathema ("accursed"). The Council reaffirmed that tradition, as well as Scripture, was a source of divine revelation and that the works wrought in us by the Holy Spirit were worthy of acceptance by God, so that our final justification is not by faith alone. All hopes of reuniting the fractured church were dashed, and the gulf between Catholics and Protestants widened.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 10

Episode III

Act 1: The Theologian

Toward the end of his life, Luther made many bitter remarks about his fellow reformers and about others, including the Jews, whom he infamously eviscerated in several writings including, *The Jews and Their Lies*. But there was one man for whom Luther had kind words. French theologian John Calvin (1509–1564), a well educated, middle-class Frenchman, represented a new generation of reformers. In 1536, he published one of the greatest works of the Reformation, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The *Institutes* coherently brought together key themes of the Reformation and defended it against distortions that had arisen.

Bookish Calvin never set out to be a leader in the Reformation. While traveling to Strasbourg, he was diverted to Geneva where he met Guillaume Farel, a leader of Geneva's struggling reform movement who begged for Calvin's help. In Geneva, Calvin was not only an administrator but also a pastor, preaching and teaching every day of the week. In his spare time, he created a new liturgy and catechism for the Genevan church. He focused on the edifying preaching of Scripture and removed any elements that could detract from that focus. Calvin stripped the churches bare of statues, and limited the use of music in the church to unison a capella singing.

In Geneva, a body of church leaders called the Consistory met weekly to deal with behavioral issues involving the citizenry/church members. Calvin's idea was to encourage Christians to live faithfully and in accountability to their community; however, some saw this as petty intrusion. Calvin likened Geneva's magistrates to the ancient kings of Israel and the pastors to its prophets. Though Calvin had significant influence in Geneva, he also struggled frequently with the city council.

More than 30 years after the beginning of the Reformation, the movement continued to fracture. Concerned about this lack of unity, Calvin worked with Zwingli's successor, Henry Bullinger, to seek consensus on issues dividing the two camps, especially the Eucharist. Calvin believed that Christ was present in a special, not only symbolic, way during the Eucharistic celebration, but he did not believe Christ was bodily present in the bread and wine. Calvin's view came to be known as Spiritual Presence. Calvin and Bullinger's efforts were successful, and the *Consensus Tigurinus* represented a rare coming together of different schools of Protestant thought.

Today Calvin is most famous for his association with the doctrine of predestination. When some called this generally accepted doctrine into question, Calvin was compelled to defend what he saw as a biblical doctrine. In later years, Jacob Arminius would make the concept of predestination a cause for controversy.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 11

Act 2: The Bloodshed

In 1547, King Henry VIII's death left England with a confused political and religious legacy. Henry was succeeded by nine-year-old Edward VI, his son by third wife Jane Seymour. Edward had been tutored by reform-minded teachers like Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. When he came to power, Edward and his advisors instituted reforms similar to those started in Zurich by Huldrych Zwingli. The Anglican churches were stripped of ornamentation, priests were allowed to marry, and the *Book of Common Prayer* was revised to reflect a Calvinist view of the Eucharist. These reforms were not popular; nonetheless, the Protestants were persistent in their mission to purify the church as quickly as possible.

Their sense of urgency turned out to be prophetic. Six years into his reign, Edward VI died at the age of 15, and his staunchly Catholic half-sister, Mary, succeeded him. Queen Mary I, the daughter of Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had always rejected her father's claim of supremacy over the English Church, although she was coerced into signing a document affirming it. She believed the rightful head of the universal church was the Roman Pontiff, and as queen, Mary was determined to return the English Church to the Roman fold. Mary's grievances against the Protestants went beyond the political and religious realms to the personal. After Cranmer annulled Henry's marriage to her mother, Mary was declared illegitimate. Her father had little contact with her for years and forbade her from seeing her mother, the former Queen Catherine, even on her deathbed. Now a queen in her own right, Mary had an opportunity to set things straight.

When Mary came to power, many Protestant-leaning bishops fled the country, with good reason. In 1554, Mary began persecuting Protestants, resulting in the execution of 280 people and earning the queen the unflattering nickname Bloody Mary. The elderly Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was arrested and tortured psychologically (and perhaps physically). Cranmer eventually broke and signed documents recanting his Protestant beliefs. However, Mary showed Cranmer no mercy and did not follow the custom of releasing a heretic who recanted. Just before his execution, Cranmer stood before the large crowd and boldly declared his repentance for denying his Protestant beliefs, and then he thrust his right hand into the fire, the hand with which he had signed the recantation documents. Cranmer died at the stake and Mary had her revenge, but like her predecessor, Mary's reign was truncated due to illness. She died in 1558 at the age of 42.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 12

Act 3: The Puritans

In 1558, Queen Elizabeth I—daughter of Henry VIII and his Protestant wife Anne Boleyn—succeeded Queen Mary, and it wasn't long before she changed the kingdom's direction once again. Elizabeth wanted to reinstate the reforms begun under Edward, but at first she didn't want to antagonize the country's large Catholic population. She instituted a compromise in hopes of appeasing both Protestants and Catholics: the 39 Articles of Faith of the Church of England. The document reflected a clearly Protestant understanding of Christianity, but Elizabeth also kept many rituals and practices associated with Catholicism. However, when a Catholic uprising developed in the north of England in 1569, Elizabeth responded by indiscriminately persecuting Catholics, even those not involved in the rebellion. Simply attending Mass became a crime punishable by death, and hundreds were executed over the course of her reign.

Elizabeth also persecuted some of her fellow Protestants. One group within the church complained that Elizabeth's reforms had not gone far enough. They called themselves "the Godly" but were more commonly known as the Puritans. They argued the church had abandoned truth in exchange for expediency. They contended that to hold on to Catholic practices was to cling to "popish rags." They also rejected the idea of political rulers controlling the church, a complaint that did not sit well with Queen Elizabeth I who quickly acted to suppress them. Eventually the Puritans and their Separatist cousins fled to North America where they established colonies based on their convictions.

The ongoing political tension and religious controversy continued to build through the second half of the 16th century, not only in England but also throughout Europe. There had already been a great deal of bloodshed surrounding the Reformation, but the worst was yet to come.

In 1618, roughly a hundred years after Luther wrote his 95 theses, a series of wars broke out in Europe, known collectively as the Thirty Years War. The conflict started when Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II attempted to return the Protestant territories in his realm to Catholicism. In response the Protestant states banded together to form the Protestant Union. Brutal warfare ensued. What started as a religious feud soon became more about political dominance in Europe, with old rivals jockeying for power. The war devastated the continent, killing millions.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 13

Act 4: The New World

In England, the disdained Puritans and Separatists longed to escape a world that seemed to be collapsing around them. In 1620, a group of them boarded a ship called the Mayflower and headed for what they hoped would be a better world. These early American pilgrims desired to establish what they believed was the one true church. In New England, the Puritans established a state church called the Congregational Church, the only sanctioned religion in the territory where the Puritans dominated. But soon after reaching the shores of America, the Puritans were joined by other groups fleeing persecution. In Pennsylvania William Penn and the Quakers established what Penn called "the holy experiment:" an attempt to create a religious utopia based on Quaker teaching. The Quakers were soon persecuted by the Puritans and other groups who desired to enforce doctrinal purity. Eventually, England's King Charles II wrote an order known as the King's Missive calling for an end to religious persecution in his colonies.

The Catholic Church had established a strong presence in large parts of South America, Central America, and parts of North America beginning in 1492. However, when Catholics later began emigrating to North America in large numbers, they too faced persecution in what had become a Protestant-dominated continent.

In 1786, led by efforts of the state's Baptist congregations, the Virginia General Assembly passed the Statute for Religious Freedom. The statute disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and guaranteed religious liberty to all, including Catholics, Jews, and all Protestant denominations. Although most 16th-century reformers would have been horrified by this pluralism, the concept of religious liberty can be linked to their ideas. In 1791, the newly formed United States of America followed Virginia's lead on church-state relations and enshrined the right to religious liberty in the First Amendment to its constitution. In North America, all of the major branches of the Reformation flourished in an atmosphere of unprecedented freedom, but they also continued to splinter into an endless array of competing camps, each fueled by the belief that they possessed a purer form of the gospel than the others.

DIGGING DEEPER: LESSON 14

Act 5: A New Era?

Five hundred years after the Reformation, its legacy gives cause for both celebration and lament. In the 21st century, the Catholic Church continues to wrestle with how to respond to the modern world and with the ongoing calls for change coming from within and without. Meanwhile, Protestant churches continue to rise, fall, multiply, and divide. By some estimates, there are 35,000 Protestant denominations worldwide. Some regard this diversity as natural or at least inevitable, but others believe that rampant factionalism is a regrettable outcome of the Reformation. In its zeal for doctrinal purity, did the Reformation promote unnecessary and harmful division? In the early 20th century, one group answered that question with an emphatic "yes." The modern ecumenical movement began on the mission field when Christian missionaries found that denominational divides hindered the spread of the gospel. Early on, the movement attempted to foster unity and increase cooperation between denominations so that the gospel could be preached more effectively.

Efforts at visible unity continued throughout the 20th century. In 1948, the World Council of Churches was formed as a fellowship of churches wishing to cooperate with each other. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) included the specific goal of working toward the reconciliation of all Christians. Its Decree on Ecumenism directed Catholics worldwide to engage with non-Catholic Christians and work toward unity. For the first time since Trent, the Catholic Church did not call Protestants "heretics," but rather "separated brethren." The Vatican has directly initiated dialogue in the Joint Commission on Lutheran-Catholic Unity. In 1999, the commission released a joint declaration stating that the two churches now "share a common understanding of God's grace through faith alone."

While unity may be desirable, many fear that it will come at the expense of true doctrine. defining "truth" continues to be a challenge.

In John 17, Jesus prays that his followers will be one, and this prayer raises difficult questions for those who live in the shadow of the Reformation. The Reformation provoked division and bloodshed, but it also unleashed unprecedented freedom and human progress. 500 years later, many celebrate the Reformation's theological epiphanies, its overthrow of oppressive hierarchies, its role in laying the groundwork for religious liberty, and much more. Only by understanding its past can the church move forward in a way that takes seriously both faithful doctrine and Christian unity.

Recommended Resources

General Reformation Resources
Lewis Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation, 1517-1559* (1985)
Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (1991)
Diarmaid McCulloch, *Reformation: A History* (2003)
Karin Maag and John Witvliet, eds., *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2004)
John H. Armstrong, *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper* (2007)
Hans Hillerbrand, *The Division of Christendom* (2007)
Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution* (2007)
James R. Payton, *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Common Misunderstandings* (2010)
Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation* (2012)
Frank A. James III, *Church History: Pre-Reformation to the Present* (2013)

Many primary sources related to the Reformation can be found at Christian Classics Ethereal Library, the H. Henry Meeter Center Post-Reformation Digital Library and the Medieval Sourcebook and the Modern History Sourcebook hosted at Fordham University. The History Guide has a good entry-level introduction to the Reformation with links to other sources. Pitts Theology Library at Emory University has a great collection of Reformation-era woodcuts; the Cranach Digital Library has resources related to the career and artwork of Lucas Cranach; and the National Gallery of Art has a good collection of Hans Holbein images.

Resources Related to Episode I

Books
Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (1950)
Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings, ed. John Dillenberger (1958)
Paul Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther* (1966)
Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (1973)
Mark Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren* (1975)
Mark Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles* (1983)
Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols* (1984)
Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* (1984)
W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought* (1994)
Karin Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe* (1995)
Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and the Reformation* (1998)
Richard Marius, *Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (1999)
Rudolf and Marilynn Markward, *Katharina Von Bora: A Reformation Life* (2002).
David Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (2002)
Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (2005)

James Kittleson, *Luther the Reformer* (2003)
Heiko Obermann, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (2006)
Merry Wisener-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (2008)
Martin Marty, *Martin Luther: a Life* (2008)
Thomas Brady, *German History in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650* (2009)
Timothy Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (2009)
Ernst Kroker, *Mother of the Reformation* (2013)

Videos from Vision Video
Here I Stand
Martin Luther (1953 black-and-white feature film)
Martin Luther (PBS documentary)
Luther (2003 feature film)
Luther—The Life, His Path, His Legacy
Opening the Door to Luther
Where Luther Walked
The Morning Star of Wittenberg—The Life of Katie Luther
The Martin Luther Story (a Torchlighters episode for children)
Zwingli and Calvin

Websites
You can read more about Luther's life at the German site Luther.de, and see a recreated transcript of the Diet of Worms at the Famous Trials website. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy has a good explanation of Luther's theology and an extensive list of secondary sources. And Project Wittenberg attempts to collect texts and information not only about Luther but later Lutheran theologians as well.

Resources Related to Episode II

Books
H. Outram Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (1970)
Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism* (1973)
Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (1973)
Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (1975)
John L. Ruth, *Conrad Grebel* (1975)
Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1980)
Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Anabaptists* (1984)
Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525* (1984)
A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1991)
J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (1991)
Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (1998)

George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (2000)
O'Malley, John W. *Trent and All That* (2000)
Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (2001)
David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (2001)
Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (2005)
Guy Bedouelle, *The Reform of Catholicism, 1480–1620* (2008)
James Simpson, *Burning to Read* (2010)
Joel F. Harrington, *The Faithful Executioner* (2013)
Peter Matheson, *Cardinal Contarini at Regensburg* (2014)

Videos from Vision Video
God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale
The William Tyndale Story (a Torchlighters episode for children)
The Radicals
Reformation Overview

Websites
Some selected Anabaptist historical websites include Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online), Global Anabaptist Wiki, and Anabaptists.org. Learn more about Anglican history at The Anglican Domain and Project Canterbury. Read the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent here and learn more about the Jesuits at Jesuits.org and the Inquisition at The Galileo Project (which has an additional list of helpful books.)

Resources Related to Episode III

Books
World Council of Churches, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (3 vols.: 1954, 1970, 2004)
François Wendel, *Calvin: Origin and Development of His Religious Thought* (1963)
Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967)
Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (1973)
Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation from Spain to Scandinavia* (1977)
Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (1983)
Alexandre *Ganoczy, The Young Calvin (1987)*
A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1991)
J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (1991)
Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (1995)
David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (1995)
Thomas Kocik, *Apostolic Succession in an Ecumenical Context* (1996)
Frank A. James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination* (1998)
Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (2000)
Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England 1547-1603* (2000)

Christopher Ellwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (2002)
Richard Muller, *After Calvin* (2003)
Scott Kisker, *Foundation for Revival* (2007)
David Hall and Peter Lillback, eds., *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes* (2008)
Frank Bremer, *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (2009)
Jacqueline Rose, *Godly Kingship in Restoration England* (2011)
Richard Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition* (2012)
Jon Balserak, *John Calvin as 16th-Century Prophet* (2014)
Michael Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever* (2014)
Bruce Gordon, *John Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion": A Biography* (2016)

Videos from Vision Video

Zwingli and Calvin
Saints and Strangers
We the People: The Character of a Nation
People of Faith: Christianity in America
The Intersection of Church and State
Gospel of Liberty
The Quakers: That of God in Everyone
Common Ground: What Protestants and Catholics Can Learn From Each Other

Websites

Read more about Calvin and the Reformed tradition at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, the Calvin Studies Society, and at The History Guide. Anglican history, again, is covered at The Anglican Domain and Project Canterbury. Resources at the World Council of Churches make a good introduction to what's up in the modern ecumenical movement, and a bibliography of ecumenism is at Ecumenism.net. The joint Catholic-Lutheran statement on justification can be found at the Vatican.