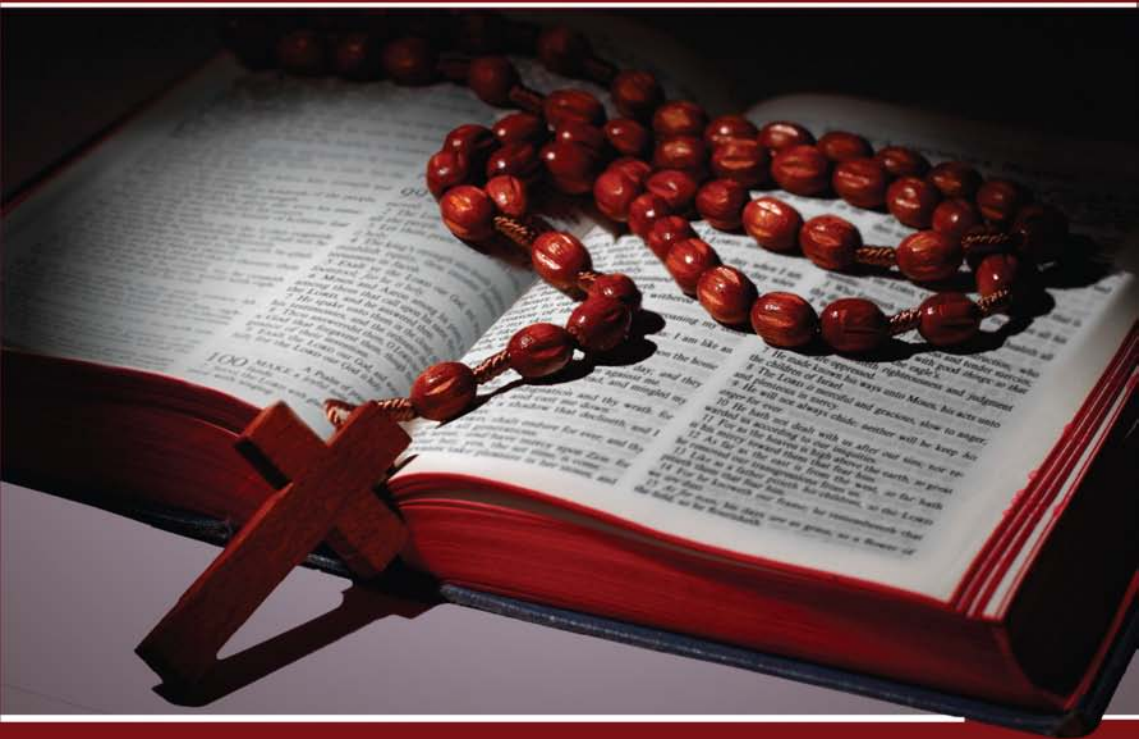
Heresy in the Roman Catholic Church

A History



Michael C. Thomsett

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Introduction: The Many Definitions of Heresy

> At the beginning it was essential for Christianity to make itself distinct from Judaism and from contemporary polytheistic pagan religions. As the young Church grew in numbers and evolved a more complex structure, there were also practical problems to do with keeping control over change and development, so that the Christian faith would not fragment into a thousand different forms.
>
> —G. R. Evans, *A Brief History of Heresy*, 2003

Christianity has never been of a single mind. In fact, from its earliest days, an unending debate has been going on throughout the faith as to exactly what Christian dogma should be, and what is true versus what is heretical. The one consistent policy, however, has been that heresy is a crime, and in fact the most serious crime a Christian can commit, because it is defined specifically as a crime against God. The Church's structure and organization have always been based on the need to ensure consensus among Christians on matters of doctrine.

The need for cohesion among Christians, and for consensus on doctrine, was present from the very beginning days of Christianity. One of the initial struggles for the new faith was to break away from Judaism. Many early sects (for example, the Kerinthians, Ebionites, Elchasaites and Mandeans) promoted a variation of Christianity conforming to Jewish law, and viewed the new faith as a schism within Judaism and not as a separate religion.

However, Christianity won its separate identity over time, and as part of its initial doctrine and procedures, determined that all Christians must agree completely with doctrine, or risk being shunned or worse, imprisoned or executed, for defying or questioning that doctrine. By the definition employed within the Roman Church, a "heretic" must be a Christian who challenges either the dogma of the Church or its policies, the "formal denial or doubt of any defined doctrine of the Catholic faith."[1]

Formulating a belief system at odds with this defined doctrine may lead to schism or to a group of people leaving the Christian faith altogether, or to an outspoken challenge from an individual or group. In the mind of the central Church based in Rome, any challenge or departure is *heresy* regardless of what motives underlie the act. A heretic may be someone who has decided that the true dogma involves a trinity, or that Christ was not divine, or that there are two separate powers, representing good and evil. A non–Christian cannot be accused of heresy under the Church definition. Only a Christian who defies the central dogma is capable of heretical thought.

This restriction defined the central theme of the Spanish Inquisition, which was largely an anti–Jewish movement. A practicing Jew cannot be a heretic. However, by law, Jews in Spain were required to either leave the country or convert to Christianity. The law was then amended to forbid Jews from leaving assigned ghetto areas, but they were also forbidden from trading with Christians. These restrictions left Jews no choice but to convert. However, once that happened they also came under the jurisdiction of the Church and its inquisitors. The primary accusation made against Spanish Jews was that they were secretly continuing to practice their original religion, an offense punishable by death. So the *Conversos* (Jews who converted to Christianity) of Spain became the main target of this Inquisition. It was necessary for the Spanish Jew to have converted to Christianity in order to be accused of heresy. And so it was in the late 15th century that the Spanish Inquisition went into full gear against the Conversos. In the minds of many within the Roman Church, all Conversos came under suspicion of secretly continuing to practice Jewish rituals.

Spanish Christians viewed the Conversos as failing to truly practice their newly-found religion of Christianity. So a "heretic" under this definition was anyone who secretly practiced a non–Christian faith rather than embrace the doctrines the Church mandated. The problem is broader and more complex when it involves not simply a disobedient group, but an actual breakaway from the central dogma. A schism presents a different manifestation of heresy, and at times has involved not only individuals but thousands of individuals.

Schisms result from relatively small points of order. The Catholic faith has a long history of trying to quell schisms, including the Great Schism leading to the establishment of Catholic versus Orthodox (West and East), each with its own head (pope and patriarch). A second major schism began with the Reformation led by Martin Luther, John Calvin and others. That in turn led to further breakaway groups. Today, there are over 800 million Protestants worldwide, or approximately one-third of the entire Christian Church. Every year, another 300 denominations appear and at the beginning of the 21st century, there were over 33,000 different Protestant denominations throughout the world.[2]

The proliferation of Christian sects demonstrates that the Roman Church has not succeeded in maintaining a central, singular authority on either dogma or policy within Christianity. Tragically, untold death and suffering have occurred in the name of God through the seven Crusades to the Middle East between 1095 and 1291, as well as the Albigensian Crusade from 1209 to 1229, in which an estimated one million people died and an entire region went into economic ruin, in the Church-managed effort to quell the movement of the Cathars in Languedoc.[3]

Even 400 years after the period of the Crusades, a final war was fought between Catholic and Protestant. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) was largely a conflict between the two sects, although other political and social conflicts made the war much more complex. This war could be viewed as the last Crusade and was one of the most costly in terms of human lives in European history. Many countries were bankrupted by the conflict and the combination of warfare and disease claimed between half and two-thirds of the population in many regions. Estimates range between 3 and 12 million total deaths throughout Europe.[4]

Finally, over 600 years, many versions of the Inquisition destroyed unknown numbers of lives, led to torture, exile, confiscation, and death for many accused of heresy. Victims included not only those who disagreed with Church dogma, but eventually expanded to Conversos (Jews in Spain accused of converting to Christianity but secretly continuing to practice Jewish rites), Lutherans, witches, alchemists, those accused of sexual immorality, and finally even scientists and artists. As the definition of heresy expanded over time, so did the scope of the Inquisition. It became so institutionalized throughout Europe that in many countries, it was a permanent fact of life. At any time, a jealous neighbor, business competitor, or even a relative could make an accusation of heresy. The accused were considered guilty until proven innocent and were not allowed access to testimony or even representation. In fact, those who came forth to vouch for an accused heretic were in danger of being accused of the same crime and sentenced to death at the stake. Today, the Inquisition no longer holds the power to put ordinary citizens on trial, imprison them, seize their land or execute them. So the Inquisition has turned inward and today (employing a new title) the office investigates and controls the behavior of its own clergy.

This book explores the history of heresy in the Roman Church over its entire history. From its inception, the Church has contended with disagreement within the ranks of Christians, and often has not even allowed debate. Even sincerely questioning dogma has been treated as a form of heresy. Questioning the judgment of the pope has also been treated as heretical. Both the pope and the Church at large continue to cling to the belief in infallibility,

meaning that in matters of faith, pope and Church are doing God's work and cannot be in error. To question either, the logical conclusion states, is heretical.

This idea — infallibility — has led to a rigid and uncompromising policy throughout much of the Church's history, including the position and policies of the Church today. The Church has been unwilling to discuss challenges because, it argues, the institution and its leader are infallible and *cannot* be second-guessed on matters of theology. Even one-time Church insiders like Martin Luther, who started out desiring to address and reform the blatant corruption within the Church, were never given voices for their concerns; Luther was given the choice of complying with the Church in every respect, or being condemned as a heretic and excommunicated. In this regard, it was infallibility itself that defined Luther as a heretic and created the Reformation movement. The refusal by Church leaders to enter into a dialogue with Luther prevented any true reform from taking place, even while Church leaders knew about the corruption and nepotism within the clergy and even within the papacy itself. The Church instead focused on how to quell the Reformation and punish its followers.

A recurring theme is found in the history of heretical movements. Not only do heretics challenge a core belief, but the Roman Church itself has historically refused to entertain any dissent, even when well-founded or based on policies and corruption rather than on matters of dogma. The two are confused in the discussion of heresy, but they are distinct. Had the Roman Church been willing in its history to consider policy and operations issues separately from dogmatic beliefs in infallibility, it might have experienced less dissent and more sincere and well-meaning, constructive dialogue. But as it occurs in matters of religion, policy and dogma were inseparable in the minds of Church leaders. Tragically, this has meant that the Church, by its own policies, has at times encouraged heresy rather than reduced it.

1

Heresy in Historical Perspective

Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus (Outside the church there is no salvation).
— Latin phrase associated with the Jesuit movement,
from Saint Cyprian of Carthage, 3rd c.

Throughout its 2,000-year history, the Church has faced persistent and recurring heretical movements. These have not been isolated events. Beginning in the earliest days of the Church, disputes over doctrine and policy led to growing numbers of discontent Christians. The more widespread the influence of Christianity became, the more the activity grew among those movements to break away from central Church authority.

In the telling of this history, bias will always be present either in defense of the Roman Church or in defiance of its policies and doctrines. How can a history of Roman Church heresy be documented without bias? When the extremes of the Inquisition, the Crusades, and persecution extending to expanded forms of "heresy" are considered as part of the history, a biased view is impossible to avoid. While everyone experiences bias to some degree in anything undertaken, researched and written down, two extremes are evident in the existing literature. A degree of this debate is centered on the Inquisition, because that period extends over 600 years and has always been highly controversial. In fact, the line between differences in doctrine and policy has become blurred by the debate over whether the Church was justified in pursuing heretics through the Inquisition. The Church itself has tried even in recent years to downplay the extent of the Inquisition and its efforts to find heretical movements and destroy them. Even with widespread documentation of Church history (most often sourced from Church records), the denial of the anti-heretical efforts of the Church is extraordinary.

The two extreme biases in any discussion of the history of heresy, notably the Inquisition, involves apologists and anti–Church theories. The apologist either downplays the abuses of inquisitors or claims that the Inquisition was

not the sole source of abuse in the period. An example of downplaying the actual nature of the era: "The abuses were much less than most people think.... Torture was used, but quite infrequent [*sic*] and not lasting in its effects ... the Inquisition is to be blamed for some things, but not as badly as the legend says."[1]

The same source contains examples of comparison, citing instances in which abuse by those other than Church officials was just as bad, even claiming that the Cathars (a long-standing heretical movement) themselves murdered inquisitors sent to investigate their activities.

It is doubtful that the claims downplaying the horrific treatment of accused heretics will stand up under honest research. The events themselves are well documented and there is no point in questioning whether the Inquisition occurred in response; a more valid approach is to investigate its causes and effects. No one can deny that the Inquisition became the primary means for battling heresy, real or perceived, between the 13th and 16th centuries and that it even extends into the modern-day Church.

On the far end of the bias spectrum are those who simply hate the Church or, for that matter, any organized religious group, and who point to corruption of the Church itself, notably in the manner in which it has treated heretics. This extreme bias is equally damaging to a sincere effort at finding and documenting the truth. Unfortunately, any history is going to include literature with bias on both sides. The Church must struggle with its self-imposed requirement of correctness in the present as well as in the past. The concept of "infallibility" does not belong to the pope alone; it is assumed to apply to the Church as a whole in policy matters, and to admit that a past policy was wrong would bring into question the role the Church sees itself performing: that of the sole and supreme representative of God on earth. In that context, it is impossible for the Church to reconcile its position with its own history. However, it is important to remember that belief in its own infallibility caused the Church to react so extremely to heretics, and to justify the extreme measures taken against them.

The Heresy of Reading the Wrong Books

Church policy regarding heretics has always contained the need to exert control over the Christian flock. For example, up until 1966, the Vatican maintained its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books). It was a sin for any Catholic to read a book on the list, which in its 32nd edition, published in 1948, contained over 4,000 titles, including works by Voltaire, Defoe, Copernicus, Balzac, Sartre, and van de Velde (author of the sex manual,

The Perfect Marriage). While the Index is no longer officially published, it is available even today, and it remains a sin for Catholics to read any books containing material deemed to be contrary to Church doctrine.[2]

The Index, originated by decree of the Roman Inquisition in 1559, was designed to suppress not only salacious writings, as would be expected, but also writings politically or dogmatically offensive to the Vatican, containing "moral deficiency" or heresy. Thus, the list was intended to prevent people from reading works containing "theological errors" or being exposed to pernicious ideas; however, it is one of many modern manifestations of a mindset that grew from hundreds of years of Church control, censorship, and even capital punishment for a broad range of practices (either real or imagined) defined under the umbrella of "heresy." Over the centuries, the definition of heretic itself has evolved to mean anyone who disagrees with any Church doctrine; questions Church or papal authority or criticizes the behavior of the pope (even when that behavior is clearly corrupt); acts in a manner the Church deems improper; or expresses ideas contrary to the prevailing dogma of the day.

The Roman Inquisition, a final phase in a series of Inquisitions, was characterized by the Church's legalistic points of view regarding both dogma and policy, and it expanded the definition of heresy in a desire to control and censor expressions of art as well as any controversial theories in the sciences. This was a far cry from the schisms and anti–Christian pagan movements of the past, but the definition of heresy evolved over time as well. This last phase of the Inquisition sought out crimes of witchcraft and sorcery, blasphemy, Judaizing, and publishing materials deemed at odds with Church standards — thus the development of the Index.

The origins of the Roman Inquisition go back to the spread of Lutheranism in Europe. The Church formed its Roman Inquisition to prevent Lutheran influence from spreading to Italy, and succeeded in this effort while also expanding the scope of its investigations. In fact, the Roman Inquisition remained active into the 19th century, when it continued to hold power over investigations into acts of heresy, which were by this time broadly defined to encompass many wrongs. Tribunals consisted of a cardinal presiding over as many as 10 other cardinals with advisors drawn from the Dominican Order. (Dominicans had traditionally served as inquisitors for many centuries.) The best-known "heretic" brought before such a tribunal was Galileo, whose astronomical studies led to *proof* that the earth revolved around the sun, contrary to long-held Christian belief that the earth was the center of God's universe. The tribunal's review concluded that Galileo's assertions were "foolish and absurd" and deemed his beliefs "formally heretical."

After this judgment was passed, the Copernican book *De Revolutionibus*

Orbium Coelestium (*On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres*) came under scrutiny by the Inquisition as a possible heresy. The heliocentric theory Copernicus put forth was confirmed by Galileo, and a Spanish theologian named Diego de Zúñiga wrote in a separate document, *In Job Commentaria* (*Commentary on Job*, published in 1584) that the theory was compatible with Church doctrine. The tribunal of the Roman Inquisition disagreed and wrote that

> This Holy Congregation has also learned about the spreading and acceptance by many of the false Pythagorean doctrine, altogether contrary to the Holy Scripture, that the earth moves and the sun is motionless, which is also taught by Nicholaus Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* and by Diego de Zúñiga's *In Job Commentaria*. Therefore, in order that this opinion may not creep any further to the prejudice of Catholic truth, the Congregation has decided that the books by Nicolaus Copernicus and Diego de Zúñiga be suspended until corrected.[3]

Ironically, the Copernican heliocentric theory had been accepted by scientists for at least 100 years prior to publication of Galileo's work. But threatened with charges of heresy, he was forced to withdraw his opinion under threat of torture and death. The last nine years of Galileo's life were spent under house arrest and close observation by suspicious Church inquisitors. Other scientists were imprisoned for many years; one scientist (Giordano Bruno) was burned at the stake. In this period of what is generally considered a benign form of the Inquisition, the heresy of writing a book that contradicted Church teachings (even if the underlying theory could be proven, as in the case of Galileo) was just as serious a heresy as those of previous centuries. In the Church view, heresy was the worst crime and — even though it existed in degrees — the level of conscious defiance determined how seriously the guilty person should be punished. Many books were placed on the Index and that was the end of the subject. However, a popular and widely known public figure like Galileo presented a greater threat. His theory, contrary to Church teachings, was all too public to be treated lightly.

The End of the Roman Inquisition

Even though executions were relatively rare during the Roman Inquisition compared to previous periods, the office endured. It remained active for three centuries. The last high-profile action occurred in 1858 in Bologna. A six-year-old Jewish boy was kidnapped after the local inquisitor received word that he had been secretly baptized by his nursemaid during a childhood illness. The boy was raised under the supervision of Pope Pius IX in Rome. The boy,

named Edgardo Mortara, became a Catholic priest. His father had tried over 13 years to regain custody of his son without success. By this point, the boy, legally an adult, decided to remain in the priesthood.[4]

Inquisitors claimed the right to remove a Jewish child from his parents because he had been baptized, making him Christian by definition. Although an isolated case, it received a great deal of publicity and drew attention to the degree to which the Inquisition had strayed from its original purpose. Public sentiment turned against the Church and added strength to the Italian Nationalism movement. Also termed the Italian Unification (*il Risorgimento*, or "Resurgence"), this movement led to the formation of separate city states into a single nation, Italy, during the late 19th century. As part of the movement, the Church lost much of its power and influence over social and political matters, including some of its ability to prosecute accused heretics.

That Church power had become focused in the Papal States (*Stato Pontificio* in Italian, or *Status Pontificius* in Latin), which were finally absorbed into Italy after 1870. Prior to the unification into a single country, these regions had been ruled directly by the papacy and included the regions of Romagna, Marche, Umbria and Lazio. Because the pope's rule was political rather than ecclesiastical, the pre-unification status was also called the pope's "temporal power." The existence of temporal power held by the pope is important in the transition of heresy and its treatment within the Church. Within those regions, the pope held political and social powers equal to those of rulers in other nations; this was the only basis the Church had for continuing to hold tribunals of heretics and to impose penalties. Outside of the Papal States, the Church held no legal authority by the beginning of the 19th century. The Italian nationalism movement ended this power by incorporating the Papal States under one central government.

The Roman Republic was formed on February 9, 1849, as a replacement for the Papal States. This step was largely in defiance of the Church and the power it had held in these regions. The original Roman Republic constitution granted religious freedom to all faiths, while allowing the pope to continue his reign over the Catholic Church as its spiritual leader. A second point in the new constitution was abolishment of capital punishment. However, this measure proved to be temporary and on September 10, 1870, Italy declared war on the Papal States and took all temporal power away from the pope in those regions.

Before these restrictions were put in place, inquisitors could legally instruct local police to arrest and incarcerate accused heretics even when secular law would not otherwise allow such actions. The abuse of the Vatican-sanctioned inquisitors' ability to exert power in this manner defined heresy in the last half of the 19th century, and ultimately spelled the end of the Inqui-

sition — not by free choice on the part of the Church but only after Italy declared war and defeated the Vatican. This is what led to an end to both the Papal States and the Inquisition.

When the Italian army overthrew the papal rule of the Papal States, it discovered that the worst abuses of earlier Inquisition practices had been continued there. Pope Pius IX (1846–78) had consigned Jews to squalid living conditions in enforced ghettos. In comparison, throughout the rest of Europe, Jews were enjoying more freedom than ever before, not only to practice their religion freely but also to exercise civil and political rights. It was not uncommon in the Papal States for Jewish children to be taken forcibly from their parents, baptized and given to Christian families. It was also illegal for Jewish families to hire Christian housekeepers or nurses to work for them, and violators could be imprisoned.

The Inquisition was at the time run by a secret police force under the control of Pius IX. It had the freedom to arrest, question, and torture expected criminals or heretics. Executions were carried out even for minor crimes. Accused heretics were not allowed legal representation in a throwback to practices of centuries earlier. The priests running the tribunals had total power to impose any sentence they wished on heretics and the occupants of the Papal State's dungeons, finally liberated by the Italian troops that defeated the meager papal army in 1870, suffered under Pius IX as much as accused heretics of the 13th and 14th centuries. When asked about the poor treatment of heretics under the modern Inquisition, Pius simply explained that his decision to treat heretics so harshly fell under the blanket of papal infallibility. He could not possibly be wrong because, as pope, his actions were faultless.

The Italian defeat and incorporation of the Papal States removed temporal power from the Church and also ended the Church's *external* search for heretics. The office of the Inquisition and its mission to root out and punish heretics evolved into an internal effort, aimed at controlling behavior among the clergy. This was the culmination of 600 years of efforts by the papacy to quell dissent among Christians, which included a great expansion of the term "heresy" to include any and all enemies and dissenters, whether breakaway religious sects or artists and scientists.

The Origins of the Inquisition Office

From the 13th century to the end of the Papal States in 1870, the office of the Inquisition was the primary arm of the Church in its battle against heresy. This effort was begun in the interest of combating many heretical trends in the 13th century. Even though it evolved over the centuries into a

more extended enforcement arm of the Roman Church, the original mission of the Inquisition, led by Dominican-organized tribunals, was narrowly focused on Christian movements that broke with the dogma of the Roman Church. These movements more closely conformed to the traditional definitions of heresy.

A series of popes and Church elders recognized a threat from heretical movements beginning with the rise of the Cathars starting in the 11th century. By the 13th century the movement had taken hold in southern France and was viewed by the Roman Church as a direct threat to the singular authority of the Church. In the region of northern Italy and southern France, Catharism sparked the first formal Inquisition.

Ironically, Cathars were deeply pious Christians who took vows of poverty and based their beliefs on biblical works. They objected to the blatant display of wealth among Catholic bishops and priests, who dressed in the finest clothes and lived in castles where they enjoyed earthly luxuries. The Cathar movement was an attempt to return to a basic Christian ideal. It was dominant in the Languedoc region of France. The real threat to the Roman Church was not the heresy of the Cathar movement, but its appeal to the local population, based on its piousness and simplicity.

From the Cathar movement and the resulting crusade to quell it, the Church expanded both the severity of investigation and punishment throughout Europe, and expanded the very definition of heresy itself. The Cathar movement sparked the Inquisition as a means for eliminating heresy once and for all, following 1,000 years of struggle between the Church and an unending stream of heretical sects. However, in spite of its intention, the Inquisition was not effective in this goal. Dissent grew as Church corruption did, leading to many schisms and disputes within the Church. Finally, the definition of "heresy" was expanded as well. The Inquisition defined the Church's view of heresy as the offering of ideas outside of Church dogma, even when those ideas could be proved. The expansion of crimes considered "heresy" is a problem for today's Church. The days are gone when Church representatives were able to try to convict accused heretics and order secular authorities to burn them at the stake. The Church prisons and torture chambers were closed long ago. However, the office of investigation has evolved over its long history. Although the Inquisition was originally formed to fight breakaway sects and to defend Church doctrine, over many centuries, two changes took place. First was the expansion of heresy beyond doctrinal groups; second was the loss of political power by the Church, assigning heretical investigations to errors or defiance on the part of priests.

The expanded definition of "heresy" reached its most troubling phase in the period of the Spanish Inquisition, when Jews were forced to convert to

Christianity and then condemned on charges of secretly continuing to practice Jewish rites. The excesses of the Spanish Inquisition were widely known throughout Europe in the late 14th century. Another factor ending Church dominance was the Black Plague, which claimed the lives of as much as one half to three-fourths of Europe's population. The Church, once perceived as all-powerful, was demonstrably unable to stop the devastation. The survivors of the Black Plague realized that the Church was not the powerful institution it had been assumed to be for several hundred years. Questions arose that were themselves heretical. Among these questions was a once unthinkable idea: Do we really need a priest to talk to God? The Humanists of the period valued human thought and independence more than the guidance of the Church. In spite of Church impotence in the face of the Black Plague, it continued to operate as though it had absolute power, at least over humanity's spiritual lives. So strong was this belief that the Church continued to insist, as it had for centuries, that the appropriate punishment for heresy was death.

The perplexing aspect of the long history of Church reactions to heresy is the fact that extremes, including capital punishment, escalated and spread rather than dying out or being corrected by Church authorities. It was the entire concept of infallibility and the self-justifying opinion within the Church that enabled the escalation and the frequent abuses of Church political power. We may learn from the lesson of history, as observed in the expression, "Men never do evil so completely as when they do it from religious conviction."*

Equally perplexing as the extent of abuse and long tenure of the struggle against heresy is the inability, even in modern times, for Church officials to admit the errors of the past. As recently as 1992, the Vatican lifted its 1633 edict of Inquisition against the most famous man accused of heresy, Galileo.

More than 300 years later, a curiously worded declaration was presented to Pope John Paul II as part of a finding commission. This declaration read:

> From the Galileo case we can draw a lesson which is applicable today in analogous cases which arise in our times and which may arise in the future. It often happens that, beyond two partial points of view which are in contrast, there exists a wider view of things which embraces both and integrates them.[5]

This Vatican apology was the farthest the Church was willing to go in 1992. In 2008, the Church again tried to change its point of view on Galileo. Pope

*Blaise Pascal, Pensées, 1670.

Benedict XVI complimented Galileo as a scientist who helped Christians to understand and "contemplate with gratitude the Lord's work." Vatican officials met in 2009 to explore how to recast Galileo as a "patron" between faith and reason. This is quite a step from the original declarations and threats made by the Church against the outspoken scientist who was tried for heresy in 1633. He was forced to deny his own provable findings about movements of the sun and the earth and sentenced to life in prison (later reduced to life under house arrest).[6]

Both attempts by the Church to revise earlier condemnations of Galileo are clearly painful and worded carefully, demonstrating that even after more than three centuries, the incident is still a sensitive one in Church history. The Church obviously wants the dispute to be put to rest once and for all by insisting that there never was any dispute between faith and science. History prevents this claim from having any credibility. To the Church, heresy in its perceived forms was seen as a direct threat that had to be crushed and extinguished to ensure its own survival.

It may be impossible today for anyone to fully understand the mindset of Church leaders that would enable an act of heresy to go unchallenged and unpunished (for example, a claim that the earth circles the sun instead of the other way around). However, it is even more baffling that today an apology for a specific abuse can be phrased in such guarded terms or that history itself can be restated as lacking any real conflict at all. This claim defies the acts of the Church in combating heresy throughout its own history. This demonstrates the problem: Regardless of scientific proof making Galileo's assertions absolutely true (as one well-known example among thousands of other persecutions), the enforcement of edicts intended to stop heresy were clearly wrong on the basis of equity and law. In fact, the law of the day was anything that the Church declared it to be, and a heretic was so defined by the Church official in the place and moment. Heresy charges could be brought directly by the courts and their appointed judges; this contradicts a basic assumption in most theories of law that a charge of wrongdoing must include an accuser other than the court of jurisdiction over the matter. In other words, the absolute power enjoyed by the Church during many centuries was largely the problem, and the abuses continued for as long as the Church held that power.

The Inquisition was the extreme reaction to heresy, and it never went away completely; the modern Church continues to view dissent in very serious terms. The office under which the Inquisition originally operated continues to exist, but its name has been changed. As part of the *Roman Curia*, the administrative apparatus of the Holy See, one of the "congregations" is today called the "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" (CDF). This office

was once called the "Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition."*

The work of the "Congregation" is split into four parts: doctrinal, disciplinary, and matrimonial offices and a fourth office specifically for priests. While this renamed office of Inquisition no longer imprisons, tortures or executes people, it is widely feared among clergy members. Careers have been ruined; priests have been fired, moved and silenced; and educators have been forbidden to teach in Catholic institutions. Today, the Inquisition is more subtle but some methods remain in practice:

> In the middle ages, familiars, or Inquisition spies, reported heretics who were secretly investigated and then forcibly detained without stated reason, to face the Inquisitors. Amazingly, this pattern is still followed. Any Romanist can denounce any other to the Inquisition confidentially. Those being investigated are only informed officially at a later stage.... The *Ratio agenda* (Manner of proceeding) against heretics published at Rome, by the Inquisition on June 29, 1997, is on the official Vatican website.... The Inquisition "has the duty of examining writings and opinions which appear contrary to correct faith or dangerous.... This fundamental pastoral responsibility concerns all the pastors of the Church, who have the duty and the right to exercise vigilance..." in other words, spy on one another.[7]

Before being elected Pope Benedict XVI (2005–), Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger headed up the CDF for the Vatican. During his prefecture at the Doctrine of the Faith office, the Cardinal was referred to as "God's Rottweiler."[8]

Today, investigative methods are less physical and extreme than in the past; however, the Vatican undoubtedly exercises considerable control over its priests and nuns. While originally formed to find and punish heretics who challenged the Word of God, the concept of heresy evolved to become a means for simply keeping priests in line. The threat of removal and loss of retirement security, the prevention of members from contact with a congregation, and other measures are effective in maintaining strict control over how priests can advise their flocks. Certainly, a priest telling individuals that it is all right to use birth control, for example, faces the potential wrath and discipline of the

*The Inquisition office was founded by Pope Paul III on July 21, 1542, and its stated purpose was "to maintain and defend the integrity of the faith and examine and proscribe errors and false doctrines." In 1908, Pope Pius X renamed the office the "Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office." Finally, on December 7, 1965, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), the office was again renamed, to its present configuration. On June 28, 1988, Pope John Paul II clarified the role of this office in Article 48 of the Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia, Pastor Bonus, which stated that "the duty proper to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on the faith and morals throughout the Catholic world: for this reason everything which in any way touches such matter falls within its competence."

Church, and that threat is taken seriously within the clergy. Given encouragement by the Vatican for clergy to spy upon and report on one another, a Catholic priest giving advice contrary to official doctrine does so at great risk. This variation of heresy, while not given the name, has been institutionalized within the CDF.

The continuance of the inquisitional mindset today places the *historical* Inquisition in an interesting context, if only because the phenomenon is not frozen in the past; it has evolved into a different form today, a more subtle application of control and response to heresy and other crimes of dissent. Punishment of heretics began as excommunication but was soon replaced with harsher consequences, including loss of life and property, not to mention long imprisonment and harsh interrogation, practices that continued over many hundreds of years during the Middle Ages. The history had its beginnings in perceived threats to Church unity by heretics.

History is made less clear by the writings of opposing points of view in this matter, those of both apologists and anti–Church writers; this would be the case for any topic. However, in the case of heresy and the various roles of the Church, popes, politicians, and monarchs, the passage of time has not clarified the issues. Today, the entire matter is as controversial as ever. The apologist and dogmatic arguments both strive to defend their relative positions. Apologists want to downplay the effects of heresy as well as Church reaction to it, in spite of the historical record; and those who dogmatically abhor the Catholic Church are equally unable to objectively explain the events within this book or to place those events in a context without adding in a personal bias. Apologists often resort to the argument that other groups also used torture and capital punishment of heretics, witches, and Jews. And anti–Church arguments equate everything the Church undertakes with the work of the Devil, always motivated by evil. In other words, neither extreme is objective in the points it raises to defend its own arguments and conclusions.

The truth of history often involves the tragic realization that even the best intentions (in this case among even the most spiritual of people) often lead to performance of great evil. For example, the Dominican Order, which was given a lead role in finding and punishing heretics beginning in the 14th century, was considered the most intellectual and pious of Catholic orders. This attribute did not make its members more enlightened about the treatment of people. To the contrary, their own sense of both moral and intellectual superiority gave Dominican inquisitors a sense of entitlement and was used to justify harsh treatment of the accused. While logic may indicate that better-educated people should also be more enlightened than the average person, the opposite is more likely to be the case.

The intention here is to avoid bias on either side of the issue, and to

chronicle the occurrences of heresy and Church response. This includes the expansion of original Church dogma and development of new dogma, which was an interesting outgrowth of heresy itself. Following this trail of events is a very interesting pursuit. A good example is what occurred during the Spanish Inquisition. This was in truth an effort to eradicate Jewish influence in Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella wanted a unified country, a new concept in the times when city states were the standard political units. They saw Catholicism as the most important unifying force to help them accomplish this goal.

The problem, however, was the widespread social, economic and political influence of Spanish Jews, who had a long history in Spain. The Church opposed forced conversion and outright expulsion was not entirely possible. So the political solution was to set up circumstances making "voluntary" conversion the only viable choice. However, the belief among Spanish Christians that many (if not all) converted Jews were not acting as true Christians itself led to the Spanish Inquisition. In this case, the Conversos were accused of secretly continuing to practice Judaism, and this was classified as a form of "heresy" newly defined to fit the circumstances. What was put forth as a spiritual quest led by the Dominican Order was actually a politically motivated and anti–Jewish movement. It had social, political and economic motives, but was presented as a spiritual quest to ensure the purity of Christianity.

In comparison, the campaign through Catholic Europe against the Protestant movement dominated by Lutheranism and Calvinism was more like the traditional versions of anti-heresy initiatives. The dispute was dogmatic in those cases, with Luther and Calvin challenging the authority of the pope. A century earlier, pioneers in this challenge such as Wyclif and Hus also presented a dogma-based departure from Church authority. So the fight against heresy moved along a dual track. The dogma-based effort was aimed at sects breaking away from Catholicism. At the same time, a very active Dominican-led tribunal system continued, prosecuting heretics in the guise of Conversos, witches, alchemists, magicians, and sorcerers. This second version eventually tried to control the arts as well by forbidding anti–Christian images in paintings and even banning polyphonic music. It also attacked scientists, including Galileo, among others, whose writings challenged the basic premise of early Christian belief, that the earth was the center of God's universe.

Heresy in Context

The Inquisition was not the first or last dispute between the Church and dogmatic or social threats. It was only a formalized and legalized version of

an ongoing struggle. The legalistic aspects of the Inquisition brought heresy into a Church-run court system in which a departure from accepted legal principles became the norm. For example, the accused was not allowed legal representation or the right to call witnesses or cross-examine. While confessions gained under torture were not admissible, all confessions were classified as having been given freely even when that was not true. Finally, unlike most legal proceedings in which charges stem from an accuser or law enforcement entity, in the case of the Inquisition, the court itself had the power to bring charges. These often were based on flimsy testimony, the opinions of local priests or the opinions of Dominican inquisitors themselves, even when evidence was lacking. Individuals were encouraged to come forward and make accusations; this was often the prudent decision, since a person making an accusation was in a better position than the accused. If a person had an enemy who might himself come forward, it made sense to get to the tribunal first. As a tragic consequence, many of the tribunals were so designed that instances of heresy were easy to find. Thousands of people underwent torture and execution on the basis of what others perceived about them. Their thoughts were the basis of the crimes.

The endless struggle against heresy in one form or another was especially distasteful during the Inquisition, when abuses of the process were self-serving and often financially motivated. The Dominicans, for example, were expected to finance their ever-expanding tribunal and prison system with the use of assets seized from the condemned. So finding guilty people was a necessity and, when money was short, there was even greater incentive to find *wealthy* heretics. This internal corruption and its ulterior motives characterized and defined the war against heresy over many decades. However, the Inquisition itself was only a 13th century expansion of an effort that had been underway for over 1,000 years.

During the first millennium, the Church struggled with the definition of heresy as well as how to exact punishment for it. The name "heresy" was first applied by Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 37–101). A prolific writer, Josephus produced histories that discussed three leading Jewish sects of the first century: the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes.

The origin of the word "heresy" is closely related to the idea of dissenter, troublemaker, and pest. Paul is described to Roman governor Felix as the leader of the "heresy of the Nazarenes" and described as a "pestilent fellow" (New Revised Standard Bible), "a pest, a fomenter of discord among the Jews" (Revised English Bible), or one who "stirs up trouble among the Jews" (New Jerusalem Bible).[9]

The concept of heresy (*aireseis*) is derived from the early Jewish writings of Josephus and applied to Paul as agitator to the Jewish establishment. This

concept of dissent from accepted doctrine formed the early definition of heresy, summarized by Peter, who applied the idea of dissent to Christian dissenters and who referred to "false prophets."[10]

Over time the Greek *aireseis* was translated to the English *heresies*. In Christian application, a heresy is a choice to disagree with or confront established religious or political doctrine. Even so, the definition of heresy is not agreed upon within the Church, and never has been. St. Thomas defined heresy as "a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas."[11] A variety of the term involves two ways of deviating from true belief: failing to believe in Christ, or limiting the scope of belief to only those doctrines that suit the individual. So a "true believer" is expected to accept the totality of Church doctrine revealed in scriptures and based on tradition. With this broad definition, it was easy for the Church to justify its later expansion beyond dogmatic disagreements. So anyone who challenged any dogma or policy of the Church could easily be accused of heresy. This included any form of challenge, even one — as in the case of Luther — directed toward corruption within the Church.

The legalistic expansion of heresy as a crime in the Roman Church addressed the distinctions among different forms of heresy by explaining how different forms of heresy may be brought before tribunals. Heresy may exist in three degrees: ignorance of the truth, error in judgment, or imperfect comprehension of dogma. These degrees are complicated by the role of free will, if any, in the creation of a heretic. The legalistic definition relies on motives: the desire for material comfort or power, the willing acceptance of false doctrine, or religious but misguided zeal. Thus, the cause of the heresy combined with the degree of choice defines various degrees of heretical guilt.[12]

Heresy is distinguished from *apostasy*, the complete abandonment of faith. This occurs via conversion to Judaism, Islam or a pagan faith, or neglect of religious faith altogether. Heresy is also distinctly different than *schism*, in which individuals knowingly and with free will separate from the Church. So while all heretics are also defined as schismatics due to their willing loss of faith, not all schismatics are also heretics. Separation (schism) can be based on a severing of communion with the Church, while not necessarily shunning one's faith as a Christian.

These fine points are important when a dissenter is judged based on the degree of affront. So someone guilty of apostasy or schism is not going to be judged as severely as an outright heretic. Even within the closely defined meaning of heresy, guilt exists in degrees.

A definition of "heresy in the first degree" (the most severe form) requires the holding of a belief contrary to established and accepted doctrine. If the doctrine believed in error is not specifically contrary to an established Christian

doctrine, then it may be defined as *sentential hæresi proxima*, or an opinion approaching heresy but not a willing violation. Yet another degree is called *propositio theologice erronea*, or theology that is flawed or in error. Finally, when an individual disagrees with an article of faith but the transgression cannot be entirely proven or demonstrated, it is a case of *sentential de hæresi suspecta, hæresim sapiens* (opinion suspected of heresy).

These legalistic distinctions may seem tedious to a modern reader, but the varying gravity of the sin often determined whether an accused heretic was to be given a penance and warned to correct the belief, to be publicly flogged, to be sent to prison for years or even for life, or ultimately to be burned at the stake.

Degrees of heresy require a measurement of the degree of malice on the part of the heretic. In other words, not all crimes are committed with the same degree of intent and, like any criminal proceeding, the attempt has to be made to understand the mind of the accused before an appropriate punishment can be assigned. The sin of not believing, of being an infidel, is the most serious form of heresy for a member of the Christian faith (as distinguished from a non–Christian, who cannot be legally guilty of heresy); however, in some versions of how to correct the problem, an infidel who recants a position and accepts the Church doctrine may be forgiven. It is far worse, legalistically speaking, to be a heretic with full knowledge of the heresy and in revolt against Church authority. This is especially true when the Church position also is based on a belief that its authority is derived from a *divine* source. In that case, the heretic, with full knowledge of the transgression, persists in it without remorse and without reversing the position.

One of the ironic underpinnings of Christianity is the natural conflict between faith and free will. A basic assumption is that true believers exercise free will in the choice of faith. However, man is imperfect and may also apply free will to veer from the dogma. This creates a heresy and the Church response is to correct the problem by (a) requiring a reversal in belief; (b) applying punishment, whether temporal (penance or physical punishments) or spiritual (excommunication); or (c) in the ultimate resolution, forcing an admission of wrong and a change in opinion (seeing the light) through torture, with the punishment for the crime perhaps extending to execution.

The causes of heresy also play a role in determining its criminal severity. The most commonly cited cause is *error of the mind*, and more remote causes are curiosity and pride. However, the basic requirement of faith originally depended on a learned clergy ruling a far less learned lay population. A largely illiterate population relies on the word of priests and has little choice but to accept what it is told. So as a population becomes more informed, both in basic education and in the expansion of scientific knowledge, it is only natural

that heresy will spread as well. Developments such as the Gutenberg press and organized education presented more information to the public, which came to rely less on clerics and even to question many of the dogmatic positions they had for centuries imposed. The expansion of literacy that resulted led to increased disputes between the Church and its Christian population.

Development of heretical *movements* required three parts. First, sects labeled as heretical required the leadership of a strong individual. Second, a movement was heretical if it presented the expression of new doctrine or the denial of existing and established doctrine. Third, the support of secular leaders was required, enabling the heretical sect to operate under the protection of existing political power. The success of heretical movements has relied not only on a widespread set of beliefs, but also on how much social and political support exists at the time. As a result, some movements, such as Judeo-Christian Gnostics, persisted for centuries in one form or another, while others came and went in short order due to lack of temporal support or power.

Gnosticism embraced Plato's explanation of dualism, accepting the premise of co-existing physical and spiritual elements. The Gnostic movement addressed the desire for religious knowledge in the early centuries of Church history, claiming special knowledge in this area, a *gnosis*. This included knowledge of multiple Gods, one that created the spiritual world and a lesser god that created the material world. This dualism is central to the Gnostic theme. In the Gnostic view, the world consists of "two common forces, good and evil. In line with much Greek philosophy, [Gnostics] identified evil with matter."[13]

Some varieties of Gnosticism went beyond the duality of physical and spiritual, actually denying the existence of Jesus. One notable sect of Gnostics holding this belief was Docetism. The name comes from the Greek *dokesis*, meaning "appearance." This sect believed that Jesus only appeared to be human, but in fact was not human at all. One Syrian Gnostic named Cerdo taught that "Christ, the Son of the Highest God, appeared without birth from the Virgin, yet without any birth on earth as man."[14]

Infallibility in Defense of Persecution

To the mind of a true believer in the Catholic Church, movements like Gnosticism are difficult to understand. This is so because of the assumption that the Church is infallible in all matters of spirituality. Who would dispute the teachings of a divinely supported institution? This basic tenet — the belief in the infallibility of the Church — also extends to the Church's teachings and the policies and decisions of its leaders. The Gnostic division between good and evil challenged this assumption and rationalized the flaws of the temporal

world, where nothing is infallible. Without infallibility as an argument, the Church's basis for persecuting heresy would not hold up. But because Church leaders are human, there have been numerous instances of imperfect decisions, seemingly in contradiction of a broadly accepted concept of infallibility. However, the Church has a rationale to explain how imperfect people may nonetheless achieve the infallible aims of the Church.

This rationale goes back to the original writings on which Church law relies as well as a retort to Gnostic movements and other heresies in the early centuries of Church history. The origins of the laws concerning attitudes toward heresy are found in the Gospels. Peter warned of false prophets, but that is only one of many references found in the books of the New Testament. The warnings that "Many false prophets shall rise and mislead many" (Matthew 24:11), "He who is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23) and "Those who not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16)[15] all serve as foundation references for Church policy in identifying and punishing heretics. From the Church point of view, the punishment is not undertaken merely because the heretic disagrees, but because the unbelief itself violates the basic doctrine expressed in the scriptures.

The expressions of unity among the original apostles in their Gospels were specifically enlarged by Paul, who proclaimed that "if anyone preaches a gospel other than the gospel you received, let him be banned."[16] Many references to heretics are found in the books of the New Testament and later Christian scholars described heretics in graphic terms. They have been described as "poisonous plants" (Ignatius), "inspirations of the Evil one" (Tertullian), "barren and rocky islands on which ships are wrecked" (Theophilus), and "to be avoided like that of vipers and scorpions" (Jerome).

The assumption of authority on the part of the Church to disapprove of and to punish acts of heresy is based on a level of authority above the individual, and on the assumption that the Church must be more powerful than humanity, that the Church is more knowing and inspired than human free will. The Church, as guardian of the faith, assumes the authoritarian role of determining when an individual has transgressed. At the same time, the Church persisted in supporting free will even in times when enforcement of doctrine was most severe. In fact, it was a requirement that a heretic exercised free will in order to be condemned.

If free will was not in play then heresy, as defined by the Church, could not even exist. A fatalistic point of view, in which free will is absent, cannot support punishment for heretical thoughts or acts. So mankind's ability to think and reason distinguishes between the belief in doctrine and faith on one hand, and a conscious decision to defy that doctrine (required to establish heresy) on the other.

A premise in enforcing rules against heresy rests on the origins of Christianity and on the insistence that followers believe completely and with full faith, or suffer the consequences. The enforcement of the rules begins with the pope, but there is also an expectation that the entire hierarchy of the Church enforce the pope's rulings. The infallibility of the pope and of his rulings is unquestionable under the Church doctrine. This permits no admission of error. But this belief may itself be flawed. For example, Tertullian wrote that if the Church could be in error, it would mean that "the Holy Spirit has not watched over any of them so as to guide them into the truth, although he was sent by Christ and asked from the Father for this very purpose, that He might be the teacher of truth."[17]

In other words, the Church must be right because it is guided by God, and God is perfect so the teachings of the Church must be perfect as well. This circular argument, at least as applied to heresy, precludes any possibility of human error. Infallibility is supported in Church doctrine by a three-step argument:

1. Christ founded the Church as a perfect kingdom.
2. Christ meant for his kingdom to be universal and only ignorance excuses anyone from not accepting this perfect doctrine.
3. As a singular perfect entity, Christ endowed his apostles and their successors the powers necessary to spread the doctrine throughout the world.

Under the Church view, infallibility is not simply the lack of ability to be in error; it is an absolute exemption from the possibility of being wrong on any level. Furthermore, while mankind is imperfect, perhaps even sinful and evil in its deeds, these imperfect beings may yet serve as God's agents and carriers of infallibility. The Church doctrine expands on this distinction by recognizing that even when imperfect humans act on selfish motives which influence their decisions, the infallibility of the result of decisions is not affected.

This argument — imperfect and even evilly motivated men are nonetheless acting within the framework on infallibility as long as the end result supports the doctrines of the faith — is flawed in itself. This creates a paradox. The argument presented by an infallible institution may be flawed, but that cannot be so because the institution is infallible. Thus, a man who testifies against his neighbor by accusing him of heresy may be motivated by wanting to acquire his land if he is convicted by the inquisitor. However, if the Church legal system finds the accused guilty of heresy and rewards the accuser with land owned by the guilty man, the outcome — finding and executing a heretic — is sanctioned as infallible, because it conforms to the grand scheme of things, infallibly. Even though the motive behind the accusation was self-

serving, the end result justifies the decision to execute a heretic, making that decision infallible.

This reliance on infallibility supports the Church position that the Inquisition was required to destroy heresy. Since heresy was contrary to doctrine (and doctrine itself was infallible) the Church had not only the right but also the duty to prosecute heretics. Heresy, viewed as a poisonous influence and threat to the Church, had to be attacked vigorously. While one view of the spreading of the Word was a benevolent discourse of good news, another was a more punitive and threatening message: If you refuse to believe this message, then you are condemned and deserving of death and damnation.

The power to destroy heresy has always been central to the doctrine of the Church. The power granted expertise and unlimited power to Church rulers, including popes and bishops (guided by the Holy Spirit), to act as final judges in *all* matters of faith. Paul initiated the first judgment concerning how heretics should be treated, writing to Titus the advice that "if someone is contentious, he should be allowed a second warning; after that, have nothing more to do with him, recognizing that anyone like that has a distorted mind and stands self-condemned for his sin."[18]

This advice from Paul, which may be considered recommending excommunication rather than anything more severe, prevailed through the early Church and began to change only after Emperor Constantine I (full name: Gaius Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus) set a new course, merging the secular power of Rome with the divine power of the Church and introducing more severe punishments for heresy (which at that point became indistinguishable from treason).

The evolution from warnings and excommunication in the earlier centuries, to capital punishment under the Roman system, inevitably led to the Inquisition many centuries later. The Church merged its mission to destroy the spiritual crime of heresy with the Roman legal response to the temporal crime of treason; the two crimes became equal in severity and deserving of equal response and punishment. Once the Church accepted its role as a participant in executing heretics, the older belief that religious transgressions should not be temporally punished was lost. The result — hundreds of years of activities meant to quell heresy — began with the merger of the Roman Empire and the Church.

The next chapter explores Church responses to heresy during the first four centuries of Christian history. The early examples demonstrate Church attitudes toward disagreement in dogmatic issues and its reaction to recurring heretical movements.

2

The Origins of Heresy: The First Four Centuries

> I saw heaven wide open, and a white horse appeared; its rider's name was Faithful and True, for he is just in judgment and just in war.
> — Revelation 19:11 (Revised English Bible)

The violent imagery found in biblical texts in both Old and New Testaments has served as justification for organized programs aimed at finding and silencing heresy. This was true throughout the first 12 centuries of Christianity, culminating in the Crusades to the Holy Land and, ultimately, in the policies of the centuries that followed. These policies included the Inquisition. Although no single Inquisition was in force during the entire history, the Church struggled with its need and desire to create and enforce a singular authority and belief. A series of Inquisitions was designed to quell any disagreement or questioning of Church dogma.

For the papacy of the era, suppressing heresy was perceived as a matter of survival of the Church. In the very early years of Christianity, being shunned by God originally was deemed as the most appropriate punishment for heresy. One verse, the letter of Paul to Timothy, explained: "It was through spurning conscience that certain persons made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I consigned to Satan, in the hope that through this discipline they might learn not to be blasphemous."[1]

This passage documents the names of the earliest identified heretics, but it is important for another reason as well. In this early version of how the Church should deal with the problem of disobedience, simply excluding sinners from the Church was punishment enough. This view evolved over the first 12 centuries to the point that any measures were considered just and necessary to punish heretics and infidels, especially since shunning or excommunication proved to be ineffective at eliminating heresy.

The earlier, more lenient approach involving a benign separation of believers from nonbelievers was promoted in the year 394 by St. Cyprian of Carthage, who deposed and excommunicated the *lapsi* (lapsed Christians, those who had stopped believing). In this era, the prevailing belief was that because religion was meant to serve as a spiritual rather than a temporal force, excommunication (out of communion), or exclusion from the sacraments of the Church, was a better punishment than physical death for heretics. In fact, it was considered the most serious of punishments the Church had the power to inflict. However, even in the earliest days of Church history, there was never complete agreement about how heretics should be punished, or even about whose teachings were more valid.

Detail showing Saint Paul, Saint Paul abbey church. Dedication fresco by Thomas von Villach (1493). Photograph by Wolfgang Sauber, October 27, 2007.

Departure from Early Doctrine

The original message of Christianity was simple. The citations from the book of John ("God is love, the spirit, the light") were the core of the original Christian belief. However, from the very beginning, disagreements arose about the true meaning of this basic doctrine and even about the very nature and definition of Christ's person. Some thought him a man only, others believed he was divine and the Son of God. Others viewed Christianity as a Jewish sect and as part of Judaism rather than as a separate faith, viewing Christ as the latest prophet in a long line of prophets following Moses.

As the doctrine was expanded and specific issues addressed (including the nature of the Holy Spirit, Christ's role in eventually defeating the Devil, and the removal of barriers between God and mankind) the questions raised became larger and more complicated as well. During the apostolic age (the first century of Christianity beginning with the death of Christ) there were

three broad classifications of heresy, and these themes have recurred throughout history:

1. *Judaizing.* The first resistance to Christianity as a new faith was characterized by the attempt to reconcile Christianity and Judaism and, specifically, to make Christianity subservient to long-established Jewish law. Believers in this idea taught that Christ was a prophet, perhaps on par with Moses in importance or, if not, a major prophet following Jewish tradition. However, the Christian belief in Christ's divinity was denied by those adhering to this form of heresy, and for them the laws set down by Moses prevailed. The books written by Paul in his travels are best understood in the context of an unending debate he was having with Judaizers.
2. *Gnosticism.* A second form of heresy, one that was destined to recur many times in coming centuries, was not only a heresy against Christianity but also against Judaism. The Gnostic view holds that there are two deities in the universe, one good and one evil. The good (God) controls the spiritual realm, and the evil (Satan) controls the temporal realm. This breaks from Judaism because it challenges the traditional belief concerning God's solitary rule over mankind's behavior. It simplifies those rules by assigning everything to either pure good or pure evil. Gnosticism also breaks with Christianity, which recognizes only *one* deity in three distinct personages (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). However, the forces of evil found in the nature of Satan derive not from a god but from a fallen angel. Gnosticism not only contradicts the Christian view, but is also viewed as blasphemy.
3. *Combined paganism and Judaism.* The third apostolic form of heresy proposed that Judaism and paganism combined addressed the problems (or errors) of Christianity (one sect believing this was the Ebionites). Under this compromised form of heresy, the "answer" to the Christian challenge was that both Judaism and paganism (and often, Gnosticism as well) reconciled Christianity. It simplified and explained the apparent contradictions that Christianity raised, central among these being the question, "How could an Almighty and good deity allow evil to exist in the world?" But from the Church viewpoint, this specific heresy — like the other two forms of heresy — failed to accept the simple truth of the Gospels. The simple idea that Christ was the Son of God who came to earth to die for the sins of mankind was challenged with the argument that Christ was a mere mortal.

Heresy appeared in these three forms as soon as Christianity became established. The disagreement went at once to the core of Christian belief

with attempts in various forms to redefine or explain away Christian belief itself. For heretics, Christianity could be explained as a sect or a belief with errors. For Christians, heretical beliefs were the work of the antichrist. The question to a Christian mind was, "Why would anyone challenge the divinity of Christ?"

As the Church discovered over the centuries, the more it expanded its message, the more heresies arose and spread. The success of the faith itself did not unify true believers, but only served to invite disputes over the Church's doctrines and policies.

Eastern Heresies

The Gnostic sects were popular and widespread in the early centuries. In regions surrounding Palestine, several Gnostic sects arose and prospered. The early heresies led to a split within the Christian Church itself. Those following the teachings of the Apostle Paul believed in Christianity as a new religion; this belief formed the core of Christianity as a permanent institution. The other group, the so-called "Jewish Christians," favored a form of Christianity adhering to Jewish tradition and law, viewing the faith as a branch of Judaism or as a separate, Gnostic variation. These groups included Kerinthians, Ebionites, Elchasaites and Mandaens.

Around the year 100, an individual named Kerinthos attempted to conform Christian thought to Jewish tradition. His teachings included strict observance of the Sabbath. He also taught that while Jesus had been the son of Mary, he was not the son of God, nor did he deserve the title of God the Son. Jesus had been able to perform miracles under God's recognition of Jesus' wisdom; however, at the time of his death, Jesus was not the Savior. A particularly Gnostic tenet that Kerinthos taught was the separation of God as creator of the world and another God above all things. Rather than separating good from evil, this version of Gnostic belief held that there were two benevolent deities at work.

The Church was disturbed at the idea that anyone would question Christ's divinity. Although the Kerinthians were a small sect of Jewish Christians and Gnostics, as an early heresy its emergence set the tone for many later responses by the Church to similar movements.

The Ebionites were a similar sect which also denied the divinity of Christ. Whereas the Ebionites disputed Christianity altogether, Gnostics were more likely to explain Christian belief in terms of duality. The Ebionites first appeared around 150. They believed in two divine forces, good and evil, making it similar to Gnostic beliefs. On the good side, Christ ruled as the son of

Mary *and* the Son of God. However, the sect also believed that Christ as Savior had already visited the temporal world in the persons of Adam and Moses. For this sect which attempted to reconcile Jewish and Christian beliefs, the entity of Christ had left the body of Jesus before his crucifixion; thus, at death Jesus had reverted to being only a man and was not the messiah. Ebionites also had their own sacred book, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. This book, most likely derived from the Gospel of Mark, included a claim that Jesus had been a vegetarian.

Elchasai (alt. Elkasai) began a breakaway sect of the Ebionites, called Elkasaites. The name translates to "hidden power," suggesting that the inspiration for this movement came directly from the Holy Spirit. Elchasai came from Syria and founded this sect in the first half of the second century. By 220, elements of the sect had spread as far as Rome. The Elchasaites believed in strict adherence to Jewish law and tradition, and were opposed to the teachings of Paul. They believed, like many other sects, in the existence of two Gods: a holy spirit who was a female and a Christ who was male. They viewed Jesus as a mere mortal without any godly attributes. Like so many other early sects, they attempted to combine Jewish, Christian and Gnostic ideas into a set of unifying tenets. This sect, like the Ebionites, had its own holy book, the *Book of Elchasai*. This book, the sect claimed, included the teachings of an angel who was 96 miles tall.[2]

Belief in a female side of God was also found among the Barbelo sect, named after its goddess. They believed she was the daughter of God the Father. The proliferation of sects worshipping multiple gods — the essential Gnostic tenet — created problems for the early Christian Church, which, without any powers beyond excommunication, could not stop or even discourage heretical movements. Minor movements also included the Ophites, who believed in Christ but not as an equal to the Father, rather as one among many lesser gods.

At about the same time, the Mandaens — the only one of these early sects to survive today — appeared. Today, remnants of the Mandaens are found in Iraq and nearby regions. Origins of this sect are based more in Jewish tradition than in Christianity. Followers held that Jesus was a false prophet. In comparison, the majority of other sects either acknowledged Jesus as divine or as holding divinity during his life but not necessarily at its end. However, Mandaens did include some Christian ideas. For example, they accepted John the Baptist as a prophet and themselves baptized members. For this reason have been called "Christians of John." Their God, the Great Mana, ruled over numerous other gods or lesser manas. On the evil side, demons ruled the world, and this was in agreement with Gnostic ideas. Although its origins may not be strictly Christian, the inclusion of multiple gods and considering

Jesus a false prophet made the Mandaen sect a heresy in the view of the Church.

The Spread of Gnosticism

Between the first and second centuries, many versions of Gnosticism spread and became popular alternatives to the Catholic view and, in fact, were viewed as attempts to combine Jewish and Christian beliefs into an acceptable middle ground. So influential was this trend that one writer identified all heresies as belonging to one of two major camps: legalism and Gnosticism.[3]

One of the chief spokesmen for Gnosticism in the second century was Basilides, a religious teacher from Alexandria. Basilides wrote prolifically on his views of theology circa 160, but none of his works have survived, and they are only known from secondary sources. Another influential theologian promoting Gnosticism was Valentinus (ca. 100–ca. 160). Valentinus broke with the Church when he was passed over as candidate for bishop. At that point, Valentinus started developing Gnostic teachings, and he founded a school in Rome. Tertullian (160–240), the first great Christian theologian, wrote in *Adversus Valentinianos* (Against the Valentinians): "Valentinus had expected to become a bishop, because he was an able man both in genius and eloquence. Being indignant, however, that another obtained the dignity by reason of a claim which confessorship had given him, he broke with the church of the true faith."[4]

The Gnostic followers of Valentinus were numerous and the sect broke into two geographic segments, Eastern and Western. The Gnostic teachings of Valentinus included acceptance of a supreme being and a belief in salvation. However, he distinguished between a pure spiritual realm and a physical one, preferring to view all of creation as a hierarchical "series of emanations."[5]

This reasoning presented an alternative to the Church view that the only path to salvation was acceptance of and faith in Christ. The fusing of Valentinus' Gnostic views with acceptance of Christian doctrine provided a variation of soteriology (doctrine of salvation), in which knowledge was an accepted replacement for faith and belief. Valentinian writings include the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Gospel of Philip*. These writings influenced many other Gnostic sects.

Another leader in the Gnostic movement was Marcion, who resided in Sinope in Asia Minor. He believed and taught that Christ had never been a physical entity. The creator worshipped by Christians was the same God as the God of the Old Testament. Marcion was excommunicated in 144, and

although he left the Church he continued to preach the same liturgy as the Church. He appointed bishops and priests as part of the Marcionite Church and duplicated many of the rituals, making the sect attractive to Catholics but presenting a serious challenge to Church authority. Tertullian disputed Marcion's views, writing: "But on what principle did Marcion confine his supreme powers to two? I would first ask, If there be two, why not more? Because if number be compatible with the substance of Deity, the richer you make it in number the better."[6]

Marcion and his teachings were the most serious heretical threat to the early Church. He rejected the Catholic Church, claiming that only he and his followers were the true Christians. However, his purpose was not to do away with the Church, but to make it pure and, in his interpretation, a truer version of the belief. As opposed to the Orthodox Church view of a reconciled Old and New Testament, and equally, of a Jewish tradition with Christian faith, Marcion thought the two faiths had to be separated. He was excommunicated for this point of view, but there was a difference between Marcion the man and his followers:

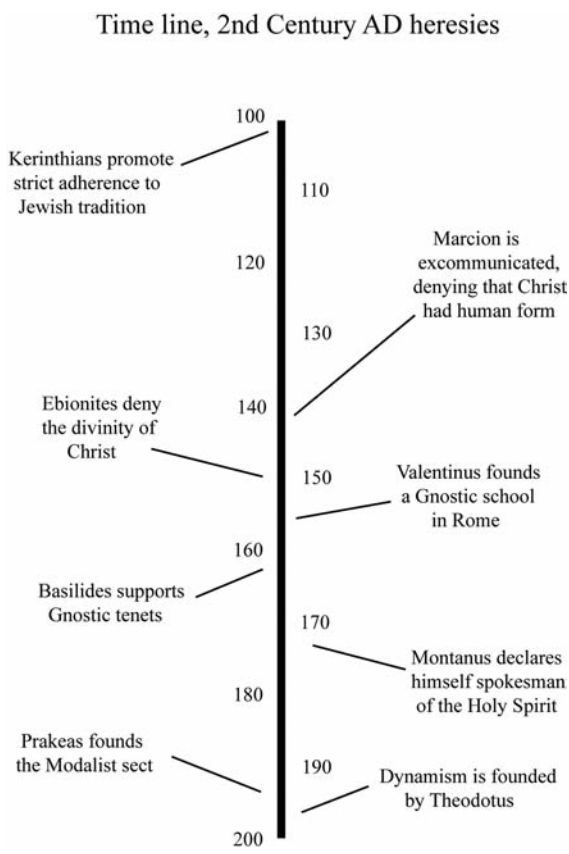
> We must distinguish between the doctrine of Marcion himself and that of his followers. Marcion was no Gnostic dreamer. He wanted a Christianity untrammeled and undefiled by association with Judaism. Christianity was the New Covenant pure and simple. Abstract questions on the origin of evil or on the essence of the Godhead interested him little, but the Old Testament was a scandal to the faithful and a stumbling-block to the refined and intellectual gentiles by its crudity and cruelty, and the Old Testament had to be set aside.[7]

Less influential movements of the same period included one led by Menander, who declared that *he* was the Redeemer; and Satornil, who distinguished between an upper world of angels ruled by the Father and a lesser world on earth created as described in Genesis and ruled by a secondary god, yet another variety of Gnosticism's duality. He preached that belief in him would prevent his followers from physical death.

Gnostics attempt to explain the existence of evil in the world by arguing that such a flawed world could not possibly have been created by a singular Supreme God. Therefore, it must be the work of an inferior entity with divine powers, an ignorant demon or a less perfect god. Many Gnostic sects were more accepting of the harsh, punitive God of the Old Testament, continually reacting to mankind's flaws with punishments and retaliation, than they were of the more gentle and accepting God of Christianity. Although this view died out as the Church expanded its influence in these early centuries, the philosophy of a divided world with good and evil forces would recur throughout history. From the Gnostic point of view, it was impossible to accept the

idea that a perfect God could operate on earth through an imperfect Church, especially one operated by fallible humans. This argument led to the development of the concept of infallibility of the Church as a justification for punishment of Gnostics and other heretics.

This development was specifically intended to counter-argue the Gnostic movement. If the Church and its leaders were accepted as infallible, then the flaws of ordinary people could be blamed on poor decisions made by the exercise of free will. The Church developed the separation between the Church and mankind based on infallibility. Divinely inspired and controlled, the Church and the pope were infallible and operated under the single Supreme God. Mankind, in comparison, was flawed and prone to sin. Mankind had the ability to exercise free will, which was the underlying cause of evil in the world, not an evil deity.



The timeline for the second century demonstrates that the Church faced recurring challenges to doctrine. This forced the development of clearly defined beliefs on the part of the Church.

Heretical Movements in the Second and Third Centuries

Ever since the beginning of Christianity, prophets have predicted the second coming of Christ and the end of the temporal world. This prediction was first made in the week after the death of Jesus. The same predictions are found in many early heretical movements. One of the prophets who rose to

make such predictions was Montanus, who lived in Phrygia in what is today Turkey.

In about 170, Montanus declared himself the official spokesperson of the Holy Spirit. He was accompanied by two women, Priscilla (or Prisca) and Maximilla, who made prophecies of their own. The Montanist movement that followed was based largely on the offering of prophecies, especially concerning the impending second coming. Through fasting to purify themselves, Montanists believed they could predict the exact day of the second coming, and many made pilgrimages to the desert to greet Christ at the moment of return. Because the end of the world was near, the sect believed that martyrdom was desirable and that trying to avoid it demonstrated weakness and worldly attachments. For the same reasons, the sect was anti-marriage and preached that members should leave their spouses. Finally, because the world was about to end, worldly possessions had no value and should be given away. Pope Zephyrinus (199–217) approved of the Montanists and their beliefs, as many of their teachings agreed with early Church ideals: fasting, prophecy, belief in the Holy Spirit, and martyrdom. However, Zephyrinus appears to have overlooked statements by Montanus claiming the position as official spokesman of the Holy Spirit.

Early Church history displays an attitude of tolerance toward heretical teachings, even when the pope and other Church elders were highly critical of heresy as a practice. During the first three centuries of Christianity, scholars were in agreement that religious belief should not be forced upon nonbelievers. In fact, whereas the Church during this period preferred excommunication as a spiritual punishment for heresy, the more traditional Mosaic Law was more rigid, preferring torture and death as penalties for a variety of sins. However, as Church and state became more closely associated in the era after Constantine, emperors increasingly saw their role as divinely appointed. While emperors maintained the Roman authority of *Pontifex Maximum*, they also expanded their thinking by referring to the Christian realm as "bishops of the exterior" and masters of Church policies as a partner to the temporal powers of Rome.

In the second and third centuries, several movements arose and were deemed heretical because they disagreed with the prevailing dogma. Collectively called *Monarchians*, these movements included *Dynamists*, *Modalists* and *Patripassians.*

The sect of Dynamism, also called *Adoptionism*, was founded by a Byzantium leather seller named Theodotus. He arrived in Rome (ca. 190–200), where he taught that Jesus was a man and not the son of God, and that the spirit of God was given to Jesus by inspiration. Pope Victor I (189–198) excommunicated Theodotus as a heretic. After Victor's death, Theodotus attempted

to elevate the sect and reform it as an alternative church. He appointed a priest named Natalis (*var.* Natalius) as the church's bishop. Eventually, Natalis was remorseful and threw himself on the mercy of Zephyrinus, who restored and forgave him. The Dynamist sect died out in the mid-third century, after a brief history of only modest influence.

Modalists were another small Monarchian sect, probably led by Praxeas, an Asiatic described in only one source, Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean*. He arrived in Rome (ca. 190–8) and taught the oneness of God, contradicting the official explanation of the Holy Trinity. Praxeas also preached these ideas in Carthage, but the sect did not take hold like some later movements. Similarly, Patripassians believed in the supremacy of one God and rejected the Trinity but did not influence Church history for long.

A movement called *Arianism* is considered the first widespread heresy in Church history. Its founder, Arius, a deacon from Alexandria, believed that Christ had not been a version of God or part of a trinity, but only a mortal man. He favored the concept of one God (the universal Father) as opposed to the Trinity favored by the Church. At that time (the fourth century), there was a debate within the Church between the two doctrines of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ. The origin of Arianism is traced to Lucian of Antioch, who, toward the end of the third century, had preached about the subservience of the Son of God to his Father. Arius picked up this theme and argued that, based on the human model, a father predates the son in all cases and therefore there had to be a time prior to birth in which the son (Jesus) had not existed. This made God the Father the dominant personage of the deity.

The controversy between Arianism and existing Christian doctrine was a serious matter and it moved rapidly. One early opponent was the bishop of Alexandria, who asked Arius to abandon his message and accept Church doctrine for the good of the Church. When Arius refused, the bishop excommunicated him and all of his followers. The bishop followed up with a letter to the Pope and all bishops warning that Arianism reduced Christ to the status of a mortal and without Godly attributes, making the movement a serious threat to the Church and a clear case of heresy.

Arias wrote his own letter to the bishop, arguing for his point of view on the matter. The letter-writing continued between the two and before long the entire church was involved, with the Egyptian bishops siding with the bishop of Alexandria and the bishops of Asia Minor siding with Arias.

In 324, Catholic and Arian believers began rioting with one another in the streets of Antioch. Constantine, working with Bishop Ossius of Cordoba, called a synod of over 50 bishops to resolve the conflict, not only in Antioch but everywhere else as well. Arias was condemned at the synod as a heretic, confirming the earlier decree, and the leaders of the synod recommended an

Drawing on vellum of the burning of Arian books. From MS CLXV, Biblioteca Capitolare, Vercelli, a compendium of canon law produced in northern Italy ca. 825. Text translates to "The synod of Nicaea ... number / ... of 318 fathers. And all / subscribed."

ecumenical council to settle the question. Constantine agreed and selected the city of Nicaea. The council began its hearings on May 20, 325, with 250 bishops in attendance, with late arrivals bringing the total to 318. Of these, only 22 supported Arias.

Athanasius, archdeacon under Alexander, denounced Arianism as blasphemy. Because the Arian supporters were such a small minority, it was impossible for them to prevail. A final creed declaring the Father and Son to be the same person was accepted on June 19, 325, and this document was signed by all bishops in attendance except two holdouts who refused to sign. These two, Libyans named Theonas of Marmarica and Secundas of Ptolemais, were condemned and, along with Arias, exiled to Illyricum. The council was hailed by Constantine as a great success based on the triumph over Arianism. Constantine also issued an order designed to do away with Arianism once and for all: "If any treatise composed by Arius is discovered, let it be consigned to the flames ... if anyone shall be caught concealing a book by Arius, and does not instantly bring it out and burn it, the penalty shall be death."[8]

The Council of Nicaea* may be described as a worldwide meeting to determine and agree upon the definition of Jesus. From that moment forward, the Church determined and defined the fundamental beliefs, although the debate over the Trinity and the mortality of Jesus continues to this day and heresy under the Nicaean definition is probably as rampant as ever, in spite of the centuries of Inquisition. This "final" determination led centuries later to the Great Schism between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The definition of God and the nature of the Trinity became major points of contention between the two sides which have not been resolved even in modern times. The *Filioque* (literally meaning "from the Son") split the Christian world permanently. This grew from the attempt at quelling Arianism, and the heretical movement's historical impact was the eventual split of the Christian Church.

Movements such as Arianism presented a serious problem for the early Church in other ways. The popularity and recurrence of heretical movements threatened the very existence of the Church. These movements were viewed as threats to the "one religion" policy put forth by the Church and supported by the state partnership. It was this partnership between the Roman Empire and the Church that changed the original policy of leniency toward heresy into the status of a capital crime on par with treason. In fact, Rome made no distinction between heresy and treason, in spite of protests among some Church leaders.

*The Nicaene Creed was created as an outgrowth of the A.D. 325 Council of Nicaea, which was followed by numerous additional councils and the final version the Creed established in final form at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

For example, St. Hilary of Poitiers loudly protested any use of force to spread Christianity or to preserve its influence. St. Hilary was a prolific writer and bishop of Poitiers who protested against Emperor Constantine II and his treatment of the Arians. Hilary wrote his protest to Constantine circa 355 (*Ad Constantium Augustum liber primus*), and the following year Hilary was summoned by the emperor and exiled for four years. At the time, the general view prevailed that the appropriate punishment for heresy, even when insidious, was excommunication. This gradually began to change.

During the fourth century, Lactantius, described as a Christian apologist, wrote that "Religion, being a matter of the will, it cannot be forced on anyone; in this matter it is better to employ words than blows. Of what use is cruelty? What has the rack to do with piety?"[9]

The participation in Church policy was increasingly influenced by Christian Roman emperors. Constantine, Theodosius and Valentinian III ruled during times when various penal laws were enacted in a codex aimed at defining heresy and the appropriate punishments, noting that heretics

> were styled infamous persons; all intercourse was forbidden to be held with them; they were deprived of all offices of profit and dignity in the civil administration, while all burdensome offices, both of the camp and of the curia, were imposed upon them; they were disqualified from disposing of their own estates by will, or of accepting estates bequeathed to them by others; they were denied the right of giving or receiving donations, of contracting, buying, and selling; pecuniary fines were imposed upon them; they were often proscribed and banished, and in many cases scourged before being sent into exile. In some particularly aggravated cases sentence of death was pronounced upon heretics, though seldom executed in the time of the Christian emperors of Rome.... Heretical teachers were forbidden to propagate their doctrines publicly or privately; to hold public disputations; to ordain bishops, presbyters, or any other clergy; to hold religious meetings; to build conventicles [secret religious meetings or places where such meetings were held] or to avail themselves of money bequeathed to them for that purpose. Slaves were allowed to inform against their heretical masters and to purchase their freedom by coming over to the Church. The children of heretical parents were denied their patrimony and inheritance unless they returned to the Catholic Church. The books of heretics were ordered to be burned.[10]

The codex included no fewer than 65 detailed varieties of heresy and the appropriate punishments for each.[11]

In this early period, the Church was in conflict not only with the occasional isolated and individual heretical movements, but also with a variety of Gnostic sects. The Gnostic movement had numerous variations, but there is a common theme: humans are divine souls trapped in the physical world and

created by a god who is imperfect and, in some sects, evil and known as the *demiurge*. This being co-exists with a god of pure good. In order to be freed from the flaws of the physical world, believers sought *gnosis*, spiritual knowledge only through direct knowledge of God. Jesus was believed to be the material embodiment of the Supreme Being whose purpose was to bring gnosis to mankind. This separation between good and evil as absolutes was an idea that persisted throughout early Christian history, to rise again in later centuries in the Cathar movement.

One prominent Gnostic sect of the 4th century was *Manichaeism*, which originated in Persia and was based on the writings of its founding prophet Mani (ca. 210–276). He claimed to have received divine revelations and orders to form the sect and begin missionary work. He began preaching in India and then in Persia and as far as Egypt. This movement spread over the next 100 years to China and west to the Roman Empire. The Christian Church labeled the movement a form of heresy as soon as it was encountered. In 387, Augustine of Hippo converted to Christianity from Manichaeism, a few years after a decree issued by Emperor Theodosius I mandating the death penalty for Manichaeans. Augustine wrote in his well-known work *Confessions* that after spending more than eight years as a Manichaean, he realized that their beliefs contradicted his own. Augustine wrote:

> Therefore I fell among men proudly raving, very carnal, and voluble, in whose mouths were the snares of the devil — the birdlime being composed of a mixture of the syllables of Thy name, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. These names departed not out of their mouths, but so far forth as the sound only and the clatter of the tongue, for the heart was empty of truth.[12]

Saint Augustine, illustration from the Nuremberg Chronicle, by Hartmann Schedel, 1493.

Augustine's conclusions conformed to the Roman state and Church view that only Christianity could be allowed to survive among beliefs.

The sect combined elements of Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Babylonian beliefs with elements of Christianity. The central belief in dualism (good and evil) supported this sect for over 1,000 years, primarily in the Middle Eastern regions and the Balkans and east to India, Tibet and China, where the sect is believed to have died out around the year 1000. Its founder Mani proclaimed himself the *paraclete* (the personification of the Holy Spirit) which had been promised by Jesus, a claim called blasphemous by the Church. The entire Old Testament was rejected entirely by Mani. The Book of Acts was also rejected because it mentioned the appearance of the Holy Spirit, a role Mani claimed belonged solely to him. Finally, the historical Jesus was rejected by Mani and described as an ordinary man whose death was merely symbolic.

A closely related movement was *Priscillianism*, developed in the fourth century by Priscillian. This movement, which began in the Iberian Peninsula, evolved into a form of dualism called Gnostic-Manichaean doctrine, and was deemed heresy by the Roman Church. This variety of Christianity promoted the belief in two separate kingdoms, Light and Darkness. Human souls were meant to conquer evil, but had fallen out of grace and were imprisoned in physical bodies. The sect also believed in an eternal conflict between the Light (led by the Twelve Patriarchs) and the Darkness (represented by the 12 signs of the zodiac).

Gnosticism was not the only challenge faced by the Church at the time. In the last half of the fourth century, Apollinaris the Younger, bishop of Laodicea, gained allies within the Church (including notables such as Saints Basil and Jerome). Saint Jerome wrote that Apollinaris created many volumes of Scripture in Greek as well as other writings (including condemnation of other heresies such as Arianism). The views offered by Apollinaris in his own writings included rejection of the idea of Christ as a flawed human. He argued that for Christ to be without sin, he could not have also been human (since humans cannot avoid sin) nor could he have possessed free will. He must be divine to avoid this contradiction.

These views were denounced by the Church as heresy. Pope Damasus I (366–84) declared Apollinaris a heretic, and this finding was confirmed at the 377 Council of Constantinople. In 381, Damasus wrote:

> We pronounce anathema against them who say that the Word of God is in the human flesh in lieu and place of the human rational and intellective soul. For, the Word of God is the Son Himself. Neither did He come in the flesh to replace, but rather to assume and preserve from sin and save the rational and intellective soul of man.[13]

Apollinaris died about 392, and his followers continued on briefly. By 416, most of these sects had died out completely.

Toward the end of that century, a turning point came in the conflicts between the Church and the Donatist movement, a heterodoxy (doctrine at conflict with the orthodox position of the Church) that brought spiritual debate and chaos for the next 100 years. This movement, named for Donatus Magnus, believed that the Church had to be made up of saints to the exclusion of sinners. They further believed that baptisms performed by sinful priests were invalid. The movement was active in provinces of Roman North Africa and was not completely eradicated until Arab conquests of the region during the seventh and eighth centuries.[14]

The Donatist Movement

The origins of the Donatist movement went back to 311, in North Africa. It was active for 100 years and caused a widespread debate within the Church. Whether the movement was heresy or schism, the central question raised by the movement was: Should priests, as representatives of God on earth, be held to a higher moral standard than other people? Donatists wanted the Church to be led by saints and not by sinners.

The Church has always responded to this question by returning to the infallibility argument. The priest, who may be a flawed person, is not as significant as the force that motivates the priest's mission, which is the grace of God. This question arose for the first time early in the fourth century when Roman Emperor Diocletian (303–5), the last of the line of Caesars, persecuted Christians widely, expressing the desire to return to the "Golden Age of Rome." This era, called the Great Persecution, included a program of burning Christian books. Many Christians refused to turn over their books, preferring martyrdom. But others saved themselves by sacrificing their books. These members of the clergy were called *traditores*, which means "they who handed over." The word is the source of both "traitor" (one who turns over loyalty) and "tradition" (what is handed from one to another).

After Diocletian's death, Constantine became ruler of the Roman Empire and the traditores returned to the Church. Many of these traditores had been lying low for the duration of Diocletian's reign. However, many Christians believed that because they had betrayed their beliefs to save themselves, traditores were not worthy of administering the sacraments. Because these bishops and priests had collaborated with authorities, they were considered to be permanently excommunicated and deprived of their power to fulfill the duties of their office.

The troubling question resided with the sacrament of penance. Could a traditore recapture his communion with God? The Church opinion on this matter was that penance existed for this very purpose, to right the wrongs and forgive the sins of those who wanted to return to grace. Even so, the Church at times imposed a strict form of penance, which could involve years (at times decades) of waiting for and earning forgiveness. This public penance involved the penitent waiting outside the doors of the church and begging for prayers until the Church finally readmitted and reconciled the individual with the Church.

Under the rigors of the Donatist, the traditore could never be forgiven or readmitted and, because the guilty person was a priest or bishop, he could never be returned to his previous stature within the Church. The conflict could not be easily or quickly resolved, as the next 100 years demonstrated.

The first leader this movement was named Majorinus. When he died in 313, the movement was taken over by Donatus Magnus, a resident of Carthage in North Africa. The following year, Donatus was declared a heretic and excommunicated at the Roman Council (313) convened by Pope Miltiades (311–14), and this decision was confirmed at the first Synod of Arles (314). The synod began with an appeal by the Donatists to Constantine, the first example of an appeal to a secular authority against a decision by the Church, in this case, the initial Council of 313, called by Pope Miltiades.

Donatus continued to lead his sect, now termed Donatists, in spite of his excommunication. In 347 he was exiled to Gaul, where he died a few years later. The Donatist movement continued, however, and was based on a strict adherence to the core idea that members of the clergy should be held to a high standard, or should not be allowed to administer sacraments. The movement spread and in some cases, craved its own form of martyrdom. One sect of Donatists, the *Circumcellions*, created a great deal of havoc for the Church. This group preferred to be termed *Agonistici* (soldiers of Christ) and worshipped previous martyrs; in fact, many craved martyrdom for themselves. This group was quite fanatical and was in the habit of attacking travelers and beating them with blunt clubs (the weapon of choice, based on a single biblical verse in which Jesus told Peter to "put away your sword." [John 18:11]). As they attacked travelers, the Circumcellions shouted "*Laudes Deo!*" ("Praise the Lord"). The purpose of these attacks was to cause the travelers to defend themselves and kill their attackers, leading to the desired martyrdom.

This kind of extreme behavior did not make it easier for the more pacifistic Donatists to make their case. For the majority, the argument was more intellectual and dogmatic. When a bishop was deemed a traditore, local Donatists named an alternate bishop and announced that any sacraments administered by the original traditore bishop were invalid. The chaos that

ensued was based on uncertainty about which position was correct. The people no longer were sure whether baptisms were valid, for example. If a priest baptized a child who later died, it would be assumed that the innocent child would go to heaven. But if it later came to light that the priest had been a traditore, according to the Donatists, the baptism was deemed retroactively invalid. This retroactive removal of grace subverted the sacraments of baptism and penance and created uncertainty and chaos among the faithful.

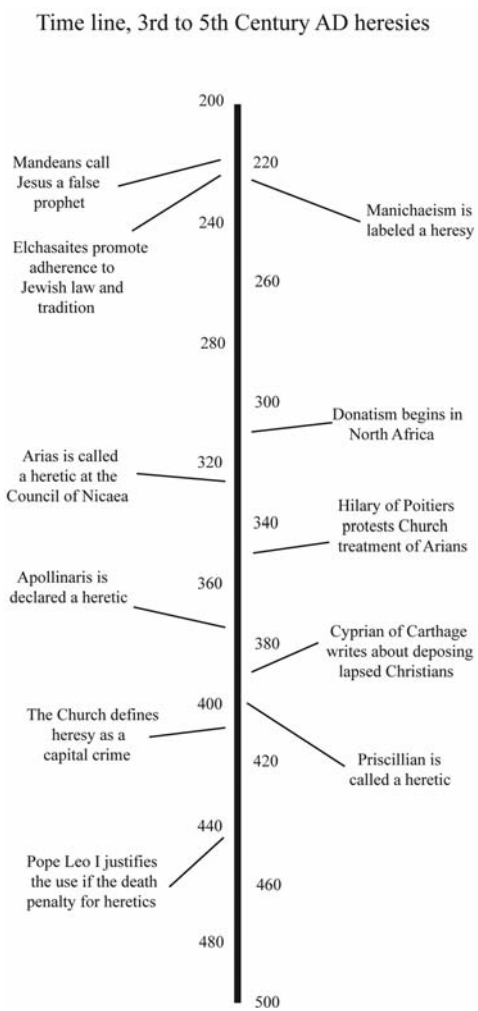
After a century of debate over this issue, the Church turned the problem over to Augustine to resolve once and for all. Augustine called the process of rebaptism by Donatist clergy to be itself invalid, and made the accusation that many of the founding Donatists had themselves been traditores. Augustine created a concept that would forever change the attitude toward the sacraments and take the strength out of the Donatist tenet.

Augustine's newly created doctrine was known as *ex opera operato* (from the work itself). This new idea stated that the sacraments granted God's grace automatically from their quality and "not based on the merits of the individual administering them" (*ex opera operantis*). From the fifth century onward, this became Church law. This new point of view not only ended the primary force behind the Donatist movement, it also provided the Church with an argument it could use against future heretical movements. Augustine had arrived at the perfect solution: Not only did it take a primary argument away from an influential heretical movement, it also make the sacraments permanent once they were administered, no matter who administered them.

Reforms were now more critical than ever to the Church, based on its difficulty with the Donatists. In 407, the Church enacted a new law that formally defined heresy for the first time as a capital crime on the same level with crimes against the Roman state. The death penalty could be applied for certain kinds of heresy. Although Augustine was one of the most prominent voices against Gnostic movements and heretics, he also was utterly opposed to physical punishments for such crimes. He wrote in *De haeresibus* in rejecting this use of force, preferring to encourage heretics to atone through public acts of submission. Augustine disagreed with Optatus of Milene, who spoke in defense of civil authorities and the use of force in cases of heresy. Augustine wrote of Christian charity and tolerance, preferring the imposition of fines over a death penalty, referring to heretics as stray lambs rather than as enemies of the state. At the same time, however, Augustine wrote to the leaders of heretical sects, warning them that the state had the right to impose physical punishment upon them.

By 447, Pope Leo I (440–61) declared once and for all that heretics were subject to the most severe punishments. As historian H. C. Lea wrote, Pope Leo I not only justified the death penalty but also declared that

if the followers of a heresy so damnable were allowed to live, there would be an end to human and Divine law. The final step had been taken and the church was definitely pledged to the suppression of heresy at any cost. It is impossible not to attribute to ecclesiastical influence the successive edicts by which, from the time of Theodosius the Great, persistence in heresy was punished with death.[15]



Heresies between the third and fifth century plagued the Church until Pope Leo I announced that the death penalty was a suitable punishment for heretics.

Leo I solidified the union of civil and Church law with this pronouncement. Whether generated by civil or Church authorities, the justification for the ultimate penalty was invariably that it was a necessary step to save pious souls. This policy continued up to and beyond the period of the Crusades. However, the conflict between extreme physical punishment and basic principles of tolerance continued as well. Explanations invariably justified extreme measures. However, this also was a departure from the traditional view that the Church should be tolerant of dissent and should use only its spiritual punishments on dissenters.

Thus ended the first four centuries of Church history. Growing from an age when excommunication was considered by many the most appropriate response to heresy, the partnership between the Church and Rome eased into a more stringent view of heresy as a capital offense not always distinguishable from treason. The lines between Church and state were permanently blurred. This important evolution led centuries later to the view that the Inquisition was not only necessary, but a natural role of the Church to protect itself from heresy.

The second significant change near the end of this period was Augustine's revolutionary interpretation of the sacraments as granting their benefits *ex opera operato* and not from the person administering them. From this point forward, the Church adopted a sterner view of heresy as not only a spiritual wrong, but also a temporal crime.

3

Heresy from the Fifth to the Eighth Century

> Long before the Christian Church possessed any judicial apparatus at all, long, in fact, before it even became a legally recognized part of the religions of the Roman world, Roman law had devised the inquisitorial procedure that later, adapted to different historical periods and problems, shaped the ecclesiastical and secular inquisitions of medieval and early modern Europe and of later European mythology.
>
> — Edward Peters, *Inquisition*, p. 11

The significant change in Church law early in the fifth century disabled the arguments of the Donatist sect, but that did not end the incidence of organized heretical movements. The Church found itself in an endless struggle with such challenges, with the level of heresies increasing over time. As the Roman Empire ended its dominance in the West by the fifth century, the Church became more aligned with Germanic kingdoms, and the definition of heresy evolved to more emphasis on internal cohesion among the clergy, expansion of the Church's political role, and alliances with monarchs throughout Europe.

Given the combination of Church policy and Roman law, punishments for heresy became harsher by the fifth century, and many heretical movements were forced underground. Augustine's "final word" on the subject had ended the debate once and for all in the Church view on the matter. Not everyone agreed.

The Dispute Over Original Sin

Trouble was brewing for the Church due to a belief denying the existence of original sin and questioning the need for God's grace. This became a major

controversy of the fifth century. Original sin was at the middle of the controversy between the Church and the Pelagian heresy.

The belief in original sin is one of the core issues of Christianity and has caused many philosophical splits among theologians and, in fact, aggravated the schism between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The belief in original sin states that all of mankind is responsible for the sin of Adam and Eve, also called the Fall of Man. This characteristic is used to explain mankind's tendency to commit sins and, under Christian doctrine, even a person who leads an entirely pious life is still as tainted with original sin as the most evil person. No distinction is made between minor flaws and total depravity; original sin implies a form of collective guilt.[1]

Biblical justification for this belief is based primarily on the writings of Paul. He wrote that

> It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as we all have sinned. For sin was already in the world before there was law; and although in the absence of law no reckoning is kept of sin, death held sway from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned as Adam did, by disobeying a direct command — and Adam foreshadows the man who was to come.[2]

Even Old Testament references are used to document original sin. For example, two verses stand out in the Book of Psalms:

> From my birth I have been evil;
> sinful from the time my mother conceived me.[3]
> The wicked go astray from birth;
> liars, no sooner born than they take the wrong ways.[4]

The dispute between Catholic and Orthodox concerning original sin is based on the phrasing itself. The Catholic belief is that all humans are born into a condition of original sin, which is separate from the actual sins that may be committed later. The Orthodox belief argues that the term "original sin" does not appear anywhere in the Bible and that humans are not directly responsible for the sin of Adam. Preferring the term "ancestral sin," the Orthodox view states that the sin belongs only to Adam and Eve and not to everyone else. It is a fine point but an important one. The action of Adam in disobeying God was *the* original sin, whereas the condition of "original sin" is a state of sinfulness that, in Christian belief, can be remedied only through the grace of God.

The belief in the idea of original sin formed disputes between the Church and heretical movements. Augustine wrote that Adam's guilt is transferred to all of his descendants through concupiscence (sexual desire), enfeebling

mankind, reducing intelligence and destroying freedom of the will.[5] Like so many of Augustine's writings, this formed the basis for official Catholic doctrine from this point forward. He argued that original sin was a form of pride and disobedience to God, inherent in the nature of mankind.

While the Eastern Orthodox philosophy differed from the Roman Catholic one in the sense of what original sin (or "ancestral" sin) meant, the debate over whether original sin even existed was the focus of heretical movements, notably of Pelagianism. More than 1,000 years after this debate began the Church was still debating this issue. At the Council of Trent, which convened between 1545 and 1563, the Church ruled that anyone disputing the Church position was guilty of heresy. The ruling was intended to serve as the "final word" on the subject, stating in part that

> 1. If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted, and through the offense of that prevarication incurred the wrath and indignation of god, and thus death with which God had previously threatened him, [Genesis 2:17] and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, [Hebrews 2:14] and that the entire Adam through that offense of prevarication was changed in body and soul for the worse, let him be anathema.
> 2. If anyone asserts that the transgression of Adam injured him alone and not his posterity, [I Corinthians 15:21] and that the holiness and justice which he received from God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has transfused only death and the pains of the body into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul, let him be anathema, since he contradicts the Apostle who says:
>
>   By one man sin entered into the world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned. [Romans 5:12]
> 3. If anyone asserts that this sin of Adam, which in its origin is one, and by propagation, not by imitation, transfused into all, which is in each one as something that is his own, is taken away either by the forces of human nature or by a remedy other than the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, [I Timothy 2:5] who has reconciled us to God in his own blood, made unto us justice, sanctification and redemption; [I Corinthians 1:30] or if he denies that that merit of Jesus Christ is applied both to adults and to infants by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the Church, let him be anathema; for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved. [Acts 4:12][6]

The Church's Catechism also summarizes this doctrinal policy in several paragraphs on the topic of original sin, stating that

> **388** With the progress of Revelation, the reality of sin is also illuminated. Although to some extent the People of God in the Old Testament had tried to understand the pathos of the human condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in Genesis, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. [Romans 5:12–21] We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin. The Spirit-Paraclete, sent by the risen Christ, came to "convict the world concerning sin," [John 16:8] by revealing him who is its Redeemer.
>
> **389** The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the "reverse side" of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ, [I Corinthians 2:16] knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.
>
> **416** By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings.
>
> **417** Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants' human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin."
>
> **418** As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called "concupiscence").[7]

The one exception to the Catholic doctrine of original sin involves the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Jesus' mother. This belief states that Mary, unique among humans, was born without original sin. This qualification was deemed essential in order to identify Mary as the Mother of God.

This background is important because the debate over original sin was the basis for the most significant heresy early in the fifth century, the Pelagian heresy. The Church was compelled to dispute this heretical sect directly because it challenged the entire concept of original sin, also drawing into doubt the basis for the salvation offered through Christ.

The Pelagian Heresy

Pelagius came from Britain and spent many years living in Rome. He was well respected as a scholar and a pious man; even Augustine praised him as "saintly." However, one of the most serious heretical movements, *Pelagianism*, is named for him. Pelagius disputed the validity of original sin generating from Adam and Eve, preaching an alternative view that mankind made choices and that Adam had simply made a poor choice. Pelagius expressed these

thoughts in his writings, making his views more in line with pagan beliefs predating Christianity. For example, he spoke of man's free will as opposed to original sin.

The philosophy Pelagius offered further viewed Jesus as an example of how human nature can overcome temptation and sin, and most revolutionary of all, that mankind could achieve eternal life even *without* achieving grace. He believed that everyone was personally responsible for their decisions; but he went beyond the point of view, proclaiming that mankind is neither damned by Adam's decision nor saved by Christ's sacrifice. Like so many of the challenges to Church views, this movement forced the Church to more carefully and completely define its own doctrine. Augustine, once again, worked to develop clarity in definition of original sin and its meaning, and of the concept of grace. These ideas, central to the Catholic philosophy of modern times, grew from the conflict between Pelagius and the Church.

During the period when these matters were being hotly debated, Pelagius found an ally in Caelestius, an influential lawyer practicing a life of asceticism.* He worked with Pelagius to define the tenets of the movement, all of which conflicted with Church doctrine. In his work *Contra traducem peccati*, Caelestius summarized six primary tenets:

1. Adam would have died even if he had not sinned.
2. Adam's sin harmed him but did not carry over to the entire human race.
3. Newborn children naturally have the same state of grace as Adam did before his fall.
4. Mankind does not die because of Adam's sin, nor is it granted salvation by Christ.
5. The older Mosaic Law is equal in value to the Gospels.
6. Humans who were without sin were born and lived before the advent of Christ.

These revolutionary beliefs summarized the beliefs of Pelagianism. Caelestius was ordered to appear before the Synod of Carthage in 411, where he refused to retract his published beliefs. He argued that the sin of Adam was an unresolved question and that it was not heresy to deny that sin. The synod condemned his six tenets. Caelestius left Carthage and became ordained as a priest in Ephesus (in Asia Minor).

The alternate theology, meanwhile, had influenced many Christians in

*Asceticism (from the Greek *askesis*) means "practice" and originally referred to athletic ability. Christian asceticism was modified to mean spiritual practice and exercise, development of the habit of virtue. This virtue is developed by resisting base urges through self-deprivation, fasting, prayer, and other means. Many ascetics took this idea to extremes, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, leading to a common view of this movement as a form of fanaticism.

and near Carthage. Augustine wrote two works in rebuttals, *De peccatorum meritis et de baptismo parvulorum* (On Merits and Remission of Sin, and Infant Baptism) and *De spiritu et litera* (On the Spirit and the Letter). In these works Augustine argued strongly for and carefully defined many of the permanent doctrines of the Church that remain in effect to this day. These include acceptance of the concept and existence of original sin, the necessity of infant baptism, the impossibility of achieving a temporal life without sin, and the need for interior grace (*spiritus*) as opposed to the exterior grace of the law (*litera*).

Although Caelestius and his works had been directly disputed by the influential Augustine, Pelagius himself was not silent. In 415, he published *De natura* (On Nature), supporting his beliefs by citing past notables such as Ambrose, Hilary, Jerome and even Augustine. The same year, Augustine responded in his own published *De natura et gratia* (On Nature and Grace), disputing not only his claims but also his interpretations of past scholarly works. Jerome also responded, directly accusing Pelagius of heresy. Pelagius was summoned to a new synod in December 415, consisting of 14 bishops and held in Diospolis. He appeared but his primary accusers were not in attendance. Contrary to the published tenets of the ascetic Caelestius, Pelagius explained to the synod that he acknowledged the need for help from God in achieving a sin-free life. He also said that the remaining beliefs published by Caelestius had not come from his teachings. The synod concluded that Pelagius had not committed heresy, and it declared him worthy of continuing in communion with the Church.

In 416, reacting to the findings of the synod of Diospolis, a new synod was convened in Carthage and attended by 67 bishops. At the same time, 59 other bishops attended a synod in Mileve. Both of these synods condemned the views of both Pelagius and his ally Caelestius, stating they were contrary to Church doctrine. Each of the synods wrote letters to Pope Innocent I (401–417), and the pope confirmed the teachings surrounding original sin and grace. The pope excluded Pelagius and Caelestius from communion with the Church until they rejected their previous statements and beliefs. Augustine announced that the matter was settled. But his pronouncement was premature.

Pope Innocent I passed away on March 12, 417, and was followed by Pope Zosimus (417–18). In spite of the previous pope's determination in the Pelagian heresy, Zosimus reopened the matter and was influenced by a well-written letter of explanation that Pelagius sent to him. Pelagius had continued publishing, but now his tenets were moving more toward accepted views expressed by Augustine. Caelestius traveled to Rome in 417 to visit the pope, where he professed his beliefs in all Church doctrine. The pope quickly decided that Pelagius and Caelestius were not heretics and cleared them of

the judgment. The African bishops confronted Zosimus, and at the Council of Carthage of 418, the pope gave in and agreed that Innocent's proclamation remained in effect. In a document called *Tractoria*, Zosimus reversed his previous position and once again declared Pelagianism to be heresy. At this council, several important canons reiterating the Church doctrine were adopted. These once and for all defined the central beliefs of the Church that have remained in effect to this day. These basic beliefs include:

- Adam's death (and physical death of all humans ever since) was caused by his sin.
- Because all humans are born with original sin, infants must be baptized or they cannot have salvation.
- Grace includes forgiveness of past sins and also helps avoid future sins.
- The grace of Christ gives mankind knowledge of God's will and also provides the strength and will to obey his commandments.
- Without God's grace, it is impossible to perform good deeds.
- Mankind must confess sins and accept the fact that all men are sinners.

The intent of so carefully stating these basic beliefs was to settle once and for all the controversy raised by Pelagianism. Any bishop who refused to sign on to these beliefs was immediately deposed and banished. At the same time that the Church defined its condemnation of the heretic sect, Emperor Honorius banished all Pelagians from Italy.

Some bishops refused to sign on to the newly defined doctrines. Among these were 18 bishops of Italy, including Julian of Eclanum. Julian protested specifically against Zosimus and his writings in *Tractoria* and, at the same time, assumed leadership among the Pelagians. A literary exchange ensued between Julian and Augustine. After several years, Julian joined fellow exiles, the bishops of Florus, Orontios and Fabius, and the four met with Nestorius in Constantinople in 429. Nestorius not only supported the exiled bishops but to some extent agreed with them. The following year, however, Emperor Theodosius II banished the bishops, and the condemnation originally decreed in the West was confirmed at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431.

The sect remained active for many years, mostly in Gaul and Britain. As late as 519, the sect was known to exist in Wales, where a synod was held in Brefy and the Pelagian problem was discussed. The Second Synod of Orange in 529 also mentioned the problems of the sect, and this date marked the end of Pelagianism as an influential force. Although the sect was not prominent for long, its challenge of the Church doctrine of original sin was viewed as a serious departure from the core beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Nestorianism and Monophysitism Movements

Another of the outspoken heretics of the day was Nestorius, a monk from Antioch. His views further challenged original sin and the assumed exemption of Mary. He was named patriarch of Constantinople in 428. On Christmas day of that year, Nestorius spoke from his pulpit and introduced a theme, claiming that "Mary did not give birth to God." He further claimed that Jesus was not God, but that God embraced Jesus the man. The Church position was that Jesus was the Son of God, and any discussion of Jesus as mere mortal was not acceptable.

The Church believed in the fusion of humanity and divinity in Jesus as *perfect*; a challenge to this concept was also a challenge to a basic Christian doctrine. Although members of the congregation argued with Nestorius, he continued to promote his theme. As patriarch, he had the power to excommunicate; any members of the clergy who challenged his beliefs too strongly were promptly excommunicated and many were even imprisoned. The essence of his message was a denial of Christ as a being both human and divine, and the claim that Mary's role was solely as mother to Jesus the man and not as mother of God. He defined Mary's role as *Christotokos* (mother of Christ) but he refused to recognize Mary as *Theotokos* (mother of God).

Copies of the Nestorius sermons were distributed widely and Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, demanded that Nestorius reverse his view and complained to Pope Celestine I (422–32). Celestine instructed Cyril to investigate further and to threaten excommunication if Nestorius did not admit his error. Cyril soon reported that Nestorius was openly preaching heresy, and Celestine called a synod in 430; at that synod, he confirmed Nestorius' excommunication while restoring to grace all whom Nestorius had himself excommunicated.

Nestorius ignored the pope's sentence, declaring his beliefs to be correct and blaming Cyril for the pope's action, citing jealousy as his true motive. He went into exile in the desert of Egypt, where he died circa 450. Although his teachings were short-lived and did not have a large following the ideas spread throughout Asia and led to a similar heretical movement, *Monophysitism*. Eutyches of Constantinople preached the oneness of Christ (*Monophysis*) as divine and human. This also went against the Church position that Jesus was the Son of God as well as a man, two people in one; so Flavian, the new patriarch of Constantinople, deposed and excommunicated Eutyches. In 449, Emperor Theodosius II called a general council. However, the patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, refused to recognize the Pope's emissaries to this council. These emissaries had arrived at the council with a document from Pope Leo I. In this document, Leo declared that Christ was one divine person with two separate and perfect natures, one divine and one human. When this

statement was read out loud, a riot broke out and the two emissaries were beaten and one, Flavian, later died from the attack. The other, Hilary, returned to Rome and reported to Pope Leo.

The pope condemned the actions of the council and named it the "Robber Council of Ephesus." He also excommunicated Dioscorus and called for a new council, although this demand was ignored. However, Theodosius II's successor, Marcian, granted the Pope's request and the Fourth Ecumenical Council was held at Chalcedon, a city in Bithynia in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The council convened on October 8, 451, and continued to November 1. Approximately 600 bishops attended. Leo's previous statement, now known as the Tome of Leo, was again read and this time was received with enthusiasm and agreement. However, the non–Greek bishops from the churches of Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia and Armenia did not agree and broke away from the rest of the Church, labeling themselves non–Chalcedonian (or, opposed to the conclusions reached at Chalcedon).

For the next 100 years, the followers of Monophysitism protested against the Chalcedon decision. The movement's most influential ally was Theodora, wife of Emperor Justinian (527–65). Theodora tried to have Monophysites named to the papacy. Influential in this movement were Vigilius of Rome and Anthimius of Constantinople. The empress promised Vigilius the papacy. After years of intrigue and struggle between Rome and the Monophysites, Theodora ordered her general Belisaris to arrest Pope Silverius (536–37) and exile him. Theodora's ally Vigilius (537–55) arranged for the pope to be exiled and then took his place. Now the Monophysites controlled the papacy.

Theodora's dreams of a Church dominated by the Monophysites did not come to be, however. In 540, Pope Vigilius sent two letters, one to Emperor Justinian and the other to Patriarch Menas. In these writings, Vigilius expressed his support for the findings of the Synods of Ephasus and Chalcadon and expressed complete agreement with Pope Leo's position on the question of Monophysitism, directly challenging Theodora's views.

In 547, Theodora had the pope imprisoned in Constantinople, where he remained for the next seven years. Vigilius, previously an ambitious politician and heretic, had tried to redeem himself by reversing his previous position, declaring he had spoken "wrongly and foolishly." His confirmation of Leo's doctrinal positions were what led to his imprisonment. Justinian finally granted Vigilius permission to return to Rome, but he died in Sicily during his journey back. The conflict between the accepted Church doctrine and Monophysitism died out in the Western Church, but continues even today as a controversial but acknowledged belief in the churches of Egypt, Syria, Armenia and Ethiopia.

The Fervor of Paulicianism

In the sixth century, a new type of heretical movement began to appear, one which attempted more than previous movements to reconcile Christian and pagan beliefs. The most important of these militant movements was the Paulicians, labeled by the Church as the New Manichaeans but in terms of belief, they were more like the followers of Marcion. The Paulicians' founders were former officers in the Byzantine army, and claimed to be the direct extension of the Church Paul founded in Corinth.

Their primary belief was in a distinction between two Gods: one who created the temporal existence, and the other who ruled over heaven; only the latter should be worshipped. The sect discounted the Old Testament, the incarnation of Christ (rather, Christ had been sent into the world as an angel), and belief in Mary as Christ's mother. A true baptism, Paulicians believed, consisted only in hearing the word of Christ and accepting it, without the need for further ritual.

The sect further rejected all sacraments and Catholic ritual, considering themselves the true apostles and prophets, some even claiming to be reincarnations of people named by Saint Paul in his writings of the New Testament. Fearing retribution from the Church, many Paulicians lived as Catholics in public. The first known Paulician community was founded in Kibossa (in Armenia) by Constantine of Mananalis, a Syrian who changed his named to Silvanus. After preaching the belief for 27 years, Silvanus was arrested, tried for heresy and condemned to death by stoning. Many other members of this sect were executed into the eighth century and beyond. By the first decade of the ninth century, the influence of Paulicianism had waned. However, Sergius-Tychicus, a zealot of the sect, formed a revised sect, only to face ongoing persecution by a series of emperors. The reason for such focused arrest and execution was the unceasing militancy of the Paulicians. They were constantly forming raiding parties and attacking outposts of the empire, often in organized and widespread campaigns. During the reign of Basil I, a Paulician army invaded Asia Minor almost as far as Constantinople, where they were finally defeated. Basil destroyed the Paulician army in 871; however, isolated pockets of the sect continued to practice throughout the eastern Empire. In the ninth and tenth centuries, both the government and the Church had to continually put down rebellions and assaults initiated by Paulicians.

The heresy was finally ended militarily by Emperor Alexius Comnenus (reign 1081–1118) near the time of the First Crusade.* However, the Pauli-

*Comnenus played an important role in the origins of the First Crusade. He appealed to Pope Urban II in 1095 for assistance in recruiting mercenaries to defend the Eastern Empire against the Seljuk Turks. Urban's response was to form the First Crusade in cooperation with Comnenus.

cianism sect influenced the later Cathar movement in France; and in Armenia, communities of this sect existed as late as the nineteenth century.

Gregory the Great

Late in the sixth century, Gregory I was elected pope (590–604). He is associated with the beginnings of Western music based in the Gregorian chant. It is more likely that this musical advancement was named for his era rather than for anything Gregory contributed directly. He was a prolific writer and promoted the expansion of monasteries and the monastic life and was the first monk to become pope. His works included *Dialogues*, a history of St. Benedict and other saints; *Commentary on Job*; *The Rule for Pastors*; and hundreds of letters and sermons.

Gregory did not become pope happily. A reluctantly elected pontiff, Gregory himself wrote that

> Under the pretense of being made a bishop, I have been brought back into the world, and I devote myself to the interests of secular things to a much greater extent than I recall ever having done when I was a layman. I have lost the deep joy of my peace and quiet, and while I seem outwardly to have risen, inwardly I am in a state of collapse.[8]

His first duty was to solve the problems of starvation in Rome created in a vacuum of power, natural disasters and a devastating plague. Combined with the need to protect against recurring barbarian invasions, these difficulties defined Gregory's early papal years. He focused effort on missionary work among the barbarian sects in northern Europe, most notably the Anglo-Saxon tribes of England. Gregory defined his role within the papacy as "servant of the servants of God" (*Servus Servorum Dei*).

He also preached in favor of private penance as opposed to the custom of public penance, especially for serious sins such as heresy. Gregory promoted the concept of purgatory (from the Latin *purgare*, meaning to cleanse). The belief that a soul has to be perfect to be accepted into heaven excludes those guilty of unrepentant mortal sins; purgatory was described as a place of temporary punishment for less serious (venial, or forgivable) sins, and souls are believed to be consigned to purgatory until their sins are purged.

Although Gregory and other early Church writers promoted this belief, purgatory was not formally adopted as part of Church dogma until the 16th century. At the Council of Trent (concluded in 1563) the Church issued a finding that

> Since the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, following the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught in

> sacred councils and very recently in this ecumenical council that there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are aided by the suffrages of the faithful and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar, the holy council commands the bishops that they strive diligently to the end that the sound doctrine of purgatory, transmitted by the Fathers and sacred councils, be believed and maintained by the faithful of Christ, and be everywhere taught and preached. The more difficult and subtle questions, however, and those that do not make for edification and from which there is for the most part no increase in piety, are to be excluded from popular instructions to uneducated people. Likewise, things that are uncertain or that have the appearance of falsehood they shall not permit to be made known publicly and discussed. But those things that tend to a certain kind of curiosity or superstition, or that savor of filthy lucre, they shall prohibit as scandals and stumbling-blocks to the faithful. The bishops shall see to it that the suffrages of the living, that is, the sacrifice of the mass, prayers, alms and other works of piety which they have been accustomed to perform for the faithful departed, be piously and devoutly discharged in accordance with the laws of the Church, and that whatever is due on their behalf from testamentary bequests or other ways, be discharged by the priests and ministers of the Church and others who are bound to render this service not in a perfunctory manner, but diligently and accurately.[9]

Numerous early writings supported the concept, including a statement by Tertullian, which accurately describes the Church's theme of purgatory: "A woman, after the death of her husband ... prays for his soul and asks that he may, while waiting, find rest; and that he may share in the first resurrection. And each year, on the anniversary of his death, she offers the sacrifice."[10]

Gregory worked to improve relations between the Church and the kingdom of the Franks, which led to a formal allegiance between the two, with Germanic kingdoms replacing the Roman Empire as temporal ally. He was also tireless in his efforts to resolve the many ongoing and recurring schisms between heretical movements of the day and the Roman Church. He believed in the final authority of the papacy, and was the first pope to use the term *ex cathedra*, meaning the full weight and authority of the papacy. Gregory was involved in the on-going debate between Rome and Constantinople as well and insisted that "Saint Peter's commission made all churches, Constantinople included, subject to Rome."[11]

The split between East and West, furthered by Gregory's attempts at creation of one single and authoritative central church in Rome, contributed to the permanent split between Rome and Constantinople. In many respects, this split eventually helped to justify the Crusades that came hundreds of years later. Gregory was involved in trying to settle differences between the Church and the Nestorianism movement. However, it was his early effort to convert the tribes of Europe that led to Gregory's most important contribution

to Church history, which occurred nearly 150 years after Gregory's day: the alliance between the Church and the Frankish empire of Charlemagne (Charles the Great).

Kings Replacing Emperors: Charlemagne

Even as the Roman Empire declined throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, the old Roman tradition of *inquisitio** survived in the Church. This process of inquiry into wrongdoing was, during these early years, applied primarily to investigation of clergy straying from accepted doctrine. The change from Roman Empire to an era of allegiance between Church and Germanic emperors brought with it a tradition of kingly responsibility. The king, this belief assumes, had an obligation to God for the spiritual good of his subjects. A tradition in Europe among Visigoth kings included exceptionally harsh and swift punishment of heretics.

Portrait of Carlo Magno. From "Grande illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto ossia storia delle città, dei borghi, comuni, castelli, ecc. fino ai tempi moderni" per cura di Cesare Cantù e d'altri letterati, Milano, Corona e Caimi Editori, 1858.

The formal arrangement between Church and state in this time was most apparent during the reign of Charlemagne (742–814). His name and title in Latin was *Carolus Magnus* (Charles the Great). As king of the Franks, he was the first strong continental ruler, and has been called the Father of Europe. Charlemagne was responsible for creating the great empires of France and Germany, as well as for a revival in art and culture through association with the Church.

*Originally referring to a legal proceeding, *inquisitio* is founded in ancient Roman law. It refers to the period of a trial in which evidence is gathered to develop a case, or "discovery" in modern law. An important distinction has to be made between this old concept, in which the process was applied to those charged with civil or criminal wrongdoing, versus its use to investigate personal beliefs. This change evolved within Church law as *inquisitio* began to be used to find and punish heretics.

Like his father, Pippin the Short, Charlemagne continued the tradition of protecting the Church. He battled the Lombards in Italy and the Saracens in Spain, and later forced the Saxons to accept Christianity.

Pope Leo III (795–816) fled Rome in 799, and asked Charlemagne to intervene and reinstate him as Pope. Charlemagne did so and, in gratitude, Leo crowned Charlemagne *Imperator Romanorum* (Emperor of the Romans) in Saint Peter's Basilica. This act was an attempt by the pope to transfer the power of empire away from Constantinople and grant it to Charlemagne. A conflict between Constantinople and Rome had been ongoing since 727, and declaring a Western ruler as Emperor was seen as a claim to authority and power. For Western Christians, the coronation had the desired effect and in many ways, Charlemagne's reign defined the political nature of Europe and the Church of the period as well as how the history of both has evolved since.

Charlemagne enacted sweeping legal reforms. In the history of the Inquisition, the reform that had the greatest impact was known as *Rügeverfahren*, meaning "procedure." Under this legal concept, judges were able to conduct inquests or hearings based on public knowledge of offenses or suspicion of wrongdoing on the basis of reputation. The idea of *mala fama* (ill fame) was nothing new in Germanic law, and the concept also bore a close resemblance to the Roman idea of *infamia* (infamy). This was a practice closely associated with later, more formalized procedures of the Inquisition. Charlemagne named trusted noblemen and clergy to act as traveling supervisors and courts. Individuals were allowed to register complaints to these so-called *missi* (those sent), and an investigation and judgment would follow. These ancient "circuit judges" had great discretion not only in interpreting law and equity, but also in defining it.

With this reform, Charlemagne created a means for settling disputes, but by involving the clergy as part of his partnership with the Church, he also expanded Church authority beyond the clergy. As a consequence, the older Roman *inquisitio* was preserved within Church law. Although the concept was originally intended to be applied only to clerical conflicts, it was inevitable that this would be expanded into civil matters as well. By the tenth century, synodal witnesses (*testes synodales*) were thought of as people of good character who were expected to denounce fellow citizens for crimes. The development of reliance upon such witnesses, in place of personal accusations between two people, foreshadowed a trend toward evangelical denunciation (*denuntiatio evangelica*). The assumption was that accusations made for personal reasons often led to "ecclesiastical justice."

A similar reform under Charlemagne was the visitation, in which bishops were expected to travel around the diocese and review lists of complaints offered by synodal witnesses. The power of bishops in this role was allowed

outside the realm of Germanic law. In matters of heresy and other Church violations, this helped shape and provide precedence for future Inquisition rules of conduct. Development of the later legal justification for inquisitional process was based in the evolution of Roman law tempered by application of Church investigative procedure, and then combined with Germanic law and tradition. Because each aspect of this evolving process included portions of past legal theories, many of the *inquisitio* methods and assumptions from many centuries earlier were applied to Inquisition hearings in the 15th century, and even later.

Iconoclasm

During the eighth and ninth centuries, the long-standing conflict within the Church concerning the use of icons became serious with the Iconoclasm (in Greek, *Eikonoklasmos*, or image-breaking) movement. This conflict between Eastern and Western branches of the church also led to a power struggle between the pope and the Roman emperor.

The veneration of Christ, Mary and saints through icons was controversial. Proponents (called *Iconodules*) argued that the icons in the form of statues and images were simply representations of a less tangible reality. Beyond this, however, many extended the view to the belief that temporal life itself was a mere shadow and not reality, while eternity and the spiritual realm were the real realities.

Opponents of this view, the idol smashers, or *Iconoclasts*, were fundamental in their beliefs, and "wanted to replace the religious icons with the traditional Christian symbols of the cross, the Book, and the elements of the Lord's supper. These objects alone, they insisted, should be considered holy."[12]

Iconoclasts opposed the use of icons for three reasons. First, they considered them idols to which prayers were offered, often citing as authority the commandment of God: "You must not make a carved image for yourself, nor the likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them in worship."[13] Second, icons were not supported by Church tradition and were even denounced. Third, because icons were physical, they were considered contrary to the natures of Christology expressed in the Nicaean Creed. ("We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.")

This problem — potentially worshipping the icon itself in place of the being it was supposed to represent — was thought of by Iconoclasts as superstition rather than faith:

> Icons, the images of Christ, the Virgin Mary or the saints, made of mosaic or fresco and covering the walls of churches, or more accessibly painted on wooden panels where they were frequently found in private lay hands, were seen as doors into the spiritual world. Not only were the saints easily recognizable in visions from their images in icons, but the icon itself was regarded as having an intimate relationship with the holy reality it represented.[14]

Although Iconoclasts could be viewed as attempting to discourage heretical beliefs, they were themselves branded as heretics, especially in the Roman Church. To this day, the controversy remains one of the most important differences between Catholic and Orthodox beliefs. The aversion to icons is at least partially traceable to the Paulician movement that began in the sixth century, in which all external matters (including sacraments, rites, and all use of relics) was rejected.

Emperor Leo III declared in 726 that all icons were forbidden by the Bible, citing Exodus and the commandment forbidding images and idols. He ordered that all icons be destroyed, and his orders were followed by soldiers. This led to civil disturbances in many churches around the empire. For example, over the gate to the Constantinople palace was a famous painting of Christ, the Christos antiphonetes, which was destroyed. This led to a full-scale riot. Patriarch Germanus I (715–30) protested strongly and in 729 asked Pope Gregory II (715–31) to reverse the order. Instead Emperor Leo III deposed Germanus as a traitor and appointed Anastasius (730–54) to replace him.

Even before Germanus appealed to Gregory II, the pope had received an order from the emperor to destroy all icons in Rome's churches. This included a threat by the emperor that, in the event of non-compliance, he would come to Rome and personally destroy the statue of Saint Peter and place the pope under arrest. Gregory replied in defense of icons, explaining the differences between icons and actual idols and articulating the rules for the use of icons in prayer and worship. The pope further criticized the emperor's interference in Church matters and cautioned him to stay out of ecclesiastical affairs. Gregory also stated that Christians in the West would never consent to the destruction of their images and detested the emperor's actions. Gregory also expressed regret that Emperor Leo did not see the error in his thinking. This ended the threat but increased the friction between emperor and pope.

In the East, the Iconoclasts continued destroying all icons and relics they could find. The movement extended to the destruction of monasteries and the murder as well as banishment or torture of monks. As part of this protest movement shrines were broken into and the bodies of saints burned, supported

by a rejection among Iconoclasts of prayer directly to saints. When Gregory II died in 731, his successor, Gregory III (731–41), continued to resist efforts from the East to dictate policy to Rome. The disagreement escalated as the emperor seized land belonging to Rome in southern Italy and Sicily. That same year, 731, Gregory convened a synod of 93 bishops in Rome. At this gathering, Gregory excommunicated all who had taken part in breaking or defiling images of Christ, Mary, the Apostles and the saints.

Emperor Leo III died in 741, and his policies were carried forward by his heir and son, Constantine V (741–75), who persecuted image-worship with even more vigor than his father. However, Artabasdus, husband of the late Leo's daughter, led a rebellion, named himself protector of the holy icons and claimed the title of emperor. Anastasius, who had replaced Germanus as patriarch, changed his position and supported Artabasdus, even going so far as to excommunicate Constantine V, declaring him a heretic. Constantine responded by sending his army to exact revenge. Artabasdus was blinded and Anastasius was publicly flogged, blinded, forced to return to Iconoclasm and then restored as patriarch. At a synod held in Constantinople in 754, and attended by 340 bishops (with the notable absence of Rome, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch), Constantine V decreed that images of Christ were forbidden; images and icons of the saints were banned. He also declared that it was blasphemy to make icons of those believed to reside with God. The synod concluded that "Image-worshippers are idolaters, adorers of wood and stone; the Emperors Leo and Constantine are lights of the Orthodox faith, our saviors from idolatry."[15]

All bishops of the empire were required to sign pledges to eliminate icons within their dioceses, and in place of original paintings and statues, churches were adorned with paintings of landscapes and fruit. Many who refused to go along were punished, accused of heresy, and even killed. Monks were tortured and killed based on the argument that the monastic movement was a center of resistance to Iconoclasm. In 814, after more than 50 years of relaxed enforcement of the rule against icons, the Iconoclast movement again asserted itself. At a meeting that year, the decisions of the 754 synod were repeated and augmented. In opposition to this was the patriarch of Constantinople, Nicephorus I (806–15). He was invited by the emperor to a discussion of the issue, which he refused. He argued that the question had been settled previously. A monk named Theodore, abbot of the Studium monastery in Constantinople, supported Nicephorus and became known as chief defender of the icons. He accused the Iconoclasts of being Christological heretics because they denied Christ's human nature (which could be represented via icons).

With the controversy nowhere near being settled, Catholics, including those living in the East, became increasingly aligned with the views of Rome.

The two sides — East and West — were thus moved toward the Great Schism in which the churches went their separate ways, due partly to this dispute, among other points of contention. As the result of continued persecution, great numbers of Christians fled westward, especially monks. Many Catholics who were unable to escape in the early ninth century were imprisoned and tortured, accused of idolatry and heresy. All icons had been removed by this time from the Eastern churches, and prisons were full of Iconodules. Faithful Catholics not in prison were reduced to only a small number hiding throughout the East, while the vast majority had fled to areas under Rome's control.

In 842 a synod at Constantinople excommunicated all Iconoclasts, ending the heresy as far as the Eastern Church was concerned. On February 19, 842, icons were finally allowed back into the churches. That day, also the first Sunday of Lent, was declared the "Feast of Orthodoxy" by the Byzantine Church, and remains celebrated to this day as Christianity's triumph over all types of heresy.

The lengthy conflict between Iconoclasts and the long-persecuted Iconodules was significant, and Iconoclasm came to be known as the last of the "old heresies."

4

Heresies in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries

> In the first Christian centuries, there was a need to establish how Christian doctrine "fitted" with existing systems of religious belief in the Greek and Roman world. It was not contentious that it was distinct from the polytheisms of paganism. It was a monotheistic religion which, like Judaism, would have nothing to do with the pervasive syncretism of the Roman world. But it was not so easy to say what made it unlike any other religion.
>
> —G. R. Evans, *A Brief History of Heresy*

In the centuries approaching the first millennium, Gnosticism evolved into numerous dualist variations, all of which were condemned by the Church as heretical. The basic Church tenet identifying a sole, supreme God was contradicted by the dualist view of coexisting "good" and "evil" deities. Dualism predated Christianity, so it was not a simple matter for the Church to eradicate it once and for all or to replace it as a more palatable system of beliefs.

During this period, the Church struggled with the problem of how the forces of good and evil could exist and interact in the world, and what beings controlled each force. Augustine had described evil as a turning away from God that was a function of mankind's free will. But this concept did not explain the existence of spiritual or cosmic evil, which still required an explanation and rationale. During the ninth and tenth centuries, this question dominated the Church in its struggle against heretical trends.

From the Gnostic point of view, there had to be an evil deity because otherwise it was incomprehensible how a single, good deity could allow evil to exist. To the Christian theologian, evil grew from mankind's weakness and tendency to sin despite God's desire. So evil, from this point of view, was indeed a turning away from God. Even so, the explanation did not satisfy the Gnostic.

Good Versus Evil and the Question of Free Will

The great Church intellectual Augustine faced a challenge in trying to reconcile Gnosticism with Catholic beliefs. The initial challenge of distinguishing between good and evil formed the early basis for heretical movements. However, this evolved into distinctions between rich and poor, notably between rich priests and poor peasants, and between lives of luxury for clerics and lives of poverty and devotion by breakaway Christian movements. Over time, dualist beliefs evolved into disputes between these temporal groups: clerical versus lay, and rich versus poor. So the theological debate spilled over into the social, cultural and political arenas. Initially, however, Augustine primarily addressed the issue of good versus evil as one of spiritual forces.

The question of free will posed a challenge for Augustine. If individuals were born with free will, they could choose either good or evil. But if God is all-knowing, does he not also know how people will choose? And why would anyone choose evil over good? Augustine explained that free will was necessary in order for mankind to make a conscious choice. At the same time, Augustine said, once a person knows about God and makes a conscious decision to defy him, the spiritual crime has occurred. So free will places man in the position of *knowingly* turning his back on God and on the forces of good. Augustine wrote:

> Now He has revealed to us, through His Holy Scriptures, that there is in a man a free choice of will. But how He has revealed this I do not recount in human language, but in divine. There is, to begin with, the fact that God's precepts themselves would be of no use to a man unless he had free choice of will, so that by performing them he might obtain the promised rewards....
>
> The apostle also says: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold back the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him are from the creation of the world clearly seen — being understood by the things that are made — even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are inexcusable."[1]

Augustine's description of free will rationalized the existence of evil as one of free choice made by man, claiming that there was no argument for an evil deity controlling the temporal world. However, the question of the source of an *evil* free choice also needed to be addressed. Augustine's definition of Satan as a fallen angel partially addressed this problem, but did not explain why any being, having free will, would want to defy a loving God.

In later years (late 11th century), Anselm of Canterbury provided one possible explanation. Fallen angels were those who desired to be god-like,

with pride the cause of their fall from God's grace. A fallen angel made a conscious choice, Anselm rationalized, to prefer evil over good, after being granted knowledge from God. The implication here is that mankind makes the same choice based on knowledge and on free will:

> In discussing the knowledge of good and evil in the good angels, Anselm argues that sin need not have existed for the good angels to know the difference between good and evil. Even if no angels ever chose to rebel, God could have given this knowledge to the angels in some way. But since some angels did choose evil and sinned, God used them as an example for the good angels to confirm them in the goodness and obedience they chose, showing his power to bring good from evil. Evil, thus, serves a purpose and is not independent of God's will and power. Otherwise, Anselm concludes, "evil would abide unordered in the kingdom of omnipotent wisdom." ("*ut nec malum inordinatum in regno omnipotentis sapientiæ remaneret.*")[2]

This supported and explained the Church's basis for distinguishing between good and evil among angels and also among men. There were not two gods, only one. He exemplified good in the universe and—given free will—in the decisions made by mortal man. However, evil was controlled and promoted by the fallen angel Satan, who was not a god but an angel. In the spiritual hierarchy, such a being was immortal but not a God. This was an attempt at explaining the dispute raised by dualist beliefs, while continuing to deny the possibility of more than one god. So the fallen angel became a hybrid being, immortal and powerful but not a god and not a temporal being either. The Church never accepted the idea of dual deities or of a hierarchy of deity-like beings. The fallen angel is meant to explain why evil can exist even with the all-powerful God in control of the universe.

To the Gnostic mind, this raised yet another question: If the sole God is all-powerful, why doesn't he simply extinguish Satan and modify the universe so that no evil exists? The answer to this is that mankind has to make a conscious choice between good and evil. In this explanation, the fallen angel provides an essential service to the Church's version of God's plan. Without temptation and without the opposing forces of good and evil, mankind would simply comply with God's plan for universal good; but without free will, there would be no process for consciously *selecting* the path of good.

The explanation was meant to provide an elegant solution to the significant problem that arose time and again in the debate over the meaning of good and evil. But it was not enough to explain why God did not simply eradicate evil. If God is all-powerful and created everything in the universe, did the same God also create evil? Or are there other gods on the dark side as Gnostics claimed? Augustine's description of Satan as an immortal but fallen angel provided an explanation. For many, the explanation did not make

sense because it continued to rely on the acceptance of a single, all-powerful God. The debate did not end with the attempt at rationalizing good and evil while continuing to acknowledge only one God. As heretical movements rose in the ninth and tenth centuries, the old arguments persisted and heretical movements expanded. In spite of efforts by the Church, heresy did not vanish or diminish; it expanded.

The unending struggle to define the oneness of God was made difficult as the Church itself expanded both geographically and in the number of practicing Christians. This expansion, helped by the alliance between Church and Roman Empire, rapidly accelerated the frequency of heretical movements, mostly dualistic in nature during these centuries. Even the split in the definition of God between Roman and Orthodox Churches demonstrated the difficulty in creating a single, universal dogma. One of the perplexing aspects of this is a core belief that, during the various synods and councils the Church held through the centuries, the Holy Spirit was guiding the decisions and conclusions of attendees. Even so, the Roman and Orthodox arms of the Church never agreed on the basic definition of God or the origins of the Holy Spirit as an aspect of God. So even with the assumption that divine guidance ruled over the meetings, the temporal forces within the Church were never able to reach agreement, even on the foundations of dogma. In fact, the political motives of popes and patriarchs often had more to do with the outcome of meetings than with divine guidance.

With internal debates perpetually at work within the Church, it was difficult for the Church to dispute heresies through mere excommunication, which partially explains why temporal punishments replaced the spiritual punishment. As the Church expanded geographically and politically, the tendency to use extreme measures against heretics expanded as well. Even with a solemn last word pronouncement on the topic (*consensus fidelium*) agreed to by dozens of bishops at the same time, the Church was never able to dispel heretical movements. It became obvious that mere proclamations that disputes had been ended did not actually end those disputes. The Church considered itself all-powerful and the voice of God, but not everyone agreed. By the nature of heretical movements, the "guilty" parties had already rejected the Church as the last word on the issue.

This problem became worse for the Church as Christianity became more successful and active in a wider region of the world. Over the centuries, even what seemed like simple proclamations could quickly turn into major disputes within the Church itself. One example was that of the Filioque, which led to a permanent Great Schism between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of the church.

The Filioque Dispute

The East/West split in the Church was based primarily on a fine point in dispute between the two centers of Christianity. Does the concept of the Holy Spirit come from both Father and Son or from the Father alone? The multiple personages of God became a major point of division in the ranks of the Church and never was resolved. In fact, over many centuries this basic question grew from its original proclamation, meant to quell a heresy, into a heated controversy that changed the whole face of the Christian world.

The word *Filioque* literally means "and from the Son." This phrase was added by the Roman Church to the Nicaean Creed in the fourth century, making the doctrinal claim that the Son (Jesus) was equal with God the Father as a divine individual. In the Orthodox Church, the Holy Spirit is derived only from God the Father. The language in the Roman version of the Creed is: "*Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum, et vivificantem: qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.* (And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.)"[3]

This controversy was the most important cause of the Great Schism between Catholic and Orthodox Churches in 1054. The Filioque had predated the schism by hundreds of years but never has been settled, even in modern times. At the point of the schism, both sides considered the other heretics and the expected exchange of excommunications accompanied the disagreement.

The dispute was raised by Photios I, patriarch of Constantinople (858–67 and 877–86). Also known as Saint Photios the Great, he was one of the powerful and intellectual Church leaders of the ninth century. He convened a council in Constantinople in 879, which condemned the Filioque and any other changes the Roman Church might later make to the Nicaean Creed's language. They declared the Filioque clause as heresy, with the written conclusion of this council explaining in part that

> The new doctrine, that "the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son," is contrary to the memorable declaration of our LORD, emphatically made respecting it: *which proceedeth from the Father* (John xv. 26), and contrary to the universal Confession of the Catholic Church as witnessed by the seven Ecumenical Councils, uttering "which proceedeth from the Father." (Symbol of Faith)....
>
> It was subjected to anathema, as a novelty and augmentation of the Creed, by the eighth Ecumenical Council, congregated at Constantinople for the pacification of the Eastern and Western Churches.[4]

The dispute set up a permanent position of both sides that the beliefs of each other were heretical. Repeated attempts to reconcile the question have failed throughout the centuries. The concept was not originally intended as a dispute

between the two Christian centers, however. It was first applied in the fourth century to criticize the dogmatic differences between the Roman Church and the heretical sect of Arianism. This sect's primary dispute with the Roman Church was its denial of the full deity status of Christ. Arianism argued that Christ had not generated God the Father; rather God the Son was created by God the Father and could not be treated as an *equal* deity. The Father had to have preceded the Son. In response, the Council of Toledo added the Filioque in 587 as an argument that Christ was divine since he had created, or *caused*, the creation of the Holy Spirit. This argument had also been offered by Augustine as justification for equal treatment of both Father and Son. He wrote that

> All those Catholic expounders of the divine Scriptures, both Old and New, whom I have been able to read, who have written before me concerning the Trinity, Who is God, have purposed to teach, according to the Scriptures, this doctrine, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality; and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God: although the Father hath begotten the Son, and so He who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and so He who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, Himself also co-equal with the Father and the Son, and pertaining to the unity of the Trinity.[5]

Ironically, the origin of the Filioque as a means for combating Arianism led to a far greater problem between East and West and, several hundred years later, to a permanent schism between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. The controversy accelerated when the two sides began citing biblical passages to make their respective cases. The Orthodox view cites John 15:26, which includes the phrase "the spirit of truth that issues from the Father" (Revised English Bible) or "the spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father" (New American Bible). No mention is made of "and the Son" as the Filioque reads.

The Roman Church cites John 20:22, in which Jesus said "Receive the Holy Spirit" as evidence that all three personages of the Holy Trinity are equally powerful and important. Also cited is Romans 8:9: "You live by the spirit, since God's Spirit dwells in you" (Revised English Bible); or "you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you" (New American Bible). References to John, Titus, Acts and other New Testament books complicate the debate and both sides have been able to find support for their positions. The end result — mutual excommunication or declaration of heresy — ensured that the debate would continue without end. The language has been parsed and argued repeatedly. The interpretation of what is meant by the expression, "The Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father" (or from Father and Son) is itself

debatable. The antagonism over this issue only grew. In the 12th century, the archbishop of Nicomedia wrote to the Roman Church complaining about its position in the dispute:

> [The Roman Church] has separated herself from us by her own deeds when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office.... How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman pontiff seated on the lofty throne of his glory wished to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves not the sons, of such a church and the Roman see would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves.[6]

The original Nicaean Creed was created during the first two Ecumenical Councils in 325 and 381, from which this dispute arose as part of the Arianism conflict. Following is the text of the original creed with Western changes shown in parentheses:

> We believe (I believe) in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and born of the Father before all ages. (God of God,) light of light, true God of true God. Begotten not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and was made man; was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried; and the third day rose again according to the Scriptures. And ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. And (I believe) in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), who together with the Father and the Son is to be adored and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess (I confess) one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for (I look for) the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.[7]

The more often cited and closely worded Apostle's Creed manages to avoid the Filioque in its wording, while making the same range of statements of belief:

> I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of

> saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.[8]

The Filioque debate was not the sole cause of the split in the Church. Some believe that Patriarch Photios used this theological disagreement as an excuse to sever ties with and reliance on the pope and the Roman Church. Photios had also criticized papal relationships with Frankish monarchs and their endorsement of these monarchs as emperors not only in Western Europe, but in the East as well. So the never-ending debate over Filioque certainly had a political aspect as well as a theological one. The conflict is well described by this passage:

> Although [the doctrinal difference on the procession of the Holy Spirit] existed before the schism, it assumed a practical importance only in connection with the broader ecclesiastical and political conflict between the patriarch and the pope, between Constantinople and Rome.
>
> The first serious outbreak of this conflict took place after the middle of the ninth century, when Photios and Nicolas, two of the ablest representatives of the rival churches, came into collision. Photios is one of the greatest of patriarchs, as Nicolas is one of the greatest of popes. The former was superior in learning, the latter in statesmanship; while in moral integrity, official pride and obstinacy both were fairly matched, except that the papal ambition towered above the patriarchal dignity.[9]

This schism between the two sides was aggravated by the dispute over the definition of God:

> The single word Filioque keeps the oldest, largest, and most nearly related churches divided since the ninth century, and still forbids a reunion. The Eastern Church regards the doctrine of the single procession as the cornerstone of orthodoxy, and the doctrine of the double procession as the mother of all heresies. She has held most tenaciously to her view since the fourth century, and is not likely ever to give it up. Nor can the Roman church change her doctrine of the double procession without sacrificing the principle of infallibility.[10]

Photios was in trouble with the Western Church not only because of the long-standing dispute over the nature of God, but also because he challenged the pope's claim to supremacy over the entire Church. In 858, as a result, he was excommunicated by Pope Nicholas.

During the same period, another controversy arose over the beliefs of Gottschalk of Orbais, a monk who put forth the concept of double predestination. This concept states that God has determined in advance who will be saved, and who will be damned (described also as eternal salvation and eternal reprobation). Archbishop Rabanus Maurus (ca. 780–856) took up the matter at the Synod of Mainz. Unfortunately for Gottschalk, he and Rabanus had a history of conflict. Gottschalk had been presented by his par-

ents as an oblate. Rabanus argued that Gottschalk had to choice but to dedicate his life to the Church, and, winning his argument, forced Gottschalk to become a monk. Given no escape, Gottschalk dedicated himself to the Church literature, especially books written by Augustine. One of Augustine's central themes was that no one could have salvation without God's grace, which, in fact, was the original source for the idea of predestination. Gottschalk embraced Augustine's theory on the topic.

Rabanus was determined to bring Gottschalk into line and make an example of him. The archbishop declared Gottschalk a heretic and sentenced him to life imprisonment in the monastery of Hautvilliers. He remained there for the next 20 years, until he became deranged and passed away.

The long-standing antagonism between Gottschalk and Rabanus may explain why his punishment was so severe, especially given the relatively mild nature of his offense, which has been described as

> doubtful whether Gottschalk's doctrine on predestination was heretical. There is nothing in his extant writings that cannot be interpreted in a Catholic sense. He, indeed, taught that God does not wish all men to be saved, and that Christ died only for those who were predestined to be saved; but these doctrines are not necessarily heretical. He may have meant (and certain passages in his extant writings warrant the assumption) that, in consequence of God's foreknowing that that some men will die on sin, He does not wish these to be saved; and that Christ's death was of no avail to those who will be damned for their sins.[11]

Gottschalk's condemnation and imprisonment was probably based more on personal dispute than on a true belief that he was a heretic. Small disputes often led to large heresies, not only in this time, but throughout Christian history. This was especially true of the unending debate over dualism and the basic nature of God.

The Rise of Bogomilism

The tenth century saw one of the first dualist movements that posed a serious threat to the authority of the Roman Church. A movement called *Bogomilism* was perceived as a challenge to the sole dominance of the Roman Church over the Christian world. Like so many heretical movements, Bogomilism had its roots in differences among rich and poor.

Bogomil was a priest in the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. His movement began in response to a form of feudal class warfare. The people in top positions tended to be from the higher power levels in society, and the flocks tended to consist primarily of peasants. Bogomil traveled to many villages preaching his own version of Gnosticism, which contradicted Christian teachings. He

believed that the world was created by an evil being who had been an enemy of God since the beginning of time. He also taught that Christ's mission had been to provide a way for people to escape the realm of the evil being and find the realm of God. Most important of all (and the major point of contention with the Church), Bogomil stated that the earthly servants of the evil being were mostly wealthy nobles and priests. He bolstered this view by criticizing the luxurious lifestyle priests of the day enjoyed, especially in comparison to the more difficult life of the peasant. This argument was appealing to the peasants, who readily accepted the idea that rich versus poor was the equivalent of evil versus good.

The belief named for Bogomil formed the basis for a later movement, *Catharism*. The duality of good and bad spiritual beings was a recurring theme in heretical movements both before and after Bogomilism. Like so many of these heretical movements, its leaders, called *Perfecti*, set an example of piety by abstaining from sex and consumption of meat, and they devoted their lives to poverty and missionary work. The movement spread and co-existed with the Orthodox Christian Church in Constantinople. One of the movement's leaders, named Basil, attempted to convert Byzantine Emperor Alexius to the faith. Basil was accused of heresy; he was imprisoned and ordered to renounce Bogomilism, but he refused. Finally, the emperor had him put to death by burning at the stake.

As the movement developed, it created an elaborate explanation for many Christian tenets. For example, it taught that earth had been created by Jesus' older brother, Satanael. Humans are actually angels captured in material bodies, and Jesus had come to earth to free these angels from their bodies. God's word had entered Mary's right ear and Christ emerged from the same ear at birth. It was Jesus who revised his brother's name by removing the last three letters, renaming him Satan. In spite of Jesus' efforts, Satan was responsible for the crucifixion. Bogomilism taught that the cross was not a symbol of Christ's death, but of Satan, a relic of evil and not of good.

The movement eventually spread to Western Europe, where its continued to find adherents because it was based on the belief that rich nobles and priests were evil forces in the world, while disenfranchised peasants were good. When, in later years, the Cathars also challenged Church power, Bogomil was cited as one of the movement's mentors.

Church Conflicts Leading Up to the Crusades

By the last half of the tenth century, Western Europe was disintegrating rapidly. This was the result of military attacks from all sides, primarily from

Vikings in the north and Muslims in the east. The Vikings were in control in England, while Muslims had taken over Sicily. Moving their invading force from England to France, the Vikings assimilated with the population and over the years evolved, first being called Norsemen and eventually Normans. For the Church, the encroaching Viking and Muslim invaders posed threats to survival.

By the beginning of the second millennium, the Church and its followers expected the world to soon come to an end. With the anticipated return of Christ after 1,000 years, the lack of a second coming was a short-lived disappointment. Of much greater concern to the Church leaders was its failure to defeat Islam. For hundreds of years, the Church had been able to convert or destroy small groups of non-believers, pagans and heretics, but now it faced new and powerful threats on many levels. In addition to the encroachment of foreign tribes on its borders, the Church itself was split between Catholic and Orthodox. The tenets of disagreement were many, from as minor a point as the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist (used in the West, not in the East); to changes made in the Nicaean Creed (not agreed to in the East); to the question of whether clergy could marry (not allowed in the West, but approved in the East). Most important of all, the Western view declared the pope supreme temporal ruler of the entire Church; the Eastern Church did not agree.

In this time of both political and spiritual unrest, anyone outside the Church — especially Muslims — were viewed as heretics. This was a departure from the long-standing definition of heresy as a crime committed by Christians in their defiance of Church authority or contradiction of its tenets. Under this traditional view, a non–Christian could not be accused of heresy. In the tenth century, a temporary departure from this legal point enabled the Church to expand the realm of threats of concern to Church leaders. The charge that non–Christians were heretics was used to justify many initiatives which evolved into a series of organized Crusades.

Internally, the focus on heresy was narrowed to two specific crimes among the clergy. First was abandonment of celibacy by priests; second was a growing occurrence of simony (paying for blessings and other Sacramental privileges, as well as the purchase of bishoprics, not to mention the purchase of the papacy, often for huge sums of money). A brisk trade in holy relics grew at the time of the new millennium, and items including the bones of saints, slivers of the alleged "real" cross, and more were offered for sale. Relics were believed to have healing or protective powers, contributing to the illicit trade throughout Europe.

At the same time Christians began to believe that visits to holy sites would bring people closer to God, cure illness, and ensure salvation. A wide-

spread movement to make pilgrimage to the Holy Land began, but virtually the entire region was under Islamic control. This justified the Crusades as missions to free Jerusalem and to make the area completely Christian. Among the early explanations for the Crusades was the claim that Muslims were heretics, in spite of the widely accepted narrower definition of the term.

The motive behind anti-heretical movements was not exclusively spiritual. The papacy had become an office of power and influence, and wealth was used frequently to buy the position. In this circumstance, heretics claiming lives of poverty and drawing class distinctions between evil and wealthy clergy and good but poor peasants had popular appeal; the movements also posed a direct threat, not to the spiritual message of the Church, but to the power its leaders enjoyed.

During this period, popes were known to purchase the office, at times without even being members of the priesthood as a first step. For example, Pope John XIX (1024–32) was a member of the wealthy Tusculan family. This family regarded the papacy as its personal property and bribed all of the right people to have their son Romanus named pope and given the title John. The next pope was a member of the same family, named Theophylact. He took the name Pope Benedict IX (1032–44). It was not until after this period that the tradition of electing a bishop to the position of pope was reinstituted.

The corruption in the papacy and widespread bribery and influence (simony) only worsened the questionable trade in holy relics and increased interest in pilgrimages among the devout. This also made the differences in wealth and station between clergy and peasants more glaring. Finally, the situation reached the point where it was intolerable. Pope Leo IX (1049–1054) deposed bishops guilty of simony and took many steps to reform the Church and end corruption and influence within it.

Leo was an effective political pope who emphasized papal right to rule over the entire Church. This, combined with a growing desire for holy pilgrimage, led to the beginning of the Crusades 40 years later. At the height of Leo's papacy, the Eastern Church was ruled by Patriarch Michael Cerularius, who strongly disagreed with Leo's contention that Rome had the right to claim complete power and authority over the entire Church. Leo excommunicated Michael in 1054, with the announcement read publicly and indiscreetly by papal representatives in the Orthodox basilica Hagia Sophia, during the Eucharist. Michael's response was to excommunicate Leo and his representatives. Even though the Eastern and Western Church heads had been known to excommunicate each other many times throughout history and eventually make peace again, this time it was different. The split between the two Church centers was permanent and irreparable. From 1054 forward, the Catholic and Orthodox branches of Christianity remained apart.

The split led to further trouble for the Eastern Church. The Turks, an invading tribe of barbarians from the north, defeated the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071. After this, the Turks immigrated into Asia Minor, where they posed a direct threat to Constantinople, the center of Eastern Christianity. The split in the Church was codified once and for all by a new and influential pope, Hildebrand. He instituted a program of reforms within the Church. Taking the name Gregory VII (1073–85), he was a gifted administrator and intellectual who had risen up through the Church ranks over many years. His reforms were substantial; he wrote 27 propositions, including:

- the pope possesses direct and personal sanctity passed down from St. Peter (a belief that continues to modern times);
- the papacy holds supremacy over all earthly monarchs;
- the pope and his office have total judicial power over all men in and out of the Church;
- the pope has the power to depose emperors and kings;
- no one has the right to judge the pope; and
- the pope has the right to release subjects from their allegiance to unjust rulers.[12]

The decision by Hildebrand to claim papal supremacy was intended at first to reform the Church and do away with corruption, and not specifically to further the claim of domination over the Orthodox arm of Christianity. For example, he put a stop to the practice of lay investiture, installing clerics or interfering with Church appointments on the part of non–Church interests. This practice was claimed by emperors and kings over many centuries and was the right

> to appoint bishops, abbots and priests to benefices, or landed estates. Western Europe was dotted with such ecclesiastical real estate holdings that had fallen under the control of local rulers. The cleric or layperson who was given the living, as the English called a benefice, naturally became the creature of the ruler in matters spiritual as well as temporal.[13]

This practice, even though long established throughout Europe, was viewed by Hildebrand as fully inappropriate given the spiritual mandate he claimed in the name of the Church. However, these initiatives removed royal control over appointments of bishops and their decisions in offices. German Emperor Henry IV (1084–1105) disagreed with Hildebrand's positions.

Henry's disagreement with Hildebrand came to a head in the Church councils of 1074 and 1075. At the 1075 council in Rome, "any person, even if he were emperor or king, who should confer an investiture in connection with any ecclesiastical office" was declared excommunicated. In addition, secular rulers were declared to have no rights to appoint or control bishops. In Germany at this time, bishops were often also powerful feudal lords and,

because they had been appointed by the emperor, their power disappeared overnight as a result of the council's decision. Henry continued to defy Hildebrand and also claimed the ongoing right to appoint bishops. He went to the extreme step of kidnapping the pope and holding him prisoner, but the pope was released by Roman citizens. The following year (1076) at the Synod of Worms, Henry declared Hildebrand deposed as pope. Hildebrand excommunicated Henry in retaliation as well as all of the bishops Henry had appointed that year.

At the same time Hildebrand was concerned with what was taking place in the East. Seljuk Turks, still a threat to Constantinople, were believed to be preventing Christians from free practice of religion in Turkey, and Hildebrand considered mounting a crusade to achieve two objectives: defeat the Turks and reunite Eastern and Western Churches. The crusade never came to pass, however, as Hildebrand was unable to muster interest in the expedition and was otherwise occupied in his conflict with Emperor Henry.

The interest in making a crusade was to be brought up again a few years later. However, Hildebrand's ambitious plans had to be put off in the interest of internal reforms. The controversy over lay investiture was a big storm throughout Europe, a power struggle that occupied most of Hildebrand's time and effort. He was also intent on enforcing clerical celibacy, which was at least as controversial. Supporters of marriage among the clergy cited biblical passages to argue their position, including "It is better to be married than to burn with desire."[14]

Hildebrand was not entirely concerned with enforcing celibacy as a spiritual matter; it was financially motivated as well. He referred to children of priests as illegitimate, meaning that they were not entitled to inheritances upon the priest's death. All of the priest's possessions were to become Church property. However, if a priest could legally marry, then his children would be legally entitled to an inheritance. A century after Hildebrand's reign, the First and Second Lateran Councils, held in 1123 and 1139, declared that priests could not legally enter a marital contract. So even if a priest married secretly, his contract with the Church preceded the marriage and the Church, not the spouse or children, was solely entitled to inherit all of the priest's property.

The controversy over celibacy of priests raged throughout Europe, and Hildebrand sent legates throughout the continent with the power to depose any clerics who defied his ruling on the subject. And so, by papal decree, deposing and excommunicating all who disagreed with the Church became a matter of policy, and those who defied any such orders were called heretics.

Hildebrand had a particularly severe problem close to home. In Rome, 60 married laymen calling themselves *mansionarii* were responsible for guarding St. Peter's Basilica. However, they also donned cardinals' vestments each

day and conducted Mass for pilgrims while collecting donations. These 60 overtly defied Hildebrand's edicts against both simony and marriage. Hildebrand fired all of them.

Meanwhile, Hildebrand continued to promote a crusade to rid both Europe and the Holy Land of enemies and non-believers. He wrote about the need to raise an enormous European army to defeat Normans, Greeks and Muslims and expel all invaders from Constantinople, destroy the Muslim Caliphate, invade Palestine and rescue Jerusalem and north Africa. He proposed that he himself would lead this massive army. However, his ongoing troubles with Emperor Henry IV prevented this ambitious idea from being put into effect.

Hildebrand's initiatives moved the Church along on its path toward becoming an all-powerful temporal power, although this dream was not realized during his reign. But 200 years later, the papacy headed up a powerful empire complete with its own foreign office, a school of law, and a well-organized system for controlling all clerical Church members. Hildebrand also sowed the seeds of thought leading to crusades to the Holy Land and, based on the righteousness of Christianity, of the Inquisition as well. The pope's motives for the crusade were based on his desire for increased temporal power and on his belief in the Church's God-given right to have access to the Holy Land. In addition, because Islam was a different faith, its followers were all looked down upon as non-believers (infidels) condemned to an afterlife lacking the grace of God. All of this justified the desire for crusades that dominated Church thinking for many decades to follow, and created a permanent distrust between Eastern and Western civilizations.

While the distinction remained between non-believers and heretics, the two could easily be assigned to the same broad condemnation. The Crusades were military expeditions aimed at defeating Islam in the Holy Land, and the Inquisition was a legal step to identify and punish or reform heretics within the Church. Both came, however, from the same motive: to control people and consolidate power, to expand the political influence of the Church, and to ensure that beliefs conformed to whatever the Roman Church defined as the "correct" tenets. To disagree was to invite the wrath of God.

5

Catharism: A Major Heretical Movement

> The Cathars would not accept that an omnipotent and eternal God could have been responsible for the material world; for them this world was the work of an evil creator. Such a creator was either a being fallen from the perfection of Heaven who had seduced a proportion of the angelic souls there and then entrapped them in matter, or he was a co-eternal power, quite independent of the Good God of the Spirit.
>
> —Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars*

Strong heretical movements had last appeared in the form of Arianism in the sixth century. Since then the Roman Church had successfully demonstrated its solitary power. Heresies arose but were quickly put down. At last, the enduring message of Christianity was for the most part accepted as the sole authority on both doctrine and policy. The Church had endured 1,000 years and had won. Then the Cathars appeared and everything changed.

Catharism was the epitome of Gnostic belief. It gained such popularity in an isolated region of southern France that the Church felt compelled to mount a Crusade to destroy the movement. There had been very little serious heretical threat to Church power since the days of the Arians; movements had come and gone but none represented the kind of challenge posed by the Cathars. Before the Cathars, the Roman Church was in control. After the Cathars, Church leaders saw heresy everywhere they turned and they lost much of the control they had once held, never to fully regain it. The Inquisition was formed to address the problem but, even with the threat of prison or death, post–Cathar Christianity was changed for all time.

The Crusades

In the 11th century, "heresy" was anything the Church decided it to be. So non–Christians were likely targets, especially if that fit well with the Church's political ambitions. Included in this revised definition of "heresy" was the entire Islamic world which occupied the Holy Land. The Crusades can be viewed as not only an effort to take the Holy Land away from non–Christians, but also as a righteous "mission from God" to quell the newly-defined heresy that existed within the Holy Land in the form of Islam.

Church leaders were preoccupied in this period with organizing and operating a series of Crusades with two major goals: to capture Jerusalem and to ensure that it would forever be a Christian region. During the period of the late 11th century through the end of the 13th century, numerous Crusades were initiated for this purpose. The entire effort was expensive, cost many lives, and gained no positive results. The effort only created hatred and distrust from the Islamic world toward everything Christian, a problem that remains in effect today. For Western European culture, however, the Crusades continue to be viewed in far more romantic terms, as having

> a romantic and sentimental, as well as a religious and military, interest. They were a sublime product of the Christian imagination, and constitute a chapter of rare interest in the history of humanity. They exhibit the muscular Christianity of the new nations of the West which were just emerging from barbarism and heathenism.[1]

The precise dates of the seven separate Crusades are not agreed upon by all sources; however, most acknowledge the following approximate dates:

First Crusade	1096–1099
Second Crusade	1147–1149
Third Crusade	1189–1192
Fourth Crusade	1202–1204
Fifth Crusade	1217–1221
Sixth Crusade	1248–1254
Seventh Crusade	1270[2]

The folklore surrounding the Crusades is romantic and to this day holds a power over Christian imagination. Among the most enduring of these is the Children's Crusade, which is a combination of fact and fiction. This Crusade took place about 1212 and is often cited as evidence of the depth of Christian faith in Western Europe. The myths include stories of a charismatic boy leading children out of towns and villages *en masse* to go to the Holy Land to convert Islam to Christianity. To the extent that such a Crusade did occur, its participants were killed or became slaves. It was described as a "popular movement which arose spontaneously [in] Cologne, the main party reaching

Genoa.... It is very possible that the so-called 'children' were in reality servants, shepherds, and others outside the main structures of organized society."[3]

The Crusade was said to be led by a youth, who may have recruited as many as 30,000 children to go on the Crusade. One version claims that this youth said he had been visited by Jesus and told to lead the Crusade. The tale gives his name as Nicholas, a German shepherd. Another version or, possibly, a second Crusade, was led by a French shepherd boy named Stephen of Cloves. The alluring tales have persisted even without clear evidence, and they have been kept alive in the form of fables. For example, the story of the Pied Piper of Hamlin may have developed from the story of the Children's Crusade. The tale claims that a young piper contracted with the citizens of Hamlin to remove all of the rats from their town in exchange for payment. When the townspeople reneged on the agreement, the Pied Piper played his tune again and emptied Hamlin of all its children, who were never seen again. This incident, like many fables, may be based on partial truth from the era of the Crusades.[4]

Although the Children's Crusade cannot be clearly documented, the legend has continued, serving as an illustration of the depth of faith among Christians. They willingly gave up their most treasured possessions, their children, to save the Holy Land from the infidels and even to convert them to Christianity. The remaining Crusades, in contrast, were well documented at the time and were continent-wide phenomena.

The crusading armies, drawn from all countries of Western Europe, were led by noblemen and emperors, and contained other nobles as well as farmers, priests and even criminals. These armies "of the cross" were entitled "soldiers of Christ" and were granted spiritual incentives to participate. Pope Urban II (1088–99), who is best known for his calling of the First Crusade, recognized that crusading was a suitable substitute for penance; Pope Eugene III (1145–53) promised crusaders a guarantee of Heaven, even forgiving all sins in advance, enabling crusading soldiers to commit any crimes they wished in the Holy Land, knowing their absolution had already been granted.

The romanticized era of the Crusades is viewed by many as a noble and well-intended time in Christian history. However, among the political and social motives behind the Crusades was another excuse, the fight against heresy. The popes organizing Crusades depended on wealthy noblemen and monarchs to spend a great amount of money to raise armies for the cause. Part of the appeal was the promise of salvation, as well as financial benefits such as forgiveness of debts and taxes. Another incentive was the argument that non–Christians were in control of Jerusalem, were ill-treating Christian citizens in those lands, and were infidels.

By definition, an "infidel" was a non–Christian or anyone opposed to

Christianity and its practice. The Crusades, however, were organized to mix together a range of offenders, including not only infidels, but pagans, heretics, and the excommunicated. The Church of the time considered Islamic leaders in the Middle East heretics because they occupied Jerusalem and were believed to be suppressing Christians. The Crusades were major undertakings demanding months and even years away from a participant's homeland, incurring great expense and requiring them to rely on others to carry on their obligations at home, so Church leaders made every possible argument to encourage participation.

While this long-term initiative to expand Christian influence was underway, the Church was enjoying what it perceived as total power and control in Western Europe. However, a rebellion against this complete control was taking place in a small region of southern France as well, in a limited way, in parts of northern Italy. By the concluding years of the 12th century, the Church had become alarmed at increased incidences of heretical movements. Jacques de Vitry (ca. 1160–1240), a theologian, visited Milan in about 1200 and described the city as *fovea hæreticorum* (a pit of heretics). Vitry was prominent throughout the rest of his life as a promoter of various Crusades to the Holy Land as well as a more localized Crusade against the Cathars (the Albigensian Crusade, 1209–29). Appointed to the post of cardinal in 1216, he began work three years later on *Historia Hierosolymitana*, a history of the Holy Land from the beginnings of Islam through to the Crusades. He was one of the more prolific writers of the age and an important supporter of the Church in its Crusades and anti-heretical programs. His discovery of the growing challenge to singular Church authority raised awareness in the Church that infidels and heretics existed not only in the Holy Land, but also very close to home.

The Roots of Catharism

In past heretical movements, the motives for defying the Church were normally doctrine-based. Disputes based strictly on the conflict between the "One God" and Gnostic belief systems were at the root of many heretical movements. Catharism was strongly based in the Gnostic philosophy, but the contributing factor to its success was the well-known avarice and worldliness of the clergy. In this time, priests and bishops led lavish lives, owned castles, wore the finest clothes, and had plenty of wealth. In comparison, the common peasants led lives of hardship and poverty. This disparity was the most important cause for the popularity of Catharism.

Aggravating the obvious distinctions between a wealthy clergy and a poor peasantry was the reality of how heretics were punished. Most of those

brought before tribunals and accused of heretical thought and practice were poor and uneducated people. In contrast, the tribunals consisted of well-educated members of the clergy. A characteristic of these tribunals was the cruel derision that the inquisitors aimed at their uneducated, mostly illiterate victims. The revolt against the Roman Church was largely inspired by the glaring differences between the clergy and the people, not to mention the greater likelihood of a peasant being accused of heresy and imprisoned or executed. This important foundation of the Cathar movement is easily overlooked because of the doctrinal differences it also represented. The Church argued that Catharism was a heresy based solely on its dissenting interpretation of the Bible and Christ's teachings, and its rejection of the Catholic power structure. Beyond the accusation of heresy was a social movement in response to the clergy itself and its exploitation of the peasantry.

Heretical movements are easily criticized as being anti-spiritual. However, the Cathars arose from a devout Christian population desiring spiritual communion. The primary emphasis of Catharism was not a rejection of Christian belief, but a desire to replace the corrupt and self-serving papacy and clerical system, which kept worldly power and wealth for itself. Catharism involved different doctrinal beliefs than those mandated by the Roman Church, but it was equally a social movement that resented clerical abuses and the decline of spiritual values. It was the social and political aspects of Catharism as a popular movement that posed the greater threat to Church authority.

Catharism rejected important Church doctrine, including the special station enjoyed by priests as God's voice and connection to the common man. Cathars denied that priests were necessary for communion with God. They also denied the need for baptism of infants and cited worship of the cross as idolatry. The threat posed by Cathars to many essential Roman Church beliefs set the stage for the major conflict that followed. Church leaders vilified Cathars and other heretics, comparing them to serpents, locusts, vermin, demons, and even the black horse mentioned in Revelation, appearing at the Apocalypse and ridden by the devil. In 1183, the Council of Verona ordered bishops to deal sternly with all heretics. The council made no distinctions between various groups but described all heresies with a single, generalized blanket of accusation, naming a few and concluding, "whom we put under perpetual Anathema."

There was considerable hysteria among Church leaders facing the threat of heresy. Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) stated that the number of heretics in southern France was innumerable. By grouping *all* heretics together as a single threat, the Church leaders confused the issues underlying the Cathar threat to its authority. Cathars were considered basically the same kind of heretics

as the Waldensians, an entirely different movement; in later years, Catholic historians even described Cathars as part of the Protestant movement (even though that movement did not appear until four centuries later). The challenge of the need for priests for communion was a central theme of the Protestant movement, however, and this is one of the reasons that the Church made the association between the two movements.

The Cathar doctrine itself was derived from previous Gnostic belief systems combined with the tenets of Christianity. The Cathar philosophy was believed by the Church to represent an expansion of the Eastern sects of the Paulicians and Bogomils. So Catharism, whether developed primarily on its own or borrowed from other sects, was the most important heretical movement to arise in several centuries. The combined doctrinal and social impetus for Catharism is what made the movement as successful as it was among the people of southern France.

The Cathars' Early Development

Like so many previous sects, the Cathars based their beliefs on the Gnostic philosophy of dualism. However, the Cathars also strived for a form of temporal perfection, with lives dedicated to poverty and good works. The word "Cathar" is derived from the Greek *katharos*, which means "pure." It also is the root of the German word for heretic, *Ketzer*.

The rumor promoted during the movement by enemies of the Cathars that the word came from "cat" is false. The argument was that the devil liked to assume the form of a cat and in Cathar ceremonies, members kissed the cat's posterior. One chronicler and archbishop of the age, Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1230–98), wrote a fanciful account of how the black cat played a role in the Cathar heresy. He described that

> on one occasion some ladies, who had been heretics, were kneeling at St. Dominic's feet and suddenly cried out: "Servant of God, help us." "Tarry awhile," Dominic said, "and ye shall see what ye have been serving." Suddenly a black cat sprang up in their midst, right horrible, with long tail standing upright and emitting from the after end a terrible stench. After a while the cat climbed up the bell rope to the steeple, and the ladies were converted.[5]

In spite of exaggerated reports of Cathar rituals, their beliefs were Gnostic *and* pious, and were based on complaints about the corruption among the clergy. Cathars were known to be more pious and less worldly than Christian clergy of the day. The sect was given many names. Due to their dualist beliefs, the Church at first referred to Cathars as New Manichaeans, the same name

given to the Paulicians in the sixth century. Manichaeism was the sect founded by the prophet Mani, who claimed to be the personification of the Holy Spirit. Augustine of Hippo had belonged to the sect before he converted to Christianity in 387, a process that he described completely in his well-known text, *Confessions*.

Another title given to the Cathars by the Church was Pataria, named for a section of Milan where junk dealers bought and sold their goods. Cathars and other anti–Christian heretical movements were active in Milan, which explains why the Church gave them the name. In southern France where the Cathars were especially strong and popular, they were named Albigenses, because one of their centers of influence was the town of Albi, which is about 50 miles northeast of the city of Toulouse. In Eastern Europe, they were called Bulgari, Bugares, and Bugres based on their association with Robert Bugre, a one-time heretic who converted and joined the Dominicans, and then became an inquisitor. The word "bugger" is also derived from his name. More broadly, Cathars were called "Paterini, Jovinians, Albigenses, and those stained with other heresies."[6]

Also in France, Cathars were called *Tessarants* (weavers) and *Textores* (industrial workers) because the movement was strong in these working groups. Known by these and other names, the Gnostic movement gained strength in southern France from the millennium forward. By 1167 the movement had gained so much strength that a council of Cathars was held near Toulouse. The event was presided over by a Bogomil bishop, Nicetas of Constantinople.[7]

By the beginning of the 13th century, an estimated four million people considered themselves Cathars. They conducted their own census, built churches, and opened schools for the education of their children. Catholic clergy, continuing lives of luxury, were no longer taken seriously in the region of Languedoc where the movement was centered.

Cathar Theology

The general premise of Catharism was Gnostic in nature. However, the movement was so widespread that it broke into several different sects, with more than 70 in existence at the height of the movement. Two major ones were the Albanenses and the Concorrezzi (based in two Lombard towns, Alba and Concorreggio). The Albanenses were dualists in every sense, but the Concorrezzi argued that evil was derived from Lucifer, the fallen angel. However, even with these theological differences, Cathars were in agreement on their rituals and also in their opinions about the Roman Church.

Cathars referred to the Roman Church as *Romanists*. The Cathars believed that on earth there were two churches in power, one for the good and one for the evil. The Cathar Church represented the good side and the Romanists, or Roman Church, represented the forces of evil. Whether the specific sect assigned this evil to a fallen angel or a temporal god did not matter; the unifying theme was that the Roman Church was evil. No Romanists could expect salvation according to Catharism. They pointed to their own sacrament, the "imposition of hand," as necessary for salvation. This was one of four Cathar sacraments (the other three were blessing of bread, penance, and consecration).

Also called *consolamentum*, the imposition of the hand was a variation of baptism by the Holy Spirit. No sin could be forgiven, without exception, without this sacrament. There were two steps in the ritual. First was a blessing spoken in Latin: "Bless us; have mercy upon us. Amen. Let it be done according to Thy word. May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit forgive all your sins." This was repeated three times, then followed by the Lord's Prayer, and then the reading of John 1:1–17. The second part was yet another reading of the Lord's Prayer with explanations of each section given by an elder (*Perfecti*). The Book of John, the most important book in the Bible according to the Cathars, was placed on a table and covered with a cloth and a greeting was offered among those attending. The phrase "daily bread" was substituted with "super-substantial bread." After this, the elder laid his hands on the initiate, who was then ordered to abstain from a number of activities: adultery, killing, lying, stealing, and swearing oaths. Other members then laid their hands on the initiate and asked for forgiveness (the pardon), then the ritual concluded with everyone kissing one another on the cheek (the act of peace).

The second Cathar sacrament was the blessing of bread (*Fraction de Pain*). It was performed twice every day and was a greatly abbreviated version of the Mass. The Lord's Prayer was recited once everyone arrived at a meal and then bread was shared.

The third sacrament was penance, also called confession and absolution (*Appareilamentum)*. Similar to the Catholic penance, it consisted of prayer in atonement for sins.

The fourth sacrament was consecration, in which a member of the faith became a bishop.

The existence of sacraments that did not conform to the Roman Church's dictates was a heresy by itself, but the larger question of the Cathar description of the Roman Church as evil and not capable of granting salvation was viewed as much more serious. As the Cathar movement grew in popularity, it became the greatest heretical threat to date to the singular domination of the Roman Church. The claim by Cathars that the Roman Church was not the true

Church was based not only on separate Gnostic beliefs but also on the indisputable fact that the clergy lived in luxury and wore fine clothing, a glaring contrast to the poverty of the common worker or peasant, and the vows of poverty that Cathar elders swore. The criticism went beyond the mere claim of good versus evil. Cathars referred to the Roman Church as a harlot, and to the pope as the antichrist.

The Cathar theology was Gnostic, but also extolled many Christian beliefs. For example, Christ was considered a spiritual being and not truly human, one who was created in heaven and did not eat or drink material food. John the Baptist was considered a major demon by the Cathars. Among the Cathar believers were two groups, the *Perfecti* (elders, those who had received the rite of *consolamentum*), and the *Credentes* (believers). The Perfecti also claimed the title of *bons hommes* (good men) or *Vestiti* (the girded, derived from the practice of self-binding after receiving the *consolamentum*). The Roman Church specifically called the *consolamentum* an initiation into heresy because, as part of the ceremony, the *Perfecti* were required to renounce the seven sacraments of the Roman Church, to abstain forever from sex, eating meat, killing animals, or approving of war and capital punishment.

In rejecting the Roman Church sacraments, including matrimony, the Cathars cited biblical verse as justification for a complete rejection of sexual activity: "If a man looks at a woman with a lustful eye, he has already committed adultery in his heart."[8]

The restriction on eating meat extended to eggs and cheese as byproducts of living animals. Cathars were allowed to eat fish, however, rationalized by Christ's example of feeding fish to the gathered multitudes that had come to hear him speak.[9]

Some extreme sects of Catharism took the restriction of eating meat to the extreme, in a practice called *endura*. This was self-inflicted starvation until death occurred, practiced by those who had received the *consolamentum*. Some even imposed *endura* on their own children, leaving them without food in the belief that the suffering led to salvation.

The Albigensian Crusade

The Church initiated the Crusades to the Middle East over a long span of time, with the purpose of taking Jerusalem under Christian control. To justify these major military campaigns, the Church had to change its definition of heresy, to include all of Islam. Closer to home, the Church faced a more traditional heretical threat in the form of Catharism. This threat sparked a 20-year Crusade to southern France, causing a great deal of death and suffering.

The dispute came to a head when, in 1208, a papal legate named Peter of Castelnau was murdered in Toulouse. The Church had long viewed Toulouse suspiciously, and under Innocent III had labeled the city *quæ magis hæretica labes corrupta* (the most infamous center of heretical corruption). Peter had been sent to France to recruit an army to quell heresy in Toulouse. But Raymund VI, count of Toulouse, opposed repression of the Cathars and other anti–Rome movements in the region. Peter excommunicated Raymund, and also attempted to seize Raymund's properties. When Peter was assassinated on January 15, 1208, Innocent confirmed his excommunication and predicted further punishments in the afterlife, warning Raymund that "The hand of the Lord will descend upon thee most severely, and show thee that it is hard for one who seeks to flee from the face of His wrath which thou hast provoked."[10]

The excommunication was reversed after Raymund apologized in a formal ritual at St. Gilles in southern France. He appeared naked to the waist, and accepted all papal demands. His vassals were also forced to take oaths to ensure Raymund's compliance on threat of themselves being accused of heresy. A stole was then wrapped around Raymund's neck and he was led up to the altar while being flagellated.

Raymund's humiliation was intended as the final word on the topic. However, it was not. Raymund led a resistance movement against the Crusade, and his excommunication was reinstated by the Council of Montpellier in 1211. He was then exiled and spent the next four years living in England. Raymund is prominent at the onset of the Albigensian Crusade not only because he resisted the Church's effort to put down the heresy, but also because he became active in defying the Church and its claim to complete authority. He and his son attended the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome to challenge the Church's seizure of land he had owned before his excommunication. This dispute continued for over a year and its consequences to the Church went beyond the ownership of land. Raymund went to Aragon in Spain to secretly negotiate an alliance with Cathar leaders in Toulouse. The resulting siege of Toulouse in 1218 took impetus out of the long-lasting Crusade. It was not until the 20-year campaign was over that Raymund's family regained title to most of the land the Church had taken from them.

The Crusade itself was sparked by the assassination of Peter of Castelnau, after which Innocent declared the Crusade against the Albi region of southern France. The pope ordered:

> Attack the followers of heresy. Forward then soldiers of Christ! Forward, brave recruits to the Christian army! Let the universal cry of grief of the Holy Church arouse you, let pious zeal inspire you to avenge this monstrous crime against your God![11]

The "just war" called by Innocent led to exceptionally merciless battlefield cruelty over the two decades that followed. The Church vilified Cathars in order to inspire its recruits to remain on the field and to make sacrifices. Cathars were accused of sexual perversion, killing and cremating children in Cathar rituals, and consorting with prostitutes.[12]

The expensive 20-year Crusade did not succeed in eliminating Catharism. It caused the movement to spread to other regions and to go underground. Accounts of battles included mass slaughter of soldiers and civilians. In 1209, during the Battle of Baziège (alt. name Béziers) alone, between 10,000 and 20,000 people were killed, including Cathars as well as Catholics. At this battle, one of the best-known statements of the Crusade was issued. The commander of the crusading army, Cistercian Abbott and papal legate Arnaud Amaury (alt. Amalric), was approached by his men about what they should do, since they had no way to tell the good from the wicked. Amaury answered, "Kill them all. God will recognize his own."[13]

All were killed after this, including women and children. This ruthless attitude grew from the pope's own policy, which granted full indulgences to everyone who joined the Crusade as well as the right to seize lands owned by any heretics. By forgiving any transgressions in advance, the pope gave permission for atrocities committed in God's name, a practice that had been put into place for the Crusades to Jerusalem as well. In those instances, like in the Albigensian Crusade, the incentive brought out the worst in people, with clergy proving to be no exception.

The military campaign was an exception to the Church's treatment of heretical movements, both before and after the period of the Cathars. In other instances the Church relied on reason and conversion, or on Inquisition tribunals, or both. Taking up arms in a military campaign was uniquely associated with the Cathar dispute, which also indicates the extent of the movement's popularity and the threat the Church believed it posed. This also marked a transition from the traditional, peaceful approach to heresy, in which the vast majority of heretics were excommunicated at worst or given penances to perform as part of reversing errors. After the Albigensian Crusade, the Church adopted a more aggressive policy toward heresy, in which no dissent would be tolerated. However, the Crusade had been long-lasting and expensive, as well as politically difficult. The Church learned that even with the granting of indulgences, it was difficult to keep soldiers in the field for an extended war. In fact, many soldiers signed up to gain forgiveness for sins and, once received, they simply returned home. The problem of bad behavior on the battlefield was even acknowledged by Innocent, who wrote that the soldiers he had sent to battle the Cathars "are more dangerous than the heretics themselves."[14]

Because sustaining a long-term military campaign was costly and difficult (and in the case of the Albigensian Crusade, was unsuccessful), the Church resorted to an approach to heresy in which it held direct control. It instituted the Inquisition as a legal means for trying and convicting heretics. As an alternative to outright war, the Inquisition and its tribunals, led mostly by members of the Dominican Order, were more effective in keeping heresy under control.

The political problems this Crusade caused for the Church further inspired the Inquisition as an alternative to warfare. Massacres and the execution of prisoners were common on both sides of the war. Captured Cathars often were burned at the stake without trial, and crusaders were blinded or had their hands and feet amputated, or were tortured, starved, or held for ransom. The war turned into a military stalemate with civilians suffering as much, if not more, than soldiers.

When Innocent died in 1216, he was replaced by Honorius III (1216–27), who accelerated the military campaign and articulated appropriate punishments for heretics. Honorius also formally recognized the Dominican Order on December 22, 1216. Under the reign of the next pope, Gregory IX, the formal Inquisition began and the Dominicans were given nearly complete responsibility for running tribunals. They also made the Inquisition self-supporting, paying for its expenses with seized property and assets of those accused of heresy, found guilty, and executed or imprisoned. As an outgrowth of the problems the Church experienced during the Albigensian Crusade, the evolution of the tribunal as a means for dealing with heresy redefined Church policy for several centuries to follow. The new approach succeeded in the short term, enabling the Church to silence Catharism as a political force. The movement did not disappear; it just relocated and became less overt.

The End of the Crusade

In 1226, King Louis VIII of France (reign 1223–26) took up the cause three years before the end of the Crusade. However, he died only a few months later and his heir, Louis IX (reign 1226–70), negotiated the end of hostilities when Raymund agreed to terms proposed by the papal legate. These terms, formalized in the 1229 Treaty of Paris, included the requirement for Raymund to renounce claims to most of his lands, to be given over to France. After the end of the military campaign, Raymund also agreed to cooperate with the newly-established Inquisition set up in Toulouse. The Church recognized that the military campaign had not done away with the Cathars. However, by depriving Raymund of his land, the Church was able to rid itself of the

primary actor behind the Cathar-based military effort. From this point forward, the Church was resolved to deal with the Cathar problem through Inquisition rather than military action. The cost of the military approach had been disastrous, and the Church learned an important lesson from this: Using the legal system to identify heretics was ultimately more effective than trying to defeat them with an army.

Before the 20-year Crusade, the region of Languedoc had been known as cultured and wealthy. By the end of the Crusade, the economy of Languedoc, and especially of Toulouse, was ruined. The once wealthy population was then forced to live in poverty, with all industry destroyed. Recovery was virtually impossible because a large segment of the population had died during the conflict, and many more had moved away. Under the control of the Inquisition, the tribunals had complete power to investigate heresy. The Cathars had not been eliminated; the Crusade ended because the dispute could not be won by either side. By 1233, the tribunals were seeking out Cathars and placing them on trial, imprisoning or executing most of those found. The tribunals even ordered exhumation of the dead so they could be declared heretics and their remains burned.

The abuses of the tribunals led to a secondary uprising and in 1235 the inquisitors were forced to flee the major cities of Albi, Toulouse and Narbonne. In 1242, Raymund tried once again to lead a revolt against the Church and the French government. When that failed, he was pardoned by Louis IX. The last known conflict between French troops and Cathars took place at a fort near Quéribus, and the last reported incidence of a Cathar being convicted and burned at the stake was in 1321.

Even though the Treaty of Paris ended the Crusade, it also marked the beginning of the Inquisition against the Cathars. The Dominican inquisitors focused on southern France, with the intention of ridding itself of this threat in a more effective manner. The Cathars were the original targets of the Inquisition, even though the tribunals quickly spread out and attacked heresies throughout Europe and of many variations. The Church attitude became hardened. Any person or group that challenged the total authority of the Church had to be punished. Even the suspicion of heretical thought could lead to conviction and execution.

As a first step in the expansion of persecution aimed at the Cathars, the suspected heretics — as well as those associated with the movement in the past — were required to wear a yellow cross on their clothing at all times, serving as a symbol of shame. The crosses were given the name *las debanadoras*, which literally means "winding machines" but they are more accurately described as "a millstone around the neck."[15]

The requirement to be marked in society was similar to many past and

future demands placed by the Church on Jewish populations living among Christians. For example, in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council codified Innocent III's requirement that "Jews and Saracens of both sexes in every Christian province and at all times shall be marked off in the eyes of the public from other peoples through the character of their dress."[16]

Even with the constant threat of punishment for non-compliance, many Cathars ignored the rule and refused to wear the yellow cross, preferring to avoid the inquisitors and their tribunals, living as fugitives and moving about through a well-organized system of safe houses set up during and even before the Albigensian Crusade by Cathar leaders. The Church's problem was not solved by identifying Cathars with the badge of shame, and even the Inquisition did not do away with the movement. The initial distinctions between Cathar and Catholic that had been apparent even before the Albigensian Crusade remained. Most citizens of southern France viewed Catholic clergy as wealthy, corrupt and self-serving. The Cathars, in contrast, were spiritual, devoted to poverty, and much more in direct contact with people. The movement persisted mainly because people viewed Catharism as a form of Christianity closer to Christ than the Catholic Church.

When the Cathar movement did not die out even under the Inquisition, the Church decided during the Council of Toulouse in 1229 and the Council of Tarragona in 1234 to ban the common people from reading the Bible. Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) was behind these orders; the Council of Toulouse spelled out the rule:

> We prohibit the permission of the books of the Old and New Testament to laymen, except perhaps they might desire to have the Psalter, or some Breviary for the divine service, or the Hours of the blessed Virgin Mary, for devotion; expressly forbidding their having the other parts of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue.[17]

The Council of Toulouse issued 20 canons addressing the problem of heresy, out of 45 canons in total. One in particular was aimed at enlisting *all* members of the clergy in every city and town to root out heretics, bring them to the tribunals, and even burn down their homes:

> We appoint, therefore, that the archbishops and bishops shall swear in one priest, and two or three laymen of good report, or more if they think fit, in every parish, both in and out of cities, who shall diligently, faithfully, and frequently seek out the heretics in those parishes, by searching all houses and subterranean chambers which lie under suspicion. And looking out for appendages or outbuildings, in the roofs themselves, or any other kind of hiding places, all which we direct to be destroyed.[18]

So fearful was the Church of the threat in the Cathar movement that it enacted any and all measures it believed necessary to find and punish its supporters.

Even innocent people were interrogated and tortured, forced to identify "guilty" heretics in their towns to satisfy the inquisitors that their efforts were succeeding. As a result, the Church was convinced that through the Inquisition, it could limit movements such as Catharism and maintain its control. The Cathar movement endured for many years to follow, in spite of the severe threat of the Inquisition. The movement also inspired many other heretical movements to challenge the authority of the Roman Church.

The Formalization of the Inquisition

The Inquisition aimed at the Cathars of southern France was structured to follow a specific set of guidelines for both interrogations and trials. The procedures also protected Dominican inquisitors from any accusations that their methods were ill-conceived or involved any degree of sin or abuses of their positions. One of the provisions allowed Dominican inquisitors to absolve one another for participation in torture of suspects, based on the policy that torture was at times necessary to gain a confession. This involved a form of twisted logic. Confessions gained under torture were not permitted. Thus, when confessions were presented to the tribunal, they were always identified as having been given freely, whether or not extreme measures had been involved. To the inquisitors, the confession was accepted as proof and the claim that it was freely offered was assumed to always be true. The accusation of heresy was enough to assume guilt even before a confession was obtained, and even in the absence of any other evidence.

Also as part of its effort to find and eradicate heresy, the Church expanded its definition of the crime to include defiance of the Church. The "crime of defiance" (*ad contumacia*) was one of the primary accusations made against Cathars and anyone who sheltered or supported them. To the mind of the Dominican inquisitor, defiance of the Church's authority was the same as defiance of God, and nothing was as outrageous.

Even though the Dominican Order was given great power in its efforts to wipe out the Cathar heresy, the Church was cautious. The papacy mandated that a tribunal had to take place before judgment could be made against even the worst heretic (and even when the outcome was predetermined, as in so many cases where the accusation was enough to assume guilt). In regions where Cathars had been especially strong, inquisitors at times ignored the rule and killed accused heretics without delay. This mindset was the same as that applied during the Albigensian Crusade, when it had been more expedient to massacre everyone than to try to sort out the guilty from the innocent. Even though Gregory had demanded a formalized procedure and tribunals in

every case, inquisitors had enough power to determine, on their own, that some situations required quick justice and that tribunals were not necessary.

This attitude of supremacy over even the pope easily led to replacement of the old methods for dealing with heretics, preferring faster and more ruthless ones. Past inquisitors, including Dominicans, preferred to persuade heretics to repent and return to the grace and absolution of the Church. In the decades after the 1230s, Dominicans increasingly favored torture or the threat of torture to gain confessions. They believed this a necessity because they saw heretics everywhere they looked. Local secular authorities, clergy, and citizens were anxious to report suspected heretics to Dominican inquisitors the moment they arrived in a city or town, fearing that they might be accused by their neighbors. Making the accusation first was a smart way to avoid suspicion later on. As a consequence, those who knew they would be accused, notably Cathars, disappeared as soon as the inquisitors arrived. This, in turn, led to increased use of physical violence to force confessions:

> The slow movement from persuasion to coercion also increased the importance of investigation, of inquiry. And when no accusers came forward, or when synodal witnesses seemed unable to learn anything of heretics, those witnesses had to be given investigative powers, with new rules of evidence and a new legal procedure. The twelfth century had seen a revolution in legal procedure, and the new procedure for discovering and trying heretics borrowed much from it.[19]

Another important transition occurred once the Inquisition began targeting Cathars. In the past, the Church's legal policies had placed the burden of proof on those making an accusation and, if they failed, tribunals were likely to punish those bringing false accusations to them. The legal process also required witness testimony and documentation. With the expansion of tribunals involving the hated Cathars the burden of proof fell on the accused, and accusations could be made without consequence by anyone, even without proof. Even the tribunals could bring accusations of their own, a step that vastly changed the climate for everyone under suspicion, especially Cathars. A conviction could be gained with only a confession, even if it was given under torture.

In this intimidating climate, the frequency of people coming forth to preemptively accuse others accelerated. Some, knowing they were likely to be accused, confessed to heresy and offered to testify against others, hoping for a lighter sentence. The volume of cases grew and the papacy had to appoint more and more tribunals. Many of the judges came from the ranks of papal legates and other clergy in addition to the Dominican Order, and many of these newer judges had no legal training. Recognizing the problem with this system, the Church finally reverted to nearly exclusive reliance on the Dominicans,

who were exceptionally well trained in both theology and the law. In addition, the Dominicans were all too familiar with the Cathars and their theology, as debating Cathars had been one of Dominic's primary activities even before his order was sanctioned by the Church.

The Dominican-led tribunals were at first focused in southern France, where Cathars had been the strongest. Within only a few years, though, the tribunals were expanded throughout Europe to investigate other heresies beyond Catharism. The tribunals were greatly feared, because a conviction meant the guilty person's home would be destroyed and his family exiled without any ownership or rights of inheritance. Everything of value was taken by the tribunal and used to pay its expenses — and so as the Inquisition expanded so did its budget. Accusations against wealthy citizens were especially desirable because they provided funding for the tribunal.

The Church justified the complete destruction of lives, not only of heretics but of their families as well. It rationalized that committing heresy brought about a debt of hatred (*animadversion debita*), meaning that any penalty the Dominican tribunals and the local secular authorities deemed appropriate was justified. This debt of hatred invariably meant that the guilty person was given the death penalty by burning at the stake. Now the Church and the tribunals completely abandoned the old preference for reasoning with heretics to bring them back into the Church and work toward forgiveness and rehabilitation. Instead, heresy was elevated from "error in thought" to the same criminal level as secular treason. Heresy became known as the worst of all crimes because it was a knowingly committed, direct defiance of God.

The tribunals had virtually unlimited power, adding to the apprehension among citizenry throughout Europe. Pope Gregory allowed the tribunals to operate without needing arrest warrants or public hearings. Many confessed Cathars were forced into exile to areas where the Cathars had never been a problem, on the theory that dispersing the guilty into different areas would eliminate any recurrence of the movement. Throughout Europe, entire communities were forced by the tribunals to swear an oath of faith and against any and all forms of heresy. All of these measures failed to eliminate Catharism and other heresies. The severity of interrogations, hearings and punishments drove all such heretical movements underground, making it even more difficult to eradicate dissent.

Far from disappearing, Catharism became more organized than ever before, in part due to the need for secrecy. The level of organization was invisible to the Church until, at times, Cathars rose up and became violent against inquisitors, even going to the extent of committing beatings or murders when the local citizens believed the tribunals were punishing the wrong people or executing the innocent. The conflict was accelerated when inquisitors retaliated

by excommunicating entire communities, which they had the power to do based on their mandate from the Church. In some areas, the accused who had been summoned to appear simply did not show up, and if the community was sympathetic it could be dangerous for the inquisitors to search for the accused. It placed them in physical danger.

Local populations were not docile or even in compliance with inquisitors and their tribunals. Not only were they perceived to be too extreme in their methods, but they were also believed to be corrupt. Given their absolute power, it was not surprising that inquisitors and their helpers would enrich themselves when they could. This led to criticism even within the clergy. A Franciscan named Bernard Délicieux even stated that "if Peter and Paul themselves appeared before inquisitors they would be found guilty of heresy."[20]

Délicieux himself became a victim of the Inquisition for his criticism. He was the leader of an anti–Inquisition movement between 1299 and 1304 and denounced the tribunals to the French King Philip IV (1285–1314). When Pope John XXII (1316–34) ascended to the papacy, he authorized inquisitors to arrest Délicieux. After his trial, he was sentenced to life in prison. He died soon after.

Délicieux was not an isolated dissenter and his arrest even inspired others to protest and resist the Inquisition. In this way the initial focus on Cathars spread, creating an active resistance movement far beyond Languedoc. The more extreme the actions of these tribunals, the more resistance spread. The still-active Cathar leadership relocated from Toulouse to Lombardy in Italy, to avoid not only the Dominican-led tribunals but also their supporters and enforcers, the French army. The Church hostility toward all Cathars meant that virtually anyone suspected of belonging to this sect had no chance of escaping a guilty verdict and execution. Within a few years, the Cathars had become active in Verona (where, in 1278, dozens were arrested and burned at the stake) as well as in Milan and Florence.

Nothing the Church tried completely wiped out the Cathars, even extreme methods. The more extreme the persecution, in fact, the more the movement seemed to spread. Throughout the 13th century, the Dominican inquisitors continued to view themselves as primarily dedicated to saving souls and saw no conflict between this spiritual mission and the torture and execution of heretics. The head of the Dominican Order from 1238 to 1240, Raymond de Peñafort, wrote a "confessor's manual" between 1225 and 1235 (*Summa de penitentia*) in which he explained that Dominican inquisitors were charged with the task of judging "souls in the penitential forum." The standard for true atonement — unqualified and complete penance and contrition by the heretic — was based on the requisite need to achieve "a pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine faith."[21]

The question of whether an accused heretic had accomplished this complete penance was left to the inquisitors, who distrusted heretics and especially Cathars. They were more likely to favor execution or, if not, a lengthy prison sentence as part of true contrition. Even with that, the crime of heresy still required a loss of all property and the disinheritance of all the heretic's heirs. Repentance *might* save a heretic, but not his property. Even if the Dominicans were able to distinguish between true contrition and false contrition, their right to make the decision gave them unlimited power. For the Cathars and other heretics, the Dominican tribunal became the final authority not only on guilt or innocence, but also on what an accused person truly believed.

6

The Waldensians: Heretics and Witches

> [Waldensians] disputed the need for people to fulfill the requirements imposed by the systems of sacraments and ministry if they were to get to heaven. In effect, they were asking whether individual Christians could not hope for heaven just as well if they simply put their faith in God. They disturbed the Church's leaders because they were seen as a threat to their authority, and to the by now immense and complex system of wealth and power through which that authority was exercised.
>
> — G. R. Evans, *A Brief History of Heresy*

During the time the Cathars dominated Church concerns with heresy, another movement was evolving in the same region. The *Waldensians* (alt. names *Waldenses* or *Vaudois*) — so-called because the theology was based on the teachings of Peter Waldo — were one of the few heretical movements to survive all Church efforts at wiping it out. The movement continues and today is a Protestant sect.[1]

The origins of the Waldensian movement are traced back to the late 12th century. In approximately 1177 in Lyons, France, Peter Waldo (alt. names Waldus, Valdez, Vaudès or de Vaux, ca. 1140–ca. 1218) decided at about the age of 30 to radically change his life. At the time he was a wealthy merchant but after witnessing the death of an influential citizen of Lyons, Waldo visited his priest. The priest told Waldo that the only way to achieve heaven was to obey Christ's teachings, including leading a life of poverty; Waldo gave his wife part of his assets, with the rest going to the poor. He even sent his two daughters to a convent.

He memorized the Gospels in his native language, Provençal, which he quoted from in his teachings. His vow of poverty attracted large numbers of followers, who also swore the vow. They were named the Poor Men of Lyons

and also called themselves Brethren or the Poor of Christ, based on the biblical citation, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."[2] They were also called the *Sandalati* (the Sandaled), because they wore coarse sandals as part of their vow of poverty.

Although it co-existed with the Cathars in the same region, the Waldensian movement did not achieve the same levels of popularity as Catharism. Even so, the Church viewed Waldensians as heretics and a direct threat to their sole authority, and it was determined to prevent them from spreading their influence.

When local clergy complained about the movement to the papacy, Waldo appealed directly to Pope Alexander III (1159–81), who was sympathetic to the ideal of poverty as a Christian standard. Some of Waldo's followers attended the Third Lateran Council in 1179, where they asked the pope to sanction the movement. However, because Waldo had not been trained in theology, the pope ruled that their preaching would be allowed only if Waldo first obtained permission from the archbishop of Lyons.

Waldo refused to agree to these terms and continued to preach in defiance of the pope's order. Consequently, he was excommunicated at the Council of Verona in 1184 by Pope Lucius III (1185–7), along with all of his followers. The council ruled that the Waldensians were condemned for the heresy of preaching without the permission of their local bishop. The problem persisted, however, and the Waldensian movement gained in popularity over the next two decades. In 1199, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) reiterated his predecessors' approval of lives devoted to poverty, but condemned the Poor Men of Lyons for operating outside of the Church hierarchy. At the Fourth Lateran Council, Innocent issued decrees condemning heresy as "high treason" and demanded support from secular powers to help the Church in finding and suppressing heretical movements.

The Waldensian Doctrine

The Waldensians defied the Church not only by preaching without permission. They also held to important theological differences. Waldensians denied the existence of purgatory (*purgare* or *purgatorium*, meaning to cleanse), the place where souls were believed by the Roman Church to be assigned before being allowed to go to Heaven. Waldo argued that no such place was mentioned in the Bible. While Waldo was correct, the Church relied on many passages in both Old and New Testaments mentioning the treatment of varying levels of sin, the appropriate punishment and passages, the treatment of souls not condemned but not yet worthy of heaven, and the treatment of the

innocent but unbaptized. The concept of limbo as a place where these souls were to be assigned is closely related. The strict rule that a soul could go to heaven only if baptized created the need for a legalistic explanation of how such souls were treated in the afterlife.

Modern views of purgatory and limbo have evolved to a degree. The Roman Church continues to assert its belief in purgatory in spite of the lack of specific biblical reference. In modern times, Catholics are also concerned with the fate of not only unbaptized infants, but also miscarried embryos and fetuses. The question has become more complex, not less so. Waldo preached a theology that, compared to the rigid and legalistic beliefs of the Roman Church, was simple and easily explained.

Waldensians simplified all of their beliefs, adding to their appeal within the Christian world. They did not pray to the saints and, of greatest alarm to the Church, argued that anyone could consecrate bread and wine as part of the sacrament of Communion. The Church position held that only ordained priests could officiate at this ceremony.

In cases where Waldensians were questioned by tribunals of the Inquisition, they also refused to swear an oath as a matter of their theological belief. Inquisitors pointed to this as a refusal to be truthful. As the Church stepped up its pursuit of Waldensians even after Waldo's death, they migrated to northern Italy. Centuries later, the Church revived its antagonism, accusing Waldensians of being witches and justifying their arrest, trial and execution. In spite of centuries of persecution by the Inquisition, the Waldensian movement formed the basis for core beliefs later expressed by Protestant sects. They were influential in the formation of the Anabaptist and Mennonite movements in the 17th to 19th centuries.

The many theological differences Waldensians had with the Roman Church did not prevent efforts by the Church to reconcile with the sect. In 1207, for example, a spin-off of the Waldensian movement was initiated by Durand of Huesca, who abandoned his beliefs in Waldo's preachings and converted to the Catholic faith. He wrote "The Anti-Heresy Book" (*Liber Antihæresis*) and set up a new mendicant order intended to compete with the Waldensians. This movement, called the Poor Catholics (*Pauperes Catholici*), was active in northern Italy and southern France, the same regions where Waldensians were most prolific. But the effort to replace the Waldensians did not succeed and Pope Innocent III, who had sanctioned the new order in 1208, reversed his support four years later in favor of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders. In 1237, the Poor Catholics were folded into the Order of St. Augustine (OSA, or *Ordo Sancti Augustini*), an order requiring its members to live in monasteries and pursue lives devoted to total poverty.

The Waldensian movement persisted and perplexed Church authorities,

not only for its doctrinal differences but also for its policy beliefs. Waldensians believed that both men and woman were entitled to preach, a violation of long-held Catholic restrictions on women as priests, which continue to modern times. Women in the Roman Church have never been allowed to enter the priesthood or administer the sacraments and the Waldensians, in contradicting this rule, broke with Church *policy* as well as with Church *doctrine*. One of the issues that made heresy difficult to prevent and punish was the attitude among Church leaders that defiance of either kind — doctrine or policy — was heretical and deserving of the most extreme punishments, such as long prison terms or execution. However, among the common people, some of the so-called heretical beliefs expressed by the Waldensians, notably regarding policy, were simply not considered as serious as outright denial of faith-based doctrine. Compared to the Gnostic belief in more than one God, the Waldensian philosophy seemed relatively mild.

One reason the Waldensians saw no distinction between men and women having the right to preach was doctrinal as well as policy-based. They stated that the right to preach, to bless, and to administer sacraments (the activities most exclusively reserved by the Church for priests) was gained not by ordination granted by the Church, but by spiritual merit. This merit was granted by God and not by the Church, a belief that the Roman Church simply would never accept. Waldensians defied the Church, citing the biblical quotation of Apostle Peter: "We must obey God rather than men."[3]

This was contentious, of course, not only for the problems it created between the Roman Church and the Waldensian sect, but much later when the Reformation shook up the Church throughout Europe. The belief in merit as the basis for clerical activities was a core difference between the Protestant movement and the Roman Church and continues to be so today. At that time, the clergy and the papacy were so corrupt that Luther's movement became a social defiance of corruption itself. This included the dispute over the long-held policy that only priests could provide a connection between people and God. The central doctrinal issue of the entire Protestant movement became a challenge to the special status of the clergy, going all the way from the parish priests up to the pope, and from the right to administer sacraments to papal infallibility.

It had all begun with the Waldensian rationale that questioned the special status of priests, as well as the exclusion of women from that exclusive fraternity of God-approved *men*. The outgrowth was significant. Before the Waldensians offered up this challenge, only priests had access to the Bible itself as well as to other literature. The Church controlled distribution of all books, which had to be hand-copied before Gutenberg introduced the concept of movable type. The Church maintained its control by controlling education

itself. The majority of European adults did not read before this era. After books began to be published widely, the Church-dominated era was replaced with the Humanist era, in which everyone could gain knowledge and find enlightenment without relying on priests.

The Waldensian movement was far more than an interesting heretical sect that came and went in Church history. Very similar to Catharism, the Waldensian movement was a response to and protest of the very real problem of the growing distance between wealthy, educated clergy and illiterate, poverty-stricken peasants. The corruption within the Church prevented Church leaders from recognizing that the heretical movements of the day, including most significantly the Cathars and the Waldensians, were not only spiritual disputes, but the beginnings of major social reform as well. These were caused more by Church corruption than by any heretical beliefs. People embraced the Waldensian philosophy as simple and *Christian* and as a belief system closely aligned with what Jesus had taught. The people of Europe had begun to embrace what one historian called "a new faith, nationalism" as a protest against the old ways and the superstitions of the Church, not to mention its total control and blatant corruption:

> Dissatisfaction was felt with absenteeism and plural holding of benefices, with the indifference of the hierarchy and its widening separation from the lower clergy, with the prelates' furred gowns and suites of retainers, with coarse and ignorant village priests, with clerical lives given to concubines and carousing, no different from the average man's. This was a source of deep resentment because in the common mind if not in doctrine priests were supposed to be holier as the appointed intermediaries between man and God. Where could man find forgiveness and salvation if these intermediaries failed in their office? People felt a sense of betrayal in the daily evidence of the gulf between what Christ's agents were supposed to be and what they had become.[4]

Waldensians continued the trend Cathars had started, with the core complaints aimed at the Church eventually leading up to the Reformation and forming its root causes — most significant among these was the perceived corruption of the Church all the way up to the papacy, and the growing distance between the wealthy and powerful clergy on one hand, and the common people on the other. Through the entire period of several centuries, the Church, with its ingrained sacerdotal system, was invested in self-interest and unable to reform itself. The Cathars had protested with the non–Christian and militant approach of Gnosticism; the Waldensians considered themselves a part of the greater Christian world, and succeeded in their movement by demonstrating a greater level of piety than the Roman Church clergy of the day.

Waldensians became well organized in their self-professed church within

the greater Christian Church. In the 14th century, the Waldensian faith elected a superintendent (called the *Majoralis ominium*) to serve in the role of leader, as well as a complex hierarchy of deacons, priests, teachers and rectors. In Italy, Waldensians appointed leaders with the title of uncle (*barba*) who functioned like the father (*papas* or pope) of Roman Catholicism or the patriarch of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The *barba* was a traveling preacher and could be either a man or a woman. Local groups of Waldensians met secretly with *barbas* to hold services, house and feed them, and assist them in moving to the next village or town without being detected by the Inquisition.

Waldensians and the Inquisition

The organization of Waldensian groups was never as complete or as public as that of the Cathars and, ironically, this explains at least partially why the Waldensian Church has survived to modern times. The limited central organization of the sect enabled Waldensians to belong loosely rather than in a formal and documented manner, making it more difficult for inquisitors to identify the accused heretics and bring them to trial. The pacifism and rejection of war by Waldensians also made it more difficult for the Church to locate its perceived enemies. When inquisitors showed up, Waldensians simply retreated to the mountains to avoid persecution. The Cathars responded to armed force by raising their own army and battling the Church for 20 years.

During the Albigensian Crusade, the Waldensians were persecuted along with the Cathars, although their losses were minor in comparison because they did not take up arms but preferred to avoid direct conflict with the Roman Church's army. The first known case of a Waldensian being tried by a tribunal of the Inquisition was over a century after the movement began, in 1316. In that year, one Waldensian received a life sentence and another burned at the stake. In 1319, another 26 were imprisoned and another three condemned to death.[5]

These accounts did not include informal or undocumented cases of persecution. Banishment also was applied against Waldensians. In 1209, Roman Emperor Otto IV (reign 1209–18) banished Waldensians from areas where they were popular, including Calabria, south of Naples. Those who housed or supported Waldensians were subject to fines; but due to their piety, Waldensians were rarely punished through tribunals or imprisonment. However, in later years the Church stepped up its battle with Waldensians with a concerted effort to accuse them of practicing witchcraft.

It was not until 1487 that the Church aggressively attacked Waldensians, when Pope Innocent VIII (1484–92) declared a Crusade against them. Innocent

raised an army of 18,000 men to kill or arrest all Waldensians, forcing them up into the Alps, where they endured hardships but remained for many decades to follow. Waldensians, who shunned all war and violence, once again retreated and were able to survive. Their model enabled them to survive, unlike the Cathars, whose willingness to take up arms led to widespread death in their ranks.

By the early 1300s, the movement had migrated to other parts of Europe and was thriving, especially in Austria. At least 42 Waldensian communities were active there and many Waldensian communities had started their own schools. One district alone, Passau, was estimated to contain over 80,000 Waldensian members.[6]

In 1318, Dominican inquisitors were sent to investigate heresy in Bohemia (which had by then become one of the strongest Waldensian communities). The movement continued growing strongly in Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Poland, in spite of Church efforts to quell the movement through the Inquisition. By the end of the 14th century, the Waldensians were identified in three distinct and separate sects: the original Poor Men of Lyons, the Poor Men of Lombardy, and the Austrian Waldensians. Survival of the sects was based on two factors. First was the widespread acknowledgement that even though their movement was classified as heresy, the Waldensians were devout Christians who relied on the Gospels for their theology. This made it difficult for the Church to attack them on doctrinal grounds, as it had gone after the Gnostic beliefs of the Cathars. Second, when confronted with force, the Waldensians remained true to their expressed belief in pacifism and went into hiding or banishment rather than meeting their accusers in person. When directly confronted, Waldensians responded to inquisitors by citing biblical passages rather than denying the accusation that they held heretical beliefs.

Pope Innocent VIII (Giovanni Bettista Cybo), Pope from 1484–1492. By Marque Louis-Philippe, 15th century.

Waldensians had never embraced the Gnostic tenets of Catharism either, so that the Church had less reason to pursue

them as aggressively. Also unlike the Cathars, the Waldensians had never challenged the legitimacy of the sacraments or adopted rites different from those of the Church and, in fact, thought of themselves as good Christians. This made it very difficult for the Church to treat Waldensians as outright heretics like the Cathars and members of other movements. Although they believed that people other than priests were allowed to administer the sacraments, they also had a rationale that the Church could not easily deny. Waldensians claimed that all good people were priests simply by virtue of their *Christian* goodness.

A primary distinction between Waldensians and Catholics further made it difficult for the Church to use the Inquisition to accuse them of heresy. They believed more than anything else that, as the Apostles had said, mankind should obey God rather than other men. The Church cited this as disobedience to the papacy and its authority, but the Waldensians had a retort, from the Gospels, in the exchange between Pilate and Jesus:

> "Do you refuse to speak to me?" said Pilate. "Surely you know that I have authority to release you, and authority to crucify you?" "You would have no authority at all over me," Jesus replied, "if it had not been granted you from above; and therefore the deeper guilt lies with the one who handed me over to you."[7]

This challenge placed the Church in a predicament. How could they make a claim of heresy against a group of pious believers who based their doctrine on the Gospels? They did not dispute doctrine or directly defy the pope, but claimed a higher duty to God. This direct challenge to Church authority was the first example of the liberty from Church control that later bloomed into a full-scale social and religious movement under Martin Luther and other pioneers of the Reformation.

The Church reaction was to declare it illegal for non-clergy to read the Bible without prior permission from a local priest or bishop. As the Church tried to reinforce its tight control over what people read and learned, the invention of movable type only spread literacy and the Bible itself far and wide. The Church was unable to ban reading the Bible outright and its declaration that doing so was a form of heresy was not taken seriously. The Waldensians' power came from their citation of the Gospels, their pacifism, and their lives led by example. Compared to the corrupt, self-serving clergy of the day, the Waldensians were perceived by the citizens of Europe as being far more Christ-like than the Church itself; in fact, the differences were glaring, with Waldensians providing an example of a simple, pious ideal in contrast to the Roman Church with its wealthy, licentious, and corrupt clergy.

The Church rationale became weaker as it argued legalisms in opposing Waldensians. For example, in 1199 Innocent III wrote that the Waldensian

desire to understand the message of the Gospels was a positive attribute, but it could not be allowed to continue unchallenged. It bypassed the most important functions provided by the Roman Church priest, making the movement evil and a heresy. Only a priest, extensively educated in theology and ordained, could represent the Church and serve as conduit between the common man and God. Once again, the Waldensians had an answer. They argued that all Christians have a specific duty to obey Christ and to spread his word according to the dictates in the Gospels, and that failing to pursue this goal was wrong: "Anyone who knows the right thing to do and does not do it is a sinner."[8]

The Bible had become a big problem for the Roman Church, because Waldensians were able to use it to dispute arguments made by inquisitors. Originally the Dominicans had been the best-educated theologians and legal scholars in Europe, making them skilled in the art of interrogation and the condemnation of heretics. Interrogations against uneducated, simple people had been characterized as ridiculing the lack of sophistication among the accused. Interrogators were not only able to twist words and logic to dispute and then condemn the accused heretic, but to do so by using their superior training to humiliate their hapless and poorly educated victims.

The Waldensians were a match for these cruel and skilled inquisitors and their methods. Even lacking formal education, they resisted the Inquisition with the simple citation of biblical verse and the use of the words of Jesus and the Apostles. Inquisitors had to tread lightly to avoid sacrificing the sanctity of the Bible in the interest of pursuing and punishing heretics. For the first time, a sect was able to argue with the well-trained Dominican inquisitors. Ridicule did not work because the accused were able to cite the words of Jesus in their defense. The Bible, as the most important source of Christian doctrine, provided powerful authority for Waldensians in debating with inquisitors on any matters of doctrine.

Waldensians also produced spiritual literature of their own, once more intruding on a field that had always been owned exclusively by the Church. In addition to their own translation of the Bible, Waldensians published "The Noble Lesson" (*Noble Leyczon*), a book of spiritual poetry written in the Provençal language and consisting of 479 lines. It told the story of the Bible in highlights from the beginning of the Old Testament through to end times and the Last Judgment. It served as a vastly reduced, simplified version of biblical history for the common man.

Inquisitors called it heresy to print a translation of the Bible and even to read it. However, the greatest problem faced by the Inquisition was contending with the vow of poverty taken by Waldensians. How could the Church vilify a group of people who preached poverty and who led by example? This was especially difficult because the Waldensian philosophy was nearly identical

to that of St. Francis of Assisi, whose Franciscan Order was sanctioned by the Church and even took part in the Inquisition (although in a much more limited way than the Dominicans). The Church tried to explain away the Waldensian vow as a "false profession of poverty" as it was described by the infamous writings of Bernard Gui. But the argument was far from convincing.[9]

Church Responses to Waldensians

Church leaders were determined to battle the Waldensian movement by any means possible. They could not engage its members in armed battle, and tribunals were minimally effective. This was true not only because Waldensians were able to debate inquisitors effectively, but also because they scattered when summoned before an inquisitorial tribunal. Because Waldensians cited biblical sources to support their doctrine, the Church could not condemn their beliefs outright as they had been able to do with the Gnostic beliefs of the Cathars. Thus the Church had to condemn Waldensians for heresy based more on policy issues. The primary argument used by the Church was the Waldensian belief that ordination was not required to administer the sacraments, and that women were entitled to preach along with men.

A summary of the complaints the Church had with the movement was provided in a document published in 1254. It read in part about Waldensians:

> They say that the Romish Church is not the Church of Jesus Christ, but a church of malignants ... that they are the church of Christ, because they observe both in word, and deed, the doctrine of Christ, of the Gospel, and of the Apostles.
>
> Their second error is that all vices and sins are in the church, and that they alone live righteously.... That scarcely anyone in the church, but themselves, preserves the evangelical doctrine.... That they are the true poor in spirit, and suffer persecution for righteousness and faith.... That they are the Church of Jesus Christ.... That the Church of Rome is the Harlot in the Apocalypse.... That the Pope is the head of all errors.... That we are not to obey Prelates but only God.... That the clergy ought not to have possessions....
>
> [T]hey condemn all the Sacraments of the Church ... they condemn the sacrament of Marriage, saying that married persons sin mortally if they come together without the hope of offspring ... also, they say that the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles is sufficient for salvation without the statutes of the church.[10]

The Church also sanctioned the publication of books accusing Waldensians of outright scandal. This was one source for the popular image of witches

riding in the night on broomsticks. In a book of 24,000 verses written by Martin Le France and published in 1451 (*Le champion des dames*, or "The Champion of Women"), an image of Waldensians as witches bolstered this argument for the Church.

Two years later, in 1453, the first known case was documented of a witch admitting to flying on a broomstick. The accused male witch, Guillaume Edelin of St. Germain-en-Laye near Paris, admitted under torture to this practice. In 1477, a very specific confession was offered under torture by an accused witch in Savoy named Antoine Rose, who confessed that

> the first time she was taken to the synagogue, she saw many men and women enjoying themselves and dancing backwards. The Devil, whose name was Robinet, was a dark man who spoke in a hoarse voice. Kissing Robinet's foot in homage, she renounced God and the Christian faith. He put his mark on her, on the little finger of her left hand, and gave her a stick, 18 inches long, and a pot of ointment. She used to smear the ointment on the stick, put it between her legs and say, "Go, in the name of the Devil, go!" At once she would be carried though the air to the synagogue. The pictures of witches riding on a besom [a name for a broomstick] are therefore a polite interpretation of the truth.[11]

A century later in 1563, Martin Tulouff of Guernsey was "said to have seen his aged mother straddle a broomstick and whisk up the chimney and out of the house on it, saying "Go in the name of the Devil and Lucifer over rocks and thorns."[12]

Two trends occurred during the Waldensian period. First, the broomstick was increasingly used as proof of witchcraft and confessions were forced to include the admission, including the statement that the broomstick was merely a disguised witch's wand or a place for evil spirits to hide from sight. The second trend was a growing accusation that Waldensians were witches. The imagery of witches and broomsticks predates the Inquisition against the Waldensians. However, the Church intentionally associated the movement with witchcraft in its effort to vilify it and to support its contention that it was a serious heresy.[13]

A popular superstition, encouraged by anti–Waldensian inquisitors, was that Waldensian witches did indeed physically fly on broomsticks. In a book published in 1584 by Reginald Scot (*The Discoverie of Witchcraft*) the process was described in detail:

> At these magical assemblies, the witches never failed to dance; and in their dance they sing these words, "Har, har, divell divell, dance here dance here, plaie here plaie here, Sabbath, Sabbath." And whiles they sing and dance, ever one hath a broom in her hand, and holdeth it up aloft.[14]

The belief in witches and night-riding, either on broomsticks or on animals, can be traced back to as early as the first century when the Roman goddess

Diana was believed to take night rides as part of a pagan ritual. This ancient belief was cited in *Canon Episcopi,* a 10th-century essay:

> Have you believed or have you shared a superstition to which some wicked women claim to have given themselves, instruments of Satan, fooled by diabolical phantasms? During the night, with Diana, the pagan goddess, in the company of a crowd of other women, they ride the backs of animals, traversing great distances during the silence of the deep night, obeying Diana's orders as their mistress and putting themselves at her service during certain specified nights. If only these sorceresses could die in their impiety without dragging many others into their loss. Fooled into error, many people believe that these rides of Diana really exist. Thus they leave the true faith and fall into pagan error in believing that a god or goddess can exist besides the only God.[15]

The belief is also seen in Norse mythology and the well-known female army of Valkyries led by the god Odin, who rode through the sky during battles and gathered the souls of the dead. A similar legend in German mythology names the goddess Holda (alt. Holle) in a similar nighttime ride involving demonic or supernatural powers. The Church tried to associate *Waldensees* (also called *Waldenses* or *Vaudois*) directly with this ancient mythology, noting the similarity in name with *Valkyrie* (alt. Vauderie or Vaulderie) and even claiming that Waldensians themselves believed in and worshipped these night-flying beings.

The Church further vilified Waldensians by noting that the broomstick was an unmistakable sexual symbol, making the Waldensians prurient beings, and disputing their claims to celibacy as insincere, one of many accusations put forth by the Church in its un ending frustration with the heresy of the Waldensians. In spite of the Church's concerted efforts, the movement evolved and finally became an important Protestant sect during the Reformation.

7

The Seeds of the Reformation

> The concept of a personal call to imitate Christ, if carried to an extreme, could easily eliminate the need for an institutional Church, especially if that Church were not viewed as a true reflection of its founder. In other words, some thought that the true (institutional) Church should be abandoned in favor of a union of the faithful...
>
> — Richard M. Hogan, *Dissent from the Creed*

Before the Inquisition was established to find heretics and try them in front of tribunals, the focus had been on doctrinal "crimes" against the Church. Thus, Gnostic and pagan beliefs adopted by Christians fit into the accepted definition. The legalistic concept of heresy required that the individual was first a Christian, and that he or she knowingly (or in error) accepted beliefs contrary to the official Church doctrine.

Once the Inquisition was established and the anti-heresy effort turned over to the Dominican order, the focus shifted radically. The inquisitor was less interested in pointing out the error of a heretic's ways, and more intent on gaining a confession — even if that meant needing to coerce it from the accused. Ironically, just at the time that the Inquisition stepped up its efforts at rooting out heretics and redefining the crime itself, the entire culture of Europe was beginning to change. People were reexamining old beliefs and superstitions and questioning whether the Church was the sole authority on all matters.

The Anti–Church Social Trend in England

Long before the Reformation began in Europe, the seeds of challenge to Church authority had been sown. The Waldensians had raised the question of whether the Church and its priests were even needed for communion between mankind and God. This idea grew over time and it was in England

that the idea of changing Church domination over the Christian world became formally accepted.

Numerous social, political and cultural events affected Europe in this time, including the Black Plague and its terrible toll on all of Europe. One consequence of this plague was that people realized the Church was not all-powerful. It was unable to save people from death even with the claimed authority of God on its side. Another consequence was a growing movement to improve the rights of people in dealing with their governments and, ultimately, to end the feudal system that had been the social system for so long. As nations formed and replaced the more localized authority of lords over serfs, the Church also saw its authority ebbing away.

It was this change in social systems and people's legal rights that at least partially created the Inquisition. This was an effort by the Church to maintain control, not over heresy as defined in the past, but over the trend among people to question papal authority and power.

In England, an attempt at placing additional taxes on the people led to the Peasants' Revolt, which, while originally a political movement, also defined an age in which people demanded individual rights, not only from their king but also from a previously all-powerful Church. The Peasants' Revolt began in 1379 when the crown announced a third poll tax. Unlike previous poll taxes levied at a flat rate, the 1379 tax excluded some of the poor or allowed them to pay a reduced rate, but the scaling was applied unequally, creating the dispute. In addition to the inequity of the tax, English citizens protested the corruption of the Church which supervised the monarchy of the 14-year-old King Richard II.

The tax was only the igniter of a broader revolt. With the labor shortages caused by the Black Plague, serfs demanded their freedom and free workers demanded higher wages. The wealthy lords who had previously enjoyed complete control were forced to give in to these demands because they had no choice. So many social events were present at the same time. The revolt was first seen in 1381 when tax collectors were attacked in Essex and Kent and a group of peasants traveled to London in an uprising against the monarchy.

In London, rebels attacked the Tower of London and executed the defenders there, including the lord chancellor Simon of Sudbury and the archbishop of Canterbury. Many buildings were destroyed and the revolt spread to other parts of England. The king and nobility quickly raised an army of 7,000 men to put down the revolt and capture and execute its leaders. However, even though the revolt was put down by the king's army, the revolt changed forever the relationship between the common people and the government. Among these changes was a direct challenge to the Church.[1]

During the period of the Peasants' Revolt, English citizens increasingly

challenged papal claims to the right of appointments. This was a long-standing dispute. The pope claimed the right to appoint a *provisor* to a vacancy within the Church hierarchy. The Church claim to this power included the right of an appointed priest or bishop to control lands claimed by a parish or monastery. The priest also was entitled to a *temporality*, or payment. This was a form of tithe that included land ownership, and caused the transfer of much wealth into the hands of the Church. This system was called the "dead hand" because it lasted beyond the life of the individual and was passed on to newly appointed representatives. The Church further claimed an exemption from taxes. The concept of land rights going beyond the death of the current owner, the "dead pledge," is the source of the word *mortgage*.*

The English crown enacted a law called the Statute of Provisors, which stated that the Church claims did not conform to English law and represented a violation of the property rights of English citizens. The law claimed authority based on the founding of the Holy Church of England (*seinte eglise d'Engleterre*) not by the Church but by the sovereigns and nobles of England. Therefore, the rationale continued, the Church-appointed *aliens* were not entitled to the special treatment claimed by the Church in Rome.

This claim by the English crown was possible in part because of the distance between London and Rome. With popular support on the side of the monarchy, the Church had no way to enforce its claim to land and income. The labor shortage resulting from the Black Plague not only led to innovations in farming and industry, but also motivated the challenge to the Church. There were shortages of farmers and ranchers, so that crops went unattended and sheep and cattle grazed free with no one available to drive them or to organize herds. These social problems created practical problems in simply feeding people, and as long as the Church controlled lands but could not provide the labor required to manage them, the system was not workable. As the Church was removed from control over farm and ranch lands and replaced by individuals who previously had been serfs on the same land, the English nation gained its first strong sense of nationalism and patriotism. Of course, this devotion to a *nation* in place of a *Church* defined the age and led, over many decades, to the schism between the Church of England and the Roman Church.

This summary simplifies a much broader social change going on in England in the post–Plague decades. However, the social trend explains how the pre–Reformation changes taking place in England led to future changes

*www.etymonline.com: **mortgage** **(n.)** late 14c., from O.Fr. *morgage* (13c.), *mort gaige*, lit. "dead pledge" (replaced in modern Fr. by *hypothèque*), from *mort* "dead" + *gage* "pledge;" so called because the deal dies either when the debt is paid or when payment fails. O.Fr. *mort* is from V.L. **mortus* "dead," from L. *mortuus*, pp. of *mori* "to die" (see ***mortal***). The verb is first attested late 15c.

in both society and in how the Church was viewed in England and throughout Europe. The big change from the point of view of the Church and its anti-heresy efforts was that England would no longer accept the singular authority of the pope over the lands and citizens of England. These lands were seized by the crown and distributed among the parishioners, greatly reducing the power and authority of the Church and its representatives.

The redistribution of income-producing land was a massive change in power. The Church had owned or controlled one-third of these properties ("landed property") in England, but had not maximized their earnings and food-producing potential. The lack of concern among the friars and monks in control angered the people, so that the idea of a change in ownership of land was popular and widely supported. The Church objected but could not take steps to reverse the trend.

The English people not only challenged the right of the Church to hold land simply by virtue of being members of the clergy. They also wanted to reduce the clergy's power within the political structure of England. Bishops had previously taken part directly in parliamentary proceedings, including the holding of political posts. In 1370, however, Parliament passed a new law excluding clergy from holding state offices. The political climate went beyond this important reform. While many English citizens, notably those in rural areas, lived in poverty, many members of the clergy had lavish lifestyles and great wealth. For example, William of Wykeham bishop of Winchester owned at least 50 manors and controlled households of servants and attendants.[2]

The inequity of this system was glaring. The Church believed it had a right to tithes, not only in the form of income but also from crops, poultry, cattle, game and fish. Increasingly, the English people realized that the clergy took the best of everything and gave back nothing. The power of the Church was also misused in other ways. Priests and bishops elicited aid and construction in exchange for the offer of indulgences. Vows of celibacy were not enforced within the numerous monasteries and some priests even had families and were known to raise money from the nobility only to use it to support their wives and children. These examples of moral decline were as difficult for the distant Church to offset as were the political reforms depriving the clergy of its tithes and income. As a result, the common opinion was that the clergy was corrupt and immoral.

John Wyclif

The recognized beginning of the Reformation was the year 1517 when Martin Luther published his 95 Theses, documenting complaints against the

Roman Church and the pope. However, the roots of Reformation thought are traced to two centuries before this, and to the life of John Wyclif. He is called "The Morning Star of the Reformation" because he was the first to put forth an important, defining theory: the sovereign of a country has jurisdiction over temporal matters, separate from the Church and its jurisdiction over everything spiritual.

Today, this distinction is obvious because it is acknowledged almost everywhere in the Christian world. However, in the 14th century, this was a bold and revolutionary idea. Had it been put forth in continental Europe, it was quite likely that the person making such statements would be taken before the Inquisition and found guilty of heresy, perhaps even executed. In England, in comparison, tribunals lacked enforcement power and executions were rare. Wyclif also was able to publish freely and make statements without immediate threat of retribution because he was connected politically and had powerful allies.

Wyclif was born circa 1324 in or near the village of Wyclif in Yorkshire. He was educated at Oxford when he also served as one of the king's chaplains, where like many of his peers he opposed papal supremacy in the political and economic life of England. In 1366, Pope Urban V (1362–70), the sixth Avignon pope, demanded payment of a tribute from King John, which was then 33 years late. Parliament defied the papal demand, declaring that even if the king wanted to make the payment, he had no authority to do so without its consent. This was an important step in a series of actions in England to assert its political rights and independence from the papal authority that had ruled all of Christendom for many centuries.

Wyclif was involved politically, not only in advising Parliament on the matter of tribute, but also by serving on a commission in 1374 to negotiate a peace treaty with France. In that year, Wyclif went as part of the peace commission to Bruges, where he became friends with a powerful and influential member of the royal family, John of Gaunt, third son of King Edward III. (His title comes from his birthplace of Ghent in Belgium, then called Gaunt in England.) This connection was later crucial in protecting Wyclif from the Church and the Inquisition.

The trip to Bruges was a turning point for Wyclif. When he returned to England, he began preaching against papal authority and claim to sovereignty in England, where, Wyclif and many others argued, the monarch ruled above the Church. Wyclif also proposed that mendicant orders in England should be placed under the jurisdiction of secular authorities rather than the Church, a position so controversial that it brought Wyclif to the immediate attention of Church leaders. Stoking the fire more, Wyclif referred to the pope as "the anti–Christ, the proud, worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers

and cut-purses." Wyclif also claimed that the pope "has no more power in binding and loosing than any priest, and that the temporal lords may seize the possessions of the clergy if pressed by necessity."[3]

Wyclif's vocal challenges to papal authority brought the inevitable reaction from England's Church authorities. On February 19, 1377, he was ordered to appear before William Courtenay, bishop of London, who gave as the reason for the summons "to explain the wonderful things which had streamed forth from his mouth." Wyclif's ally John of Gaunt was present at this hearing and directly defied the bishop in Wyclif's defense. Nothing resulted immediately from this hearing, but the bishop made it clear to Wyclif that his writings and speeches were in error and could lead to his excommunication if he did not withdraw his previous positions.

Pope Gregory XI (1370–78) was determined to enforce Church authority against Wyclif when Wyclif did not become silent or recant his statements after this initial summons. Gregory wrote a bull on May 22, 1377, accusing Wyclif of blasphemy and heresy, describing him as "vomiting out of the filthy dungeon of his heart most wicked and damnable heresies, whereby he hoped to pollute the faithful and bring them to the precipice of perdition, overthrow the Church and subvert the secular estate."[4]

The pope directed that the bishop of London, archbishop of Canterbury, Oxford University, and King Edward III take immediate action to silence Wyclif. The pope demanded that Wyclif be imprisoned until a papal court was able to put together a tribunal and hold a trial. Oxford, under threat from Rome to have its funding cut off if it did not act, imposed a loosely enforced house arrest, ordering Wyclif to remain at Black Hall, but the response was half-hearted and did not last.

In 1382, a synod formalized the pope's accusations and declared Wyclif a heretic. His teachings, the synod determined, were in error and, as Wyclif had never recanted any of his statements, he was forced to retire from his Oxford position. The punishment fell short of excommunication and no serious effort was made to bring Wyclif before the Inquisition, due largely to the support of his powerful friend, John of Gaunt, and other influential noblemen. In retirement, Wyclif continued to publish works critical of the Church.

During his last two years of life, Wyclif was partially disabled by a stroke. In 1382, Pope Urban VI (1378–89) demanded that Wyclif come to Rome to answer for his heresy, but Wyclif responded by claiming he would answer to the law of Christ but not to the pope. He challenged the pope to renounce all wealth and devote himself to poverty and also to require all members of the clergy to do the same. The pope was powerless to compel Wyclif to make the journey, not only due to Wyclif's physical limitations but also because the Church had no support in England to arrest or transport an accused heretic.

On December 31, 1384, or the day after, Wyclif died after suffering a second stroke two days prior. Among those commenting on his passing, one historian described Wyclif as

> that instrument of the devil, that enemy of the Church, that author of confusion to the common people, that image of hypocrites, that idol of heretics, that author of schism, that sower of hatred, that coiner of lies, being struck with the horrible judgment of God [who] was smitten with palsy and continued to live till St. Sylvester's Day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness.[5]

Although Wyclif was gone, a movement based on his beliefs arose, and its believers were given the name Lollards. The true origin of this name is unclear. At the time, a Lollard was anyone lacking in education, but it eventually came to refer to anyone accused of heresy. The term might also be derived from the Dutch word *lollaerd*, meaning a mumbler.

Although the origins of the Lollardy movement were clearly based on Wyclif's ideas, the movement evolved over time. Fifteen years after Wyclif's death, in 1401, the mood in Parliament had turned pro–Church once again after Henry IV took the English throne. Movements challenging papal authority fell out of favor. Wyclif and his Lollard followers were condemned by Parliament with the passage of a new law, *De hæretico Comburendo* (The Burning of Heretics). This statute stated in part that the wicked sects

> make unlawful conventicles and confederacies, they hold and exercise schools, they make and write books, they do wickedly instruct and inform people, and, as much as they may, excite and stir them to sedition and insurrection, and make great strife and division among the people, and do daily perpetrate and commit other enormities horrible to be heard, in subversion of the said Catholic faith and doctrine of the Holy Church, in diminution of God's honor, and also in destruction of the estate, rights, and liberties of the said English Church; by which sect and wicked and false preachings, doctrines, and opinions of the said false and perverse people, not only the greatest peril of souls, but also many more other hurts, slanders, and perils, which God forbid, might come to this realm.[6]

The Constitutions of Oxford (1408) banned Wyclif's books, including his translation of the bible into English. This new law went to the extent of declaring that any English translation of the Bible was heresy. Seven years later, the Council of Constance (convened from November 5, 1414, through April 22, 1418) declared John Wyclif "to have been a notorious heretic, and excommunicates him and condemns his memory as one who died an obstinate heretic."[7]

All copies of Wyclif's books were ordered to be burned. In 1427, Pope Martin V (1417–31) ordered Wyclif's remains exhumed and burned, and his

ashes distributed into a river. And so, 40 years after his death, the authorities believed they had done away with Wyclif once and for all. At the time it was impossible for anyone to know, but Wyclif had begun a revolution in both political and cultural ideas about the authority of Church versus state. This would lead to the Reformation many decades later, but at the time the complete removal of all things associated with Wyclif, including his remains, satisfied the Church's desire to do away with him once and for all.

John Huss

Wyclif's views caught on outside of England and in many regions were accepted with even greater enthusiasm. In Bohemia (in the modern-day Czech Republic) John Huss (alt. Jan Hus) and Jerome of Prague both advocated the views Wyclif wrote and spoke about. Although Wyclif's followers did not endure in England, followers of Huss did endure up to modern times and today form a sect of Christianity separate from all of the major divisions of Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant. The modern Hussite Church elects its own patriarchs and follows a distinct theology including practice of the seven sacraments. Like many Protestant sects, Hussites promote individual conscience and belief and allow women to serve as ordained priests.

The Hussite movement formalized the ideas first expressed by Wyclif as a challenge to papal authority and infallibility. Jerome of Prague was studying at Oxford in the late 14th century when he first heard Wyclif's theology. Both he and John Huss had been reading Wyclif's works and in 1411, Huss informed John Stokes, a Dominican licentiate at Cambridge, that he defended Wyclif's view. Stokes replied that in England Wyclif was considered a heretic.

Huss had been educated at the University of Prague and in 1394 he received his bachelor of divinity degree. In 1402, he was appointed rector of the university but held the post for only six months. That same year, Huss was identified as the primary source for the spread of Wyclif's ideas in Prague. The controversy grew based on theological difference between Wyclif and the Church which were promoted by Huss. Pope Innocent VII (1404–6) asked the Prague authorities to seize and burn Wyclif's writings. A synod held in Prague the same year condemned Wyclif and declared that preaching his views was forbidden. University authorities were pressured by the archbishop and ordered that no one would be allowed to promote or support Wyclif's beliefs. Refusing to be silenced, Huss continued preaching and even translated many of Wyclif's published works into Czech. His public appearances were drawing ever larger crowds of supporters in spite of warnings and bans from the university, the archbishop and the pope.

In 1410, antipope Alexander V (1409–10) published a bull ordering a complete ban on all writings by Wyclif and all preaching of his beliefs. Huss appealed the order, arguing that it was illogical to burn books on philosophy and logic. Even so, under the archbishop's supervision, over 200 Wyclif manuscripts were seized and burned. Two days later, a formal declaration of excommunication was issued against Huss and anyone who followed him. Huss continued to preach in spite of the direct ban by the Church.

Huss and Jerome refused to be silenced and both criticized the papal

John Huss being burned at the stake. Diebold Schilling the Older, Spiezer Chronik (1485): Burning of Jan Hus at the stake. Fifteenth century illuminated manuscript.

bulls of 1411, in which antipope John XXIII (1400–15) offered indulgences to anyone who would fund a crusade in Italy against Ladislaus, king of Naples. The objection by Huss and Jerome to the papal attempt to raise funds with the use of indulgences brought papal attention to both reformers, not only for their protests against the crusade but also for their broader anti–Church beliefs and their willingness to criticize the Church vocally.

Pope John ordered Cardinal Oddo Colonna, who would later be elected as Pope Martin V (1417–31), to file formal accusations against Huss, who refused to appear voluntarily before a tribunal. Colonna, who reiterated the pope's ban on Huss' preaching, ordered that the ban be read from every pulpit in Prague. Huss wrote to Pope John professing his compliance with the Church and its doctrine. Even though Huss continued to insist that he had been misrepresented in the accusations leveled against him, Huss also continued preaching and protesting papal policies. Huss was publicly supported by Jerome.

In 1412, after an order was issued to arrest Huss, he left the city and went into exile, where he continued preaching to large crowds. The year after his exile began Huss published *De elllesia*, in which he further defied papal authority. He stated specifically in this work that "catholic" meant universal and it was the Church and the word of God that mattered, and that the pope and clergy were not the Church. He even stated that the Church could continue to exist even without a pope or cardinals. In contradiction of Roman Church views, Huss declared that Christ had never assigned Peter as head of the Church and that the pope had no authority to claim the position of leader. These statements were revolutionary on their own merit, but going even further, Huss also described the bulls written against him as anti–Christian, and thus not enforceable. He noted that excommunication could not be enforced if it was used to prevent preaching the truth, the same action that Christ himself had undertaken and ordered others to do in his name.

Huss denied the pope's infallibility and, based on Wyclif's previous statements, questioned the role of priests as essential in communication between mankind and God. The Roman Church could not let these direct challenges go unmet. The matter was among the most important points of business to be resolved at the Council of Constance. Emperor Sigismund, heir to the monarchy of Bohemia, wrote to Huss and asked him to attend the council. He promised Huss safe passage. Huss replied on September 1, 1414, that he was willing to attend and explain himself to the representatives of the Church. He departed the following month and arrived in Constance on November 3. He was accompanied on his journey by several supporters from the Bohemian nobility, notably John of Chlum, Wenzel of Duba and Henry Lacembok.[8]

Huss arrived in the city to an enthusiastic crowd of supporters. Even though Huss had been excommunicated, he held mass each day in the home

where he was lodged. This incensed the attending cardinals, who pointed out that Huss was a heretic and was not allowed to hold mass or to administer the sacraments. Under the rules of the day, anyone accused of heresy had no right to partake in Church rituals. On November 28, two bishops appeared in Huss' room and presented a summons for him to appear in front of the cardinals. The house was surrounded by armed guards to prevent his escape. Huss was brought in front of the council and, after a short hearing, was removed and placed in a dungeon at a nearby Dominican convent.

Huss remained locked up in unsanitary conditions for three months, by which time he had fallen ill. Supporters protested the imprisonment, citing the promise of safe passage Huss had been given by Sigismund. The council formed a commission to document the heresy and to question Huss, who, in spite of his request for representation, was not allowed an advocate. On March 24, 1415, Huss was taken to the bishop's castle, where he was given more freedom of movement during the day, but was cuffed and chained to the wall at night. He remained there until June 5, but his health deteriorated seriously. He not only had numerous ailments but was also on the brink of starvation. Over 250 of Huss' supporters signed a petition sent to Sigismund protesting their leader's incarceration and asking for a public hearing.

On June 5, Huss was transferred to a third location, a prison at a Franciscan compound. A three-day public hearing was held in this location, with the hearing dominated by clergy. The commission leveled charges of 260 errors and heresies found in Huss' published works and on June 8, he was handed a list of 39 specific articles accusing him of heresy. These included the charge that describing the Church as consisting of all believers was itself a form of heresy, and that continuing to preach while excommunicated was also a direct violation. Huss replied that if any of his statements could be shown by references to biblical verse to be in error, he would recant. The offer was rejected by the commission, which demanded a full recantation.

On June 24, the council ordered all of Huss' works burned. A week later, a delegation of archbishops and other clergy visited Huss and pleaded with him to offer a full recantation of his positions. A second visit took place July 5. Huss told the group that he would rather be burned than recant his beliefs. Called an "obstinate heretic" by the indignant bishops, Huss was again taken before the full council on July 6. The verdict and sentence was read to him, the conclusion stating that

> the holy council, having God only before its eye, condemns John Huss to have been and to be a true, real and open heretic, the disciple not of Christ but of John Wyclif, one who in the University of Prague and before the clergy and people declared Wyclif to be a Catholic and an evangelical doctor—*vir catholicus et doctor evangelicus*.[9]

In attendance was Sigismund, who had promised Huss safe conduct. After the reading of the charges, Huss looked at Sigismund as he began to reply, but Sigismund avoided eye contact with him. When Huss was taken from the council, thousands of his supporters lined the streets outside. He was taken to a square called the Devil's Place where he was burned at the stake, and his ashes thrown into the Rhine River.

In September 1415 the council replied to criticisms of its actions after Huss had been promised safe passage. The practice of offering safe passage was well established at the time and had been honored by both secular and Church tribunals. The official Church response broke with tradition, ruling that no promises of safety made to heretics were binding.

Jerome of Prague

One of Huss' most important supporters was Jerome of Prague. The two men shared a belief in the doctrines proposed by Wyclif but, unlike Huss, Jerome left no written record of his travels or beliefs.

Jerome first discovered Wyclif while he was studying at Oxford. He brought copies of two Wyclif works, *Trialogus* and *Dialogus*, upon returning to Prague circa 1402. He preached Wyclif's ideas for more than a decade until, in 1412, he directly criticized the papacy for the offering of indulgences as incentive to join a crusade. In support of Huss and his trial, Jerome traveled to Constance and arrived on April 4, 1415. Huss had written to other supporters and asked them to tell Jerome to stay away from the city, believing he would also be arrested. Jerome left shortly after his arrival, but he was arrested on the road and brought back and imprisoned on charges of heresy.

Being warned that he would need to renounce his previous support of Wyclif to save himself, Jerome recanted with a statement on September 11. He professed complete faith in the Roman Church and all of its doctrines. However, he was not released from prison as he expected and was told he would have to write to Bohemian nobility and the university to proclaim his belief in the Church. Jerome refused. He was brought to trial from May 23 through 26, 1416, where he confessed to following Wyclif and Huss and promised to abandon those beliefs. He was brought before the council once again on May 30, when charges were read aloud. Jerome was allowed to give a defense, after which the council "pronounced him a follower of Wyclif and Huss, and adjudged him to be cast off as a rotten and withered branch—*palmitem putridum et aridum*."[10]

Jerome was then taken to the same square where Huss had died the year before, and was put to death as well. Like his predecessor, his ashes were

thrown into the Rhine River. Jerome's trial was witnessed by Poggio Bracciolini, who described it as

> wonderful to see with what words, with what eloquence, with what arguments, with what countenance and with what composure, Jerome replied to his adversaries, and how fairly he put his case .... He advanced nothing unworthy of a good man, as though he felt confident — as he also publicly asserted — that no just reason could be found for his death.... Then proceeding to praise John Huss, who had been condemned to be burnt, he called him a good man, just and holy, unworthy of such a death, saying that he himself was prepared to go to any punishment whatsoever.... He said that Huss had never held opinions hostile to the Church of God, but only against the abuses of the clergy, against the pride, the arrogance and the pomp of prelates....[11]

Both John Huss and Jerome of Prague came to symbolize the social evolution of Christian belief in these times. Following on the doctrine of Wyclif, the two Bohemian men later became Reformation martyrs, expressing the challenges to total authority that the Church continued to claim as its own. The heresy they committed consisted mainly of a challenge to the position of the pope and priests as necessary to make a person a good Christian.

The Hussite Movement

After the executions of Huss and Jerome, a new movement started in Bohemia, originally consisting of followers who recognized the two men as martyrs and heroes. The movement and organized sect, the Hussites, became one of the most widespread and influential dissenting sects of the age.

The movement was more than a sect based on belief; it was also a political and social reaction to the executions. The Church was at risk of losing all of its influence in Bohemia, and no volume of proclamations could turn the tide. The attendees of the Council of Constance, who had condemned both Huss and Jerome, wrote to Prague's bishop asking him to quell the rebellion. In this letter, the council decreed that Wyclif, Huss, and Jerome had been "most unrighteous, dangerous and shameful men."[12]

The Council of Constance disbanded in 1418, and one of the last items of business was Pope Martin V's bull *Inter cunctas* published February 22, 1418. This bull was intended to suppress heresy while strengthening the papacy as an infallible institution. Martin decreed in his bull that when heretics wanted to seek forgiveness and return to the Church, they should be asked

> Whether they believe that the Pope canonically elected, for the time being, his name being expressly mentioned, is the successor of St. Peter, having

> supreme authority in the Church of God. For thereby he supposes it to be an article of faith, since those who abjure heresy are "interrogated only as to truths of faith."[13]

This expressed demand for recognition of the pope as supreme and infallible authority was aimed directly at the followers of Wyclif, Huss and Jerome. These dissenters had specifically challenged the authority of the pope as God's representative, and so Martin's bull was an opportunity for him not only to address the condition of heresy, but also to settle the question of his own authority as leader of the Church.

In 1419, the year after the Council of Constance concluded its business, civil war broke out between Hussites and the crown of newly elected King Sigismund. Churches were burned as the uprising became a popular movement and Pope Martin called for a new Crusade against Bohemia to put down the uprising. An army of 150,000 was quickly put together from countries throughout Europe and it attacked Bohemia. Although the crusading army tried to defeat the region five times, they were repelled every time. The struggle continued until 1427, when the Hussite-led army retaliated and launched an invasion of Germany.

The war did not end until 1431, when the Church army, led by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, was named by Pope Martin as head of the Council of Basel. Negotiations went on until July 5, 1436, five years later. At the conclusion, all Church censures were lifted from Bohemia and the Hussites. But Hussite sects argued among themselves and did not fully agree to the terms imposed by the council. Three decades later, in 1462, the pact between the Church and the Hussite forces was invalidated by a decree issued by Pope Pius II (1458–64). In spite of efforts by the Church to destroy the Hussite movement, by 1500 the order had between 200 and 300 congregations in Bohemia and Moravia and over 200,000 members. Of the different Hussite sects, the surviving one, the Bohemian Brethren, continued to thrive even though they were targets of the Jesuit Order for many years to follow. In modern times, the Roman Church continues to disapprove of the Hussite practice of ordaining women, but the relationship between the two churches is cordial. The Hussite movement is completely separate from the three major Christian divisions of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant, and yet, it is part of the Christian faith. The Hussite Church in the Czech Republic today has approximately 90,000 members.

8

The New Paganism and Witchcraft

> The decision to give up idolatry in the early Christian centuries ... involved a commitment to a religion which was not willing to participate in the general syncretism which allowed pagans to equate Zeus with Jupiter and so on, without any sense of disloyalty to their gods. Ordinary Christians found this a difficult rule to keep to. It is evident that the cult of the saints tended only too easily to replace in the popular mind the old worship of small local deities.
>
> —G. R. Evans, *A Brief History of Heresy*

The disputes between pagan and Christian beliefs never disappeared completely. In fact, Christian doctrine merged many pagan beliefs into its own to compromise with and thus convert pagans. Christianity cannot escape its connection to pagan rituals that predate Christ's life.

Celebration of Christmas on December 25 is one example. This date was decided by Pope Julius I (347–52) in 350 as part of an effort to convert pagan Romans who recognized that date as an important one in their own beliefs: celebration of the winter solstice. This holiday, also called Saturnalia, honored the god Saturn, the god of agriculture. It is also the source of the Mummers, costumed singers who went from house to house to celebrate the date, beginning the tradition of caroling during the Christmas season.

The date was also important to another group of pagans in Babylon who recognized December 25 as the feast of the son of Isis, goddess of nature. And in part of Europe, pagans celebrated Yule on December 25, a word meaning "wheel." On this date, the pagan sun god was honored by burning Yule logs. The same pagan belief honored mistletoe as a sacred plant, and the practice of kissing under mistletoe began as a pagan fertility ritual connected to the Yule celebration. This northern European pagan belief also included collecting holly berries, which were thought to be food for their gods.

The many ways of celebrating the season and honoring pagan gods were folded into Christianity. In addition to Christmas, many other holidays followed

the same historic course; and doctrines, including celebration of the sacraments, were also based on compromises between older pagan beliefs and newer Christian doctrine. The two general belief systems did not exist in complete opposition to one another but merged and compromised over many centuries. So it was that by the 14th century, many social and political changes throughout Europe included the emergence of a *new* paganism.

Humanism and Humanist Writings

The beginnings of a widespread movement away from dependence on the Church — including Humanism and nationalism as well as increased paganism — grew from the corruption within the Church itself. In the middle of the 14th century, the Black Plague devastated Europe and led to widespread death. The ramifications of this were many: the end of feudalism as the value of labor increased, the concurrent expansion of printed books leading to improved literacy, the desire among previously warring kingdoms to form into nation states, and most of all, a decline in Church power. The Black Plague convinced Europeans that the Church was not necessary for salvation. The Church, once thought to be all-powerful, was viewed after the Black Plague in a different light: the Church, even with its claimed direct connection to God, was not able to end the disease or to save the people.

The priesthood itself was widely known to be corrupt as well. There was no longer reliance on the Church's faith-based moral guidance. The corruption that ruined the Church's reputation and power did not occur only at the local level; it was obvious all the way to the papacy itself. The movement known as Humanism grew from the disappointment of the people in the institution of the Roman Church and, in fact, accompanied Church decline fittingly. As people abandoned their faith (or at least their reliance on the Church), Humanism filled the gap. However, during this period there were not distinct and separate belief systems in play, and Humanism — as well as other forms of paganism — did not exist entirely outside of Christianity. The differences were subtle and the lines were easily crossed. In Germany, for example, the "conversion of the Germanic peoples from paganism to Christianity remained incomplete for centuries ... affirm[ing] the continuing existence of pagan beliefs and rituals among a superficially Christianized population."[1]

The appearance of a "new" paganism is best understood within this context. It was not an anomaly appearing entirely in revolt against existing Christian doctrine, nor even a form of outright heresy (although the Church certainty treated all pagan belief and ritual as heretical, especially among Christians). Rather, pagan traditions had endured among Europeans who had

once been pagans and who had accepted Christianity as a socially and politically expedient way to share power.

Humanists, as new pagans in one form, cautiously worshipped the ancient gods of Rome and Greece. For example, during this era, when science and medicine were making fast advances, the first modern version of the Hippocratic Oath appeared. This was at the University of Wittenberg in 1508. Although the Church continued to hold great power during this period, the oath began with the words, "I swear by Apollo the Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panaceia and all the gods, and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant..."[2]

Considering the power of the Church and of its Inquisition, it is amazing that the oath referred to the god Apollo rather than to the Christian God; this is but one example of how widespread the Humanist movement and other pagan practices were between the 14th and 16th centuries. Humanists tended to be better educated than the average citizen and naturally came into direct conflict with the Church's own version of the educated man, the monk.

Conflict between Humanism and monastic orders grew from monks' dislike of any and all learning outside of their own monasteries. Self-enlightenment threatened their hold on knowledge and, thus, on power. Monks further laid claim to exceptional piety and, paradoxically, even claimed to be more humble than even the humblest of pagans. This "proud humility" defined the conflict between monks and Humanists, but Church power and influence were in decline. This is seen as much in the political aspects of European life as in the art of the period. The Renaissance Humanist Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75) used monks and nuns as leading characters in many of his more obscene writings, as did many of his contemporaries. This practice reflected the view that the clergy were corrupt.

A more controversial publication was the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* (Letters of Obscure Men), which satirically mocked Church doctrines and the lives of monks. The book was a collection of fictitious letters from extreme or fanatical Christian theologians, debating the merits of burning Jewish books because they were un–Christian. Among the satirical writings, most of which were addressed to Hardwin von Grätz (1475–1542), German Humanist and theologian, were mock accusations including that he had an affair with Johannes Pfefferkom's wife. Pfefferkom (1469–1523) was a converted Jew who became a Church theologian who promoted the destruction of all copies of the Talmud. Another satirical entry, letter XL, said Grätz had once soiled his pants in public.

The book drew attention to the corruption of monks and other members of the clergy and eventually helped bring about the Reformation. Martin

Luther's primary grievance against the Church was corruption among monks and priests, not to mention within the papacy itself. However, the Church was not willing to allow publication of critical works, especially those deemed to be obscene or that ridiculed the clergy. Pope Leo X (1513–21) excommunicated the authors in 1517 as well as anyone who published, distributed, or read the text.

Humanism as a New Paganism

The Church was intolerant of any and all writings that challenged its supremacy. The constant threat of excommunication and punishment for the crime of heresy kept many people silent; however, at the same time Humanism was gaining influence, not only as a social and philosophical movement but also as a form of paganism. It may be considered a part of the Reformation later led successfully by Martin Luther and others.

Luther's primary issue and criticism was the corruption among clergy and even within the papacy. The criticism was nothing new and had been a growing problem for many decades by the time Luther rose in prominence. Earlier, though, Humanists also criticized the corruption of the Church even though a degree of hypocrisy was in play. Humanists crossed over into paganism and valued nature more than belief in a conscious God. The philosophical ideal of *sequere naturam* (follow nature) fit well with the Humanist priority of mankind over God. However, the movement became at least as corrupt and self-serving as the Church was known to be; the self-serving interests of both institutions nullified their influence.

The Humanist and pagan belief in the values of materialism was at the core of the controversy between Christian and Humanist and pagan beliefs. Among the disputes that rose between Humanism and the Roman Church was a disagreement concerning the soul. The Church had always held that the soul is immortal; Pagans disagreed, believing the soul to be mortal and even questioning its existence. At the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513, a statement was issued, clearly challenging the pagan belief that the soul was not immortal, as the Church had always held. The council stated that

> we condemn and reject all those who insist that the intellectual soul is mortal, or that it is only one among all human beings, and those who suggest doubts on this topic. For the soul not only truly exists of itself and essentially as the form of the human body, as is said in the canon of our predecessor of happy memory, pope Clement V, promulgated in the general council of Vienne, but it is also immortal.... And since truth cannot contradict truth, we define that every statement contrary to the enlightened truth

> of the faith is totally false and we strictly forbid teaching otherwise to be permitted. We decree that all those who cling to erroneous statements of this kind, thus sowing heresies which are wholly condemned, should be avoided in every way and punished as detestable and odious heretics and infidels who are undermining the catholic faith. Moreover we strictly enjoin on each and every philosopher who teaches publicly in the universities or elsewhere, that when they explain or address to their audience the principles or conclusions of philosophers, where these are known to deviate from the true faith — as in the assertion of the soul's mortality or of there being only one soul or of the eternity of the world and other topics of this kind — they are obliged to devote their every effort to clarify for their listeners the truth of the Christian religion, to teach it by convincing arguments, so far as this is possible, and to apply themselves to the full extent of their energies to refuting and disposing of the philosophers' opposing arguments, since all the solutions are available.[3]

The debate concerning the immortality of the soul did not go away in spite of the Church's strongly worded statement. The issue was raised again by Italian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), who published a tract in 1516 called *De immortalitate animæ* (On the Immortality of the Soul). The Franciscan order in Venice ordered all copies of this burned.

Under threat of retaliation from the Church for heretical writings, Pomponazzi published two later works, *Apologia* (The Apology, 1517) and *Defensorium* (Defense, 1519), in which he made partial retractions of previous claims and attempted to explain that he was a true and loyal Catholic. Even so, the dispute was set between traditional Roman Church rules and doctrine, and the Humanist-based paganism that defined the beginnings of the Renaissance. One flaw of the Humanist movement was its self-indulgence and vanity, which made the movement as unsatisfactory as the Church and its own corruption. The Renaissance, as an outgrowth of the Humanist movement at least in part, became a movement expressed through art more than politics.

The Changing European Landscape

During the 14th century, many anti–Church movements flourished and expanded. One of the major contributing factors to the boldness in this new trend was the Black Plague between 1347 and 1350. The devastation not only to human life but to the core of society itself brought Church power into question. Before this time, European Christians for the most part accepted the Church as all-powerful. During and after the Black Plague, people began to realize that the Church could not protect them from events like plague; this realization led to a general decline in Church influence and the rise of many anti–Church movements.

The effects of the Black Plague should not be underestimated. Estimates range from 350 to 450 million deaths, representing as much as 60 percent of the entire population of Europe. This created severe labor shortages that took nearly 200 years to replace. Workers were not available to harvest crops, build and maintain shelters, or even to bury the dead. Entire villages and towns were abandoned as people fled in fear, and those who turned to priests for help were often told that the plague was God's punishment for their sins. The scope of loss is impossible to understand in modern times, but clearly its effects ended feudal Europe and led to a complete reevaluation of the role of the previously rich and powerful (including bishops and other Church elders) in the greater political and economic scheme of European life.

In spite of the Church's simplistic explanation of the Black Plague as God's punishment — or worse, the work of witches, pagans, Jews, and other enemies of the Church — the plague ran its course over the three worst years of 1347–50, with frequent recurrences in later decades. Today, scientists consider the outbreak to have been bubonic plague, characterized by the appearance of "buboes" on infected lymph nodes (thus, "black" plague). However, there also may have been other plagues occurring at the same time, including infection of the lungs (pneumonic plague) and the exceptionally deadly blood infection (septicemic plague). Yet another theory holds that the Black Plague may have been a form of viral hemorrhagic fever.

The primary method of infection was from fleas to humans, and fleas were carried by rats. Sadly, town elders of the day at first assumed that the disease was being spread by cats, so large numbers of cats were killed in an attempt to limit the spread of disease. Cats, of course, were the primary predators of rats, so this move only accelerated the rate of infection. The helplessness of the Church to do anything to end the plague or to save its victims was apparent to all, and many concurrent trends were underway that led to the eventual end of the Church's political power. These included the growing abuses of the Inquisition, notably the infamous Spanish Inquisition that began in the late 13th century; the Great Witch Hunts that were especially active in Germany and France and were led by tribunals of the Inquisition; the growing challenges of Humanism and paganism to the foundations of Christian doctrine; and the increasing criticism of Church corruption that eventually led to the Reformation.

All of these movements occurred within the same period. Those who challenged Church authority were more emboldened than ever before, the result of several changing social and cultural realities in Europe, including not only those social movements but also the correct assumption that the Church had lost its power. These included:

Humanism and **paganism** were not only alternatives to spiritual belief, but also social movements, which gained in popularity as alternatives to unquestioned Church doctrine. The Church continued to claim that its authority was universal and could not be questioned, even during a period in which people were beginning to realize that they had rights as citizens.

The Renaissance was also a social movement although it is best remembered by the enduring expression in art, music, architecture and literature of the period. This "rebirth" of mankind as both a Humanist movement and a claim to rights and freedom was also a type of liberation from the darker superstitions of previously held Christian belief. The idea that people could be excommunicated, condemned to eternal damnation and even brought to trial and burned at the stake for errors in thought was rapidly losing acceptance.

Recurring heretical movements were an unending problem for the Church. The more the Church quelled these movements, the more appeared. In the past 200 years, the Church had invested military and political power to erase the Cathars and Waldensians, among others, but was not able to slow the rise of dissent in movements like those led by Wyclif and Huss. These led eventually to a form of enlightenment that included the idea that ordinary people did not need priests to gain grace with God; that the corruption of the Church was proof of its disconnect with people; and that the pope and the Church were not infallible as the Church claimed. The Reformation was an explosive change in European history that became inevitable due to the combination of Church corruption, the massive changes of the Black Plague, and the leadership of Reformation figures, including Luther and Calvin.

The end of feudalism had a related aspect, and that was the gradual formation of a sense of nationalism. People began for the first time to gain a sense of national identity in place of feudal and highly localized fealty. This was not an easy oath, however. In Spain, for example, Ferdinand and Isabella wanted to create a fully Catholic and united Spain, but that required overcoming centuries of uneasy coexistence with both Jewish and Muslim population centers. The Spanish Inquisition was motivated largely by this desire and exploited long-held distrust of Spanish Jews, with the Inquisition held in the name of the Church and seeking out heretics in the form of *Conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity believed to secretly continue practicing Jewish rites). To many inquisitors, all Jews were under suspicion, so the social distrust of Jews (and Muslims) was exploited in an attempt to create an exclusively Christian nation. However, in Spain and elsewhere, the once feudal disputes of city states and privately raised armies were gradually replaced by new nation states. This occurred largely as an outgrowth of the Black Plague, but also as part of the evolving anti–Church sentiments of European citizens.

Printing technology and **movable type** were revolutionary as well. Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1398–1468) invented the movable type method in 1439, enabling the mass production of books and rapidly accelerating the Renaissance and the scientific revolution. Mass production of scholarly works created the revolution in astronomy, physics, biology, medicine, and chemistry, and all of these ideas enlightened people while questioning the superstitious beliefs promoted by the Church and based on literal readings of the Bible. (For example, the belief in the earth as center of the universe was based on the words in the book of Genesis, even though this was eventually disproven by later scientific research by Copernicus and Galileo, among others.)

Availability of books simply expanded knowledge and greatly reduced the illiteracy that had previously dominated European life. Increasing numbers of people were schooled even at the university level, and the more education became available, the less people relied on the clergy for information. More to the point, science and the proof it provided replaced the doctrine of the Church, which was based on faith and often provably false ideas.

Increasing skepticism also characterized the 13th century, even as the Church increased its attempt to quell dissent as well as the severity of the Inquisition. Once the citizens decided to question the Church premise of supreme authority, it was impossible to turn it back. Church leaders, corrupt and self-indulgent, were unwilling to give up lives of luxury or to take a pragmatic view of a changing continent. Rather than addressing the changes taking place, the Church decided instead to increase the penalties for defiance. As a consequence, all forms of questioning of Church dogma risked accusations of heresy. This expanded to include not only those promoting alternative beliefs, but anyone suspected of witchcraft, magic, fortune telling, or of secretly practicing Jewish rites; scientists whose theories were not consistent with the Church; or, eventually, those who accepted Luther's beliefs. In other words, the "heretic" became anyone who disagreed with or questioned the Church. In coming incarnations of the Inquisition, even artists and musicians were under threat of punishment for artistic expressions not approved by the Church.

A New Enemy: Witchcraft

With the success of the Albigensian Crusade and later Inquisitions aimed at eliminating heresy in France, the Church wanted to enter into a period of widespread acceptance of its domination. But its victory had come at a great cost. The military campaign lasted 20 years and included the deaths of an unknown number of civilians in addition to the Cathars. The entire region

of southern France was economically destroyed and the Cathar movement was only dispersed and forced underground. Previous Cathars and Waldensians reappeared under new names, and movements like those of Waldensians, Beghards, Beguines and Fraticelli — all seen between the 14th and 16th centuries — were used by inquisitors interchangeably; all were enemies of Church doctrine and all were treated as equally serious heretical movements.

Heretical movements growing out of Catharism rose repeatedly and, in spite of the efforts of the Inquisition, never disappeared. In fact, the more the Church exerted itself in attempts to punish heresy (through lengthy imprisonment, torture-induced confessions, public spectacles of execution, and seizures of family estates), the greater the heretical tide rose.

In the post-plague years of the 13th and 14th centuries, the Church continued to aggressively seek out heretics and silence them through its notorious tribunals. At the same time, Church attention expanded to a new enemy: witchcraft.

The Church confused witchcraft with known heretical movements, even accusing Waldensians of being witches. This was never true, but it suited the program the Church embarked upon, desperately looking for victims to keep its Inquisition alive and to convince the faithful of immediate and serious threats from the dark side. So "Waldensians" by variations in their names (*Vauderie*, *Vaudoisie, Vaudois, Waudenses* and *Valdenses*, for example) became confused with witches. Pope Eugene IV (1431–47) issued a bull in 1440 entitled *Ad perpetua rei memoriam*, in which he named Waldensians as witches.

In the 14th and 15th centuries the new movement of the Great Witch Hunt began, creating panic and accelerating inquisitional fervor aimed at witches, who were described either as heretics or as dupes of evil forces intent on harming good Christians. The widespread panic created intentionally by Church leaders and inquisitors had the purpose of consolidating power and bringing Christians back into line after the massive social changes of the 14th century. The witch panic turned into a mania at times, and thousands of people — almost all elderly women — were tortured, publicly humiliated, drowned and burned at the stake.

No one disputed the reality of witchcraft or protested Church excesses. In later years, even Protestant leaders supported the prosecution of witches. Luther strongly supported burning witches at the stake, and Calvin was also a believer. Even in the Protestant resistance of Church power, both of the major Reformation leaders believed that witches were a threat to Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant.

The broad description of the "dark arts," or *maleficium* described in ancient Roman law, included not only witches, but magicians, wizards, sorcerers, alchemists, and those who predicted the future. These dark arts were

collectively treated as anti–Christian and all fell under the Church-led definition of witchcraft as a form of heresy. Witches were believed capable of traveling through the air riding broomsticks and other devices, consorting with demons and conducting lurid sexual rituals in the forest. Such beliefs can be traced back to the 11th century or even earlier.

In the early 11th century, Regino of Prüm compiled a large number of Church rules and regulations as well as lists of sins good Christians should avoid. This collection was entitled *De Ecclesiasticis Disciplinis et Religione Christiana* (On Ecclesiastical Discipline and Christian Religion). This became a standard canonical reference for many centuries. Included in the second volume of this work was Chapter 364, the *Canon Episcopi* (Instructions to Bishops). The chapter was short — only one page — but its contents created the basis for Church beliefs concerning witchcraft from that point forward.[4]

The *Canon Episcopi* did not condemn witchcraft as heresy, but it did condemn the belief in witchcraft or the existence of witches. Even so, the later Great Witch Hunt revised this claim and began bringing accused witches before tribunals of the Inquisition, where their presumed sin was treated as outright heresy or as ignorance and error. The Inquisition went to the extent of holding trials for people simply for denying the existence of witches.

The text of the *Canon Episcopi* reads in part:

> To the end that bishops and their ministers work to labor with all strength to entirely uproot from their parishes the pernicious and devil-invented sorcery and malefic arts, if they find any man or woman sectarian of this wickedness, they eject them dishonorably disgraced from their parishes.... This also is not to be omitted, that certain wicked women, turned back toward Satan, seduced by demonic illusions and phantasms, believe of themselves and profess to ride upon certain beasts in the nighttime hours.... But would that they alone perished in their falsehood, and did not, through faithlessness, hand over many to ruin with themselves! For an innumerable multitude, deceived by this false opinion, believe this to be true, and so believing, avoid the straight faith, and are again caught in the errors of the Pagans, by judging there to be anything of divinity or divine will beyond the one God. Therefore, priests throughout their churches are required to pronounce this crime to the people, with all insistence, so this will be known to be lies in every way; and not from a divine, but from a malignant spirit are such phantasms imposed on the minds of the unfaithful.... Since Satan himself, who transforms himself into an angel of light, begins with the mind of whatsoever girl — and he will subjugate her to himself through unfaithfulness and disbelief — he immediately transforms himself into the species and resemblances of various persons; and the mind which he holds captive, deluded in sleep, is shown things now joyful, now mournful, and persons, now known, now unknown; through deserted places he leads it away; and though only the spirit endures this, the

> unfaithful mind believes this to happen not in the soul, but in the body.... Therefore, publicly announce to all: any who believe such and similar things destroys the faith, and whoever has not the straight faith in God, is not his, but is of whom he believes, that is, the devil.... Whoever, then, believes anything can be made, or any creature can be changed to better or worse, or transformed into another species or resemblance — except by the Creator himself who made all things, and through whom all things are made — is an unbeliever beyond doubt.[5]

The *Canon Episcopi* was republished in 1020 in a book called *On Enchanters and Augers* by Burchard of Worms. This book was a section of a larger work of canon law by Burchard entitled *Ecclesiæ Episcopi Decretorum* (called the *Decretum*). Once published within Burchard's extensive work, the *Canon Episcopi* was cited for centuries in further canonical publications.

This one-page chapter ended up holding great influence over later Church policies and beliefs concerning witchcraft. For example, it is the source for the term "fly by night" which in modern usage refers to shady dealings by con artists. Originally, it referred to witches traveling around on broomsticks to attend demonic rituals. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) refers to a dictionary published in 1796, which defined fly by night as "an ancient form of reproach to an old woman, signifying that she was a witch."[6]

Church Persecution of Witches

From about 1430 onward, witchcraft was treated with growing aggression by inquisitors, and procedures were developed defining punishments to be given for various forms and degrees of transgressions by witches or their cohorts. The official opinion was no longer that witchcraft occurred from time to time, but rather that it was an organized effort by Satan to destroy Christianity and mankind. Those accused of witchcraft were less likely to be granted the presumption of being simply misguided. It was far more likely that they were treated as willing participants in the conspiracy. A series of popes incited the panic and directed inquisitors to seek out and destroy witches. This was nothing new; Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) described witches in the 13th century, 200 years before the formal persecutions began. On June 13, 1233, Gregory issued a bull, *Vox Rama* (A Voice from On High) condemning satanic rituals in Germany and stating that witches and Satan appeared at meetings in the forms of black cats, geese, or toads.[7]

Many proclamations against witches followed over the next 200 years by several popes, culminating in the papal bull that began the official witch hunt as part of the broader Inquisition. Pope Innocent VIII (1484–92) wrote

in *Summis desiderantes affectibus* (Desiring with Supreme Ardor), published December 5, 1484, that

> It has indeed lately come to Our ears, not without afflicting Us with bitter sorrow, that in some parts of Northern Germany ... many persons of both sexes, unmindful of their own salvation and straying from the Catholic Faith, have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi and succubi, and by their incantations, spells, conjurations, and other accursed charms and crafts, enormities and horrid offences, have slain infants yet in the mother's womb, as also the offspring of cattle.[8]

The papal bull authorized German inquisitors to bring accused witches to trial and to then punish them according to their findings. The pope also authorized the writing of a book explaining the practices of witches and providing inquisitors with guidelines for questioning and prosecuting the accused witch. The resulting book, *Malleus maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches, or, in German, *Hexenhammer*), was first published in 1486 and was graphic and lurid and demonstrated the preoccupation among Dominican inquisitors with the sexual practices of young girls, both real and imagined. The book was so obscene that the Church ultimately condemned it and even placed it on the infamous list of prohibited books.

In one example of the obsession with the sexual weakness of women, the authors explained in a section called "Of the several methods by which Devils through witches entice and allure the innocent to the increase of that horrid craft and company," that

> towards young girls, more given to bodily lusts and pleasures, they observe a different method, working through their carnal desires and the pleasures of the flesh. Here it is to be noted that the devil is more eager and keen to tempt the good than the wicked, although in actual practice he tempts the wicked more than the good, because more aptitude for being tempted is found in the wicked than in the good. Therefore the devil tries all the harder to seduce all the more saintly virgins and girls; and there is reason in this, besides many examples of it.[9]

The manual was also filled with detailed descriptions of demons appearing in the shape of animals, killing babies and the unborn, even consuming babies as part of a demonic ritual. Other descriptions detailed what went on during orgies and how young girls were tricked with seduction. A lot of detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse between witches and the devil were included, particularly in one section (Part II, Question 1, Chapter IV) entitled "How in Modern Times Witches Perform the Carnal Act with Incubus Devils and How They Are Multiplied by This Means."

The manual was not the product of ignorant men. It was written by two well-educated Dominican inquisitors named Heinrich Kraemer and Jacob

Sprenger, and it contained three sections. The first was meant to prove the existence of witchcraft; the second documented the ways in which witchcraft was practiced and observed; and the third was a series of rules for discovering witches and bringing them to justice. The manual was distributed among inquisitors throughout Europe and was used as a guide for interrogation and condemnation of witches.

Among the cruel practices put into effect as part of the inquisition, witches were tortured with hot irons, almost always leading to a confession of guilt. The accusations included a great deal of sexual misconduct with demons, a matter that the Dominican inquisitors were notably obsessed with, as documented in *Malleus maleficarum* in great detail. The authors were intent on not only explaining the likely guilt of an accused female, but also in documenting the natural weakness and ease of temptation of females in general — explaining why demons preferred to tempt young girls over any others. The book was so widely used by inquisitors that it was reissued 13 times before 1520 and between 1574 and 1669, another 16 times.

The accused witches were so dehumanized by inquisitors that they were treated with more cruelty than others accused of heresy. In general, inquisitors were likely to rely on reason and intellect to convince an accused person to repent and return to the Church. But when it involved witches, any method was used to gain confession, including particularly cruel torture as a matter of policy. Confession and execution were the goals and, quite often, the foregone conclusion of the trial itself. The witch was presumed capable of lying and deceiving to a degree that confessions gained too easily were suspect. Dominican inquisitors, who at times had expressed reluctance to use torture except as a last resort, adopted extreme measures with relish. This was extended beyond the accused and included coercive measures against witnesses as well. In fact, the policy became widespread that anyone defending an accused witch should also be suspected of the same crime. Defense of the person was viewed as proof that the person offering a defense was clearly guilty; otherwise, why defend the witch?

The tendency to accuse women of witchcraft rather than men was partially due to Church policies favoring men as superior to women, and partially due to the lower social status and rights of women in society. This certainly was a factor in the nearly complete persecution of females for the crime, with nearly no men accused during the period. The fact that women were more often accused of witchcraft was clear from the record; even when men were accused of the same crime, punishments were usually much less severe:

> Having a female body was the factor most likely to render one vulnerable to being called a witch. The sexual connotations and the explicit sexual

> violence utilized in many of the trials make this fact clear. Just which women were targeted and under what circumstances reveals much more about the status of women in early modern Europe.[10]

In addition, elderly women were much more likely to be accused of witchcraft than younger women. Most were unmarried and many were viewed suspiciously by neighbors. Any hint of eccentric behavior could be enough for a neighbor to report an elderly woman to the Inquisition. Common dislike or fear of widowed, elderly women augmented this tendency. One author described witches as "women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles."[11]

The low social status for women in general, but especially for elderly, widowed women, made them easy targets for inquisitors seeking victims. The epithets "damnable vermin" and "hideous bitches" further dehumanized the elderly female who, already powerless in society, were especially vulnerable to an accusation of practicing the demonic arts. To this day, the vision of a witch as living alone and acting in an eccentric manner, as well as being elderly and ugly, persists as the image of what constitutes a "typical" witch.

Accusations went beyond simply practicing devil worship or creating spells. Witches were accused of creating bad weather and destroying crops, murdering innocent children, and corrupting the young and innocent by recruiting them into the coven that worshipped Satan. This trend was not solely a matter of suspicion aimed at powerless victims. By policy, anyone accused and found guilty of witchcraft by the Inquisition would also have their property taken from them. So an elderly widow who owned land was more vulnerable than a younger, poorer married woman who, by law, could not own property held by her husband.

In addition to the aggressive persecution of women as witches, they were also subject to crueler executions than were other heretics. When they were burned at the stake, condemned heretics were likely to be choked into unconsciousness before the fire was lit. In the case of witches, confessions were gained by way of torture, including burning the ears, eyes and breasts with hot irons and cutting off one or both hands. The final execution was carried out with equally sadistic delight even by secular authorities cooperating with the Dominican inquisitors, often with intentionally slow fires to prolong the suffering of the accused.

Even during witch trials, women were treated less favorably than men. While men accused of witchcraft or other forms of heresy were allowed to defend themselves, women were not allowed to speak at all or to offer witnesses on their own behalf. Upon being found guilty and condemned, women were not allowed to appeal their sentences; men could appeal to a higher court or even to a governing authority. The ban on appeals by women was a papal

restriction and it was strictly enforced by the Dominican tribunals. Even in cases in which a married couple faced accusations, it was likely that the man would be exonerated and released while his wife would be found guilty and condemned to burn.

The emphasis on witchcraft as part of the broader Inquisition lasted 200 years until, in the middle of the 17th century, the phase ended suddenly. At the same time, the Inquisition had begun shifting its attention away from previous definitions of heresy and focusing instead on scientists, artists and writers. A new trend also began, in which heretical focus was shifted to members of the clergy. A range of sins including defiance or preaching contrary to Church doctrine broadened the definition of punishable offenses, so that "heresy" no longer had the same meaning as in the past, of a conscious defiance of Church doctrine.

In the 15th century, the Church was a model of corruption and self-indulgence. Most priests in Rome had at least one concubine and nepotism in the papacy and the higher Church offices was the rule rather than the exception. Two centuries later, the Church had for the most part lost its political and legal influence and had begun turning its attention away from capital punishment for heresy. Citizens no longer feared retribution and it was common for people to openly criticize the Church and the pope without fear of consequences.

Also by the late 15th century, the desire to create a unified Catholic nation in Spain led the monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella to shift focus from heretics to Spanish Jews. The underlying goal, to eliminate all non–Christian influence in Spain, was an excuse for a new and terrible phase in Church history: the Spanish Inquisition.

9

The Spanish Inquisition

> Increasingly, the baptism of *conversos* came to be regarded by many Christians as invalid, or at least not sufficient to remove from *conversos* the taint of Judaism or atheism. As Christians, the *conversos* also faced a new kind of risk, for they (unlike Jews and Muslims) were now subject to ecclesiastical discipline, particularly to an inquisitor, if they were suspected of heresy.
>
> — Edward Peters, *Inquisition*

The events that occurred in Spain between the late 15th century and the 16th century — the period known as the Spanish Inquisition — did not occur spontaneously or suddenly. They resulted from many separate and evolving causes. These include a long-established racial distrust between Christians and non–Christians (especially Jews), economic competition, social or political conflicts between Christian and Jewish lifestyles and traditions, the desire for a unified Spanish government (under a single monarchy and practicing a single religion), a continuing loss of political power and influence on the part of the Church, and the social effects and consequences of the Black Plague.

History simplifies events that in the context of the time are complex and difficult to recognize. Most people think of the Spanish Inquisition solely in terms of the abuses in the system operated by Dominican friar Tomás de Torquemada on behalf of the Church, and even cite this period as being the primary cause of the reduction of Church political power. In fact, though, the Church lost its political power for many reasons beyond the abuses of the Inquisition. These reasons included its own internal excesses of the period, in which many popes spent Church assets on their own lavish lifestyle, employed relatives and mistresses, and sold appointments to enrich themselves. The decades of schism, when the papacy was centered in both Avignon and Rome, also added to the decline of the Roman Church.

The inventions of movable print made it possible for anyone to buy and own books, a revolutionary change for the times; this change applied to citizens

of Spain as much as elsewhere in Europe. Before this, few people — mostly priests and monks — had access to books or even knew how to read. The Church had owned the monopoly on information, so that illiteracy provided the Church with a form of social control. Gutenberg's invention changed this, leading to widespread education and, ultimately, the questioning of Church power and sole access to knowledge. This characterized the Renaissance as much as advances in art and science. Once this door had been opened, the Church found it impossible to maintain its domination over the Christian world.

This period witnessed an expansion of knowledge and thought, and a growing change in self-expression. People realized for the first time that priests were not the sole owners of information. Even beyond this, it became apparent to many that the Church was not a required intermediary between the individual and God. This raised many questions and began the process of the Church's decline in power and influence. The printing press was the first step. Within 35 years of the invention of the printing press, every major European city had presses of their own and books of many kinds were being produced at an incredible volume.[1]

Background of the Spanish Inquisition

In the years preceding the formal Spanish Inquisition, widespread hatred of Jews in Spain led King Enrique IV (ruled 1454–74) to issue calls to stop the violence, including the destruction of property and harming of Jewish merchants. But his mandates did not end the violence. By 1460, Enrique concluded that Church intervention was necessary. Hoping that the Church would help end the violence, he appealed to the pope to establish a new Inquisition. Enrique wanted this in order to discover whether any serious instances of heresy would be uncovered, believing that whether any were found or not, the process would end the anti–Jewish violence.

Two years later, Pope Pius II (1458–64) agreed to set up a new Inquisition in Spain, for the purpose of investigating accusations of Converso heresy. Any converted Jews found to be secretly continuing to practice Jewish rites would be accused of heresy and brought before the newly established tribunal. The two-year gap between the initial request and the pope's decision was caused by disagreement between king and pope as to who would control the new tribunals. Enrique wanted a four-person panel of inquisitors appointed and controlled by him. The pope wanted to leave control up to the Dominicans, in line with the process elsewhere in Europe.

Pius announced the new Inquisition with a bull, *Dum fidei catholicæ*, on

March 15, 1462. This proclamation included Enrique's exclusive power to appoint inquisitors. Although the stated intention of the new Inquisition was to find Converso heretics, the root cause of dissent in Castile was not with converted Jews but with non–Jewish Christians, the so-called Old Christians, who wanted the Jews to be prevented from competing economically with them. Enrique's underlying purpose in asking for a new Inquisition was not actually to find heresy, but to quiet down the conflicts between Old Christians and newly converted Jews. Among the problems were repeated accusations that converted Jews were all false Christians.

Between 1463 and 1474, the king took little action in spite of repeated demands among Franciscans to begin tribunals and bring Conversos before them. In spite of Enrique's desire for the conflict to die down, it did not. Enrique died in 1474 and new rulers took over, Queen Isabella and her husband Ferdinand. Under their reign, the Spanish Inquisition would take full effect, satisfying at least one segment of Spanish society, the Old Christians. As soon as the new monarchs took office, new demands for Inquisition were made. In 1478, a Dominican named Alonso de Hojeda told Isabella that he had discovered a secret organization of Conversos practicing Judaic rites. He convinced the queen that this discovery required a stepped-up investigation. The existing Inquisition had never been fully implemented so, in 1478, Isabella and Ferdinand asked Pope Sixtus IV (1471–84) to issue a new bull. On November 1, 1478, Sixtus issued *Exigit sinceras devotionis affectus*, a bull announcing a new Inquisition in Castile. The monarchs were given full authority to appoint their own inquisitors. In 1480, they set up the first tribunal and appointed two Dominicans, Juan de San Martín and Miguel de Morillo, as inquisitors, with Juan Ruiz de Medina serving as their advisor.

Immediately, rumors spread that Conversos were plotting to assassinate the newly appointed inquisitors, leading to the arrest of dozens and convictions of most. On February 6, 1481, the first victims of the formal Spanish Inquisition, six Conversos, were found guilty of the crime of heresy and condemned to burning at the stake.

Additional tribunals were quickly established in Córdoba in 1482 and in Ciudad Real and Jaén in 1483. A new inquisitor was appointed as part of this expanded investigation: Tomás de Torquemada. In October 1483, Torquemada was named inquisitor general for the regions of Aragon, Valencia and Catalonia. The citizens of Aragon were opposed to the Inquisition in their region until 1485, when an inquisitor named Pedro Arbués was murdered. From this point forward, the Inquisition accelerated not only with support from the monarchs and the pope, but also from the Christian community in the region.

On March 31, 1492, Isabella and Ferdinand issued the Alhambra Decree, also called the Edict of Expulsion. It called for the expulsion of all Jews from

Spain by July 31. An estimated 200,000 Jews left, and the remaining Conversos became the victims of the Inquisition. However, over time the scope of tribunals expanded greatly. Originally intent on discovering the heresy of Judaizing among Conversos, inquisitors began to also prosecute heretics of many other definitions. These included accused Lutherans and witches, and those accused of blasphemy, sexual immorality, and bigamy, as well as a range of crimes among the clergy.

A majority of confessions made by those accused of a range of heretical wrongs were given under torture. More than elsewhere in Europe, the excesses in the Spanish Inquisition ensured an impressive conviction rate. The expansion of the crime of heresy to include a broad range of wrongs led to even more abuse. The concept that crimes including sexual misbehavior were a form of heresy, as well as many other often petty wrongs, meant that anything the inquisitor disliked brought the accused into his jurisdiction. The Spanish Inquisition did not end officially until the 19th century, when heresy was still investigated among Protestants, atheists and even freemasons.

Torquemada as a Central Figure

The search for heretics in Spain is associated with Tomás de Torquemada more than any other figure. This infamous Dominican served from 1483 through 1498. He was described as the "hammer of heretics, the light of Spain, the savior of his country, the honor of his order."[2]

Torquemada was a zealot and fanatic. Under his reign as grand inquisitor, every Spanish boy over 14 or girl over 12 fell under the jurisdiction of his tribunals. He was hated and feared, recognized as the driving force behind the persecution of thousands of citizens. His tribunals had unlimited power not only to try accused heretics but also to define as heresy any actions that inquisitors deemed suspicious or immoral. The concept of "heresy" was expanded to the point that anyone was at risk. Virtually all Conversos were suspected of secretly continuing to practice Judaic rites under Torquemada's system of tribunals. The fact that most of the accused confessed to the crime bolstered Torquemada's belief that heresy was widespread, even though those confessions were extracted under torture. The use of extreme measures during interrogation were not only approved by Torquemada, he encouraged them in the belief that a confession, however obtained, was enough to gain conviction and to justify execution of those found guilty.

Ironically, Torquemada himself had Jewish blood. He was the nephew of the esteemed cardinal, Juan de Torquemada, who nearly became pope years earlier. Tomás de Torquemada was infamous as the most oppressive inquisitor

of the Spanish Inquisition, but his own grandmother was a Converso. Even so, the extreme step of expelling all Jews from Spain under the Alhambra Decree was largely due to Torquemada's support for the idea.

The extremes of the Spanish Inquisition went far beyond the usual suspicions concerning heresy seen elsewhere in Europe. In Spain, centuries of distrust between Catholic and Jewish citizens added a racial motive, and the Church's offices were used by some citizens and clergy as an excuse to eliminate the Jews, including those who had converted to Christianity in good faith. The sincerity of conversion was doubted so widely that *all* Conversos were considered probable heretics by many Spanish Christians. Even the "voluntary" conversions of Jews (often occurring when there were no other choices) did not placate the anti–Jewish interests in Spain. The Church had assumed that conversion would end the hatred and distrust and its long-standing policy was that conversion could not be forced on Jews. However, the policy itself, far from resolving the dispute, only aggravated the anti–Jewish sentiment that made the Spanish Inquisition so extreme.

As late as the mid–16th century, the Inquisition continued in Spain, even though the mass expulsion of Jews had removed many likely victims. A Spanish cardinal named Juan Martínez Pedernales, known by the shorter name of Siliceo, initiated a new and extreme version of the Spanish Inquisition. As archbishop of Toledo in 1546, Siliceo created a renewed anti–Jewish movement in the area. He decreed that Conversos were no longer allowed to enter the priesthood (in addition to existing bans on attending universities, serving in the military, or practicing medicine). The ban on Conversos required approval from the pope, but Siliceo told the pope that he knew specifically about a widespread Jewish conspiracy. This alleged plot included plans for Conversos to teach their children the art of finance so they could steal wealth from Christians. The plot also included ideas for taking over political power and becoming priests so that Christianity could be corrupted from the ranks of the clergy, and becoming doctors so they could murder Christian patients.

The claims did not convince Pope Julius III (1550–55) to approve the proposed changes Siliceo had requested; but it did mark the clear movement of the Spanish Inquisition away from the pretense of searching for heretics, and toward a theme clearly racial in motive and intent. Siliceo encouraged the conspiracy theory in spite of a lack of support from the pope. In the past, inquisitors and supporters among the clergy had masked their intentions with claims of wanting to root out heresy. Now, there was no attempt at disguising the real motive: Siliceo and his supporters simply wanted to keep Jews (including Conversos) out of important fields such as medicine, politics, the military and the clergy, and eventually suppress them entirely.

Although Conversos had been the initial and primary targets of the

Inquisition, the rights of Jewish citizens had also been acknowledged within Spain. Originally, Jewish citizens had been granted civil rights, but over the period of the Inquisition, they were eventually required to either leave the country or convert to Christianity. Because leaving was also made difficult through restrictions on movement, most Jewish citizens of Spain had no choice but to convert, to become Conversos. The Church originally hoped and believed that once Jews converted, they would embrace Christianity *and* Christianity would also embrace them. However, Spanish Christians remained suspicious and resentful toward their ex–Jewish fellow Christians. They suspected the converted Christians of secretly continuing to practice Jewish rites — the recurring accusation made against the Conversos — and so the tribunals had initially been allowed, under the guise of protecting Christianity against heretics. Large numbers of ex–Jewish Christians were arrested and tried, their property taken, and were imprisoned or executed. The trend did not wane until most Spanish ex–Jews had left the country or been condemned by the tribunals; however, after this, the claim to want to protect the Christian world from heresy no longer was necessary. The Spanish Inquisition became primarily a racially motivated effort.

The Racial Component

The firmly established conflict between Christians and Jews in Spain went back centuries. The inability of these two groups to coexist was made worse by the introduction of forced conversions or, as the Church preferred, "voluntary" conversions of Jews to Christianity. It was a dilemma for the Church in the sense that it opposed forced conversion as a matter of long-standing policy; but in Spain, Jews were cut off economically and socially from the rest of society, consigned to ghettos, and forbidden to travel. The choice became one of starvation or conversion. This was how voluntary conversion worked. Ironically, the plan backfired.

The Church had assumed that once Jews converted to Christianity, they would be completely assimilated into Christian society and that no distinctions would be visible between Old Christians and New Christians. This view was shared by Bishop Alfonso de Cartagena, himself a Converso, who wrote of looking forward to the day when the Converso river would be absorbed by the great Christian sea and would disappear.[3]

However, the racial hatred and distrust of Jews was simply transferred to the Conversos; once they became Christian, the suspicion that many Conversos were secretly practicing Jewish rituals increased the paranoia about the entire group of Jews in Spain. Because the Conversos were Christians, whether

by choice or not, they came under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition. Conversion did nothing to reduce racial hate; it made it worse. This hatred for Conversos was not limited to the working class in Spain, although it was strong in the urban areas.

This hatred was also common among both Franciscan and Dominican friars. The Dominicans, who operated the Inquisition, were intent on ridding Spain of the secret Jews and their practices. They not only took part in the racial element of the Inquisition; they encouraged and often incited it.

Among converted Jews, there were distinct groups as well. Many embraced Christianity in whole or in part, and led lives as Christians. Some participated in mass and the taking of the sacraments; others minimally complied with the requirements of Christianity as a matter of survival. Among the Conversos, the Marranos were the "secret Jews" who continued to practice Judaism while publicly identifying themselves as Christians. The number of Marranos cannot be known with accuracy because, by definition, the practice was secret. However, the Inquisition and its officers very often assumed that all or most Conversos were probably secretly continuing to practice Jewish rites. The suspicion was widespread. As a consequence, it was impossible for Jews, even those who converted willingly, to ever assimilate fully into Spanish society and its Christian-dominated culture. The inability of Spanish Jews to ever make this transition was explained by Jewish historian Don Isaac Abravanel:

> Even though they and their descendants will endeavor to be like complete gentiles, they will be unable to achieve this aim. For the native peoples of the lands will always call them "Jews," mark them as "Israelites" against their will and falsely accuse them of Judaizing in secret — a crime for which they pay with death by fire.[4]

Among the profound problems of living as a Converso in Spain was the fear of retribution for secretly practicing Judaism. This fear was shared equally by Marranos who were guilty of the offense and by Conversos who had adopted Christianity as a pragmatic matter, many of whom considered themselves fully Christian. Even second- and third-generation Conversos continued to be seen as imposters and false Christians by racists in the Christian community, notably among members of the clergy of the time. The lines between religious fervor and racial hatred were blurred and impossible to distinguish among clergy of the day, whose incitement of riots led to the worst violence suffered by Conversos. The more racially inclined Christians were all too willing to believe even fantastic charges against Conversos, and conspiracy theories — even illogical ones — were recurring facts of life during and even prior to the Spanish Inquisition.

For example, Alfonso de Espina, a rabid anti–Jewish Franciscan, spread rumors of unbelievable atrocities being committed by Conversos against Christians. These included the desecration of the Catholic Host, ritual murder of babies, and plots to kill thousands of Christians by the use of black magic. His charges included the use of the heart of a murdered Christian child in satanic rituals. Although no Christian infants were missing, the rumor spread and led to trials and executions of many Conversos.

Members of the clergy like Espina were effective at masking their personal racial hatred in the guise of religion, and at making charges that outraged Christians. The rumors of anti–Christian conspiracy, the murder of Christian children, and the use of black magic all fit well with the racial bias popular in Spain, and prevented an even-handed analysis of the charges or demand for proof.

One source of the racial hatred of Conversos was the encouragement on the part of the Church for ex–Jews to marry Christians. This conflicted with the blood purity theories, or *limpieza de sangre*, that were popular among Spanish-born Christians. The original Church view was that intermarriage would eliminate all remnants of Jewish culture and tradition; instead, it made the racial hated worse. The continual references to the impurity of the Jews as a race was completely at odds with the belief that intermarriage would solve the racial problem.

The gradual development of this racial hatred to the accusations of heresy, specifically that Conversos were secretly practicing Judaism, was based on the theory that Conversos (more specifically, Marranos) were false Christians; therein lies the heresy. And conversion itself placed Conversos legally within the realm of the inquisitors, who were then authorized to vent their own racial hatred and suspicion on any Converso who would be induced to confess. The claim began to be made that all Conversos, even those not proven to be Judaizers, were under suspicion of also being heretics. Restrictive laws, which were not supposed to apply after Jews converted to Christianity, were based on this suspicion alone and circumvented the original assumption by the Church that conversion was the cure-all for the Jewish "problem."

Another assumption that prevailed among both the Spanish clergy and the inquisitors was that a Converso who was racially Jewish was likely to also be religiously Jewish, in spite of outward appearances or lack of other evidence. The suspicion was enough for the inquisitors to make investigations, arrests, interrogations and convictions. This was largely supported by racist elements in Spain who easily accepted the premise that they, as Old Christians, were superior to the Conversos not only as Christians but also as citizens of Spain. To these citizens, the distinction between Old Christian and New Christian went beyond the question of legitimacy. It also crossed over into a sense of

nationalism, becoming a distinction between a Spanish citizen and a member of the separate Jewish race.

Spain was in the process of becoming a single, unified nation. After decades of conflict with Grenada as well as disputes between Christians and Jews, the separate Spanish states were quickly evolving into a single entity. To the spirit of nationalism held by a Spanish citizen, the Jewish race was an outside influence. Not only the citizens, but the monarchy desired the unification of a single nation and a single *religion* in the newly-defined Spanish kingdom. Thus, the racial component became part of a national identity and could not be isolated or separated from it.

Economic Competition

The racial element of the Spanish Inquisition was also intricately tied to the growing economic competition between Conversos and Old Christians. The Conversos were economically successful in the years following the initial conversion effort, leading to further legal and social measures to curtail their success. In fact, the economic success of Conversos was deeply resented on the premise that it was gained by people who might have been secretly breaking the law by continuing to practice Jewish rites.

Conversos themselves cited their economic success as the underlying *real* cause of the Inquisition and social support for persecution, as well as the suspicion that they were not genuine Christians. Many Christian accusations were made concerning economic crimes of the group. Charges made by racists like Espina were highly exaggerated on a religious basis; the charges of economic criminal acts were even more extreme. An argument can be made that the root cause was envy on the part of Christians concerning Converso success; and from another point of view, the cause was not envy but a belief in unfair advantages gained by Conversos over Christian competitors.

As early as the 13th century Spanish Christians objected to the practice of Jews engaging in collection of revenues on behalf of the monarchy. The argument was that Jews should not be given positions of power in which they could do economic harm to Christians; of course, this was also based on the assumption that, as Jews, they would naturally want to do harm. Anti-Jewish groups argued that tax collection belonged in the hands of "good men" (*hombres buenos*), meaning respectable, Christian, upper-class members of society and members of the clergy, who would protect the right of citizens and the authorities. Because these "good men" were invariably chosen by local councils or clergymen, the selection was invariably in the hands of Christians. The monarchy had employed Jewish businessmen as tax farmers and delegated to

them the responsibility of collecting taxes from others. This had been the practice for many years, but with the development of Conversos in the role of tax farming, Christians made no distinction between the two groups. The distrust of Jewish tax farmers was carried over to Converso tax farmers.

The fact that Jews and Conversos had acted as representatives of the monarchy for collecting taxes made them easy targets for economic resentment. The *Sentencia-Estatuto* (Judgment and Statute) of 1449 was an effort to ban Jews from holding public office. Written by Pero Sarmiento, a fanatical anti–Jewish politician, the *Sentencia-Estatuto* banned Conversos from holding any public or ecclesiastical office, or from testifying against Christians in court. Jews were also prevented from serving as witnesses or even bringing lawsuits of their own.

Sarmiento's law referred specifically to accusations that Jews and Conversos had "taken, carried and robbed" money from the monarchy's rents and taxes using financial knowledge and their "tricks and deceits." The *Sentencia* claimed that these practices had caused economic ruin among many Old Christian families.[5]

An aggressive campaign against tax farmers was accompanied by an equally accusatory campaign against Jewish physicians. Many Old Christian doctors resented the fact that lords and members of the monarchy had hired Converso doctors, which was at least partially responsible for the campaign to end Converso rights to practice medicine at all. Jews and Conversos were accused of entering the medical field primarily to kill Christian patients. There was also an effort to discourage universities from conferring degrees on Jews or Conversos, and even making it illegal.

Even merchants were a target of the economic war between Old Christians and Conversos. Jewish merchants (then evolved into Converso merchants) were very successful in competing with their Christian counterparts. The working partnership between merchants and financiers, notably Converso financiers, was perceived to give Conversos an unfair advantage. Even Christian merchants had to borrow money now and then, relying on Converso financial sources for funding. The Converso money lender was accused of "evil arts" in lending money and charging interest. Over the course of the history of Jews and Conversos in Spain, recurring decisions were made and passed into law cancelling Jewish-held contracts for loans and eliminating collateral agreements, or cancelling portions of existing debt in favor of Christian borrowers. Just as Converso tax farmers were distrusted and suspected of stealing, the Converso lender was often charged with usury, charging interest for money loaned, which was considered by many Christians to be a sin. The practice was invariably condemned when applied to Jews or Conversos charging interest to Christians.

The elevation of money lending from a social wrong to an act of heresy was never actually completed; this crime, selectively enforced, could not be described as heretical to the same degree as the secret practicing of Jewish rites after baptism. However, as a part of what many Christians believed to be an economic conspiracy of the Conversos, it was convenient to believe that oppressive and excessive interest was charged to Christian borrowers, but not to fellow Converso borrowers. The economic disputes between Converso and Christian merchants did not lead to charges of heresy based on economic behavior, but the resentment and suspicion made many Christian merchants welcome the Inquisition, which curtailed or even eliminated their Converso competitors.

Social and Political Conflicts

The anti–Jewish sentiment based on social and political competition, like other conflicts, predated the age of Conversos. When the Church encouraged the policy of so-called voluntary conversion over expulsion, the same feelings were carried over to the Conversos. Instead of making the problem go away, the change only aggravated the resentments, due to a belief that previously Jewish businessmen were hiding behind their Christianity while continuing to practice Jewish rites, and also continuing to compete unfairly in the marketplace.

To many historians on both the Christian and Converso side, the primary conflict between the two groups in Spain was social and not religious. The Inquisition had the formal purpose of protecting Christianity from heretics, but the Spanish monarchy supported the effort largely to protect its own internal political power; this meant helping the Old Christian interests at the expense of Conversos. The assault on Conversos was a combination of angry mobs burning homes and synagogues, and an accelerated Inquisition against Conversos charged with the crime of heresy. The inquisitors had the task of articulating a "religious" anti-heresy policy that included social crimes against Christians. In order to accomplish this, it was necessary to create conspiracies that included initiatives to take advantage of Christians, combined with the more incendiary religious crimes of which Conversos were charged, including sacrificing Christian babies and drinking their blood, for example.

The increasing influence of Conversos in government administrations prior to the mid–1440s was viewed by Old Christians in social and political terms. The political connections were used to ensure economic and social advantage, according to the Christians, and this combined fear and envy was largely behind the 1449 Toledo riots. This is evident in the fact that the legislative

outcome of that era, the *Sentencia-Estatuto*, specifically banned Conversos from all political offices in Castile. This resentment was nothing new; in Spain alone, it predated the age of Conversos and in Jewish history it extended well beyond Spain. The political argument was hundreds of years old and a recurring theme wherever Jews settled.

Repeatedly, the conflicts in the social and political sphere between Old Christians and New Christians led to legislative restrictions on Converso activity. Jewish and Converso domination in several fields, including law, medicine, and finance, resulted in laws aimed at barring Conversos altogether. Charges of a violent nature (such as Jews entering medicine only to kill Christian patients) were used to encourage the enactment of drastic laws preventing Jews and Conversos from competing in many fields. Eventually, even universities were discouraged from granting and then forbidden to grant degrees to Conversos.

This competition inevitably found its way into the merchant classes as well as the professions. Old Christian merchants charged that Converso merchants made secret or favorable deals with Jewish or Converso lenders so they were able to compete unfairly in purchasing and selling merchandise; this accusation had both economic and political ramifications. The Converso domination in finance made this argument seem plausible even though no specific cases could be cited to prove the point. Thus, Converso financiers were accused of preventing Old Christian merchants from competing on a level playing field.

Competition crossed all classes and occupations. Among craftsmen in various trades, the social competition between the groups mirrored the suspicions and envy seen elsewhere toward Conversos. In the trades as well as other professions, the desired merging of Jews into Christian society did not occur. Many leaders of anti–Converso riots in the 15th century were from the trades, and tradesmen constituted the mobs that inciters of riots depended upon to attack Conversos. The laborers and workers (*común*) of Toledo were incited by Pero Sarmiento and others to rise up against Conversos as part of the Toledo rebellion of 1449. Sarmiento, aided by Church officials, not only took control of the military strongholds, but used the workers to attack Converso properties. The social problem of the ingrained political conflict and distrust between Old Christians and Conversos was that it crossed all professions and classes in Spanish society. There was no center of this resentment. In fact, the success of the 1449 riots led largely by laborers and workers encouraged the Old Christian nobility to push for legal reforms aimed at removing Conversos from influential posts within the government. The rebellion was neither from the tradesmen or the nobles; both played a role in the political rebellion and subsequent curtailment of Converso political and social influence.

The recurring flare-ups in Spain placed the monarchy in a difficult political position. For decades, the government had relied on Conversos for tax collection, administration, and running the treasury. Attempting to remove Converso influence proved difficult and, on a local level, impossible to accomplish with simple legal reforms. Pressures on Ferdinand and Isabella to solve the Converso problem — brought by Old Christian business interests as well as by Church officials — had great influence on the decision to ask the pope to institute a new Inquisition. It was the case in Spain, as it had been so often in many European governments, that when the political situation became complicated, the monarchy turned to the Church for help. The religious motives of the Spanish Inquisition cannot be understood without appreciating the root economic causes of the entire movement.

The Desire for a Unified Spain

The racial, economic, social and political realities in Spain explain many of the causes of the Inquisition. In many respects, Spanish political and economic interests used the Church and its Inquisition as an excuse for attacking Conversos; the Church was happy to oblige because, like the rest of Spanish society, a deep-rooted distrust of Jews (including Conversos) was readily found among the clergy. Even so, the Inquisition could not have been instituted in Spain without the cooperation of the monarchy.

The argument that all Conversos were secretly practicing Jewish rites and hiding behind their Christianity to take advantage of "real" Christians was a recurring theme that led to internal political conflict as well. Conversos lost many legal rights during the mid–15th century and even with these measures the hatred toward Conversos only worsened. At the beginning of their monarchy, Ferdinand and Isabella were quite aware of the racial tensions and the great fear among the ruling class was that a rebellion could break out, further disrupting the kingdom.

In one sense, the growing hatred toward Conversos conformed to the monarchs' desire to create a unified Spain under a single government. Ferdinand and Isabella believed that to achieve this single government, it would be necessary to also create a single religion. This would have to be Catholicism, of course, because this was the majority and both monarchs were devout Catholics themselves. Getting rid of the Conversos would help unify the country, while also removing the source of social and political strife that worsened with each passing year. Past monarchs had attempted to hold down the social unrest by punishing the instigators of riots against the Conversos, which only fueled more hatred instead of reducing it. Those steps by past rulers had

also turned the nobility and Church centers of power against the monarchy. Taking similar steps was not going to fix the problem; Ferdinand and Isabella needed to find a way to unify the country while reducing racial tensions; at the same time they wanted to act within the law and maintain moral and social order. The monarchs

> believed that respect for the law was the primary condition of an orderly government and in no circumstances would they countenance or contribute to an open disregard of traditionally accepted morality and thus throw the country into moral confusion, which would sooner or later lead to social chaos.[6]

This was a dilemma for the monarchs. The racial tension was escalating and they wanted to find a political solution that would maintain their stature as esteemed Catholic monarchs (*Reyes Católicos*), the prestigious title given them by Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503). Their chosen solution came to the monarchs by eliminating all other solutions as unacceptable. Had the problem gone away on its own as the Church had hoped when voluntary conversion was initially proposed, the monarchs would have accomplished a unified Christian nation; but because the centuries of distrust and hatred were racial and not based on religion, the conversions did not make any difference to the Old Christians. And so Ferdinand and Isabella turned to the pope and relied on the idea that a Jewish conspiracy — secret activities of the Conversos or, more specifically, of the Marranos — was cause enough to institute a new Inquisition.

As part of the movement toward placing the problem into a Christian context, the terms Converso, Marrano, Jew and heretic became synonymous in the minds of racists and among Church leaders in Spain. From initial suspicions about a minority of Conversos secretly practicing Jewish rites, the trend moved toward suspicion that most, if not all, Conversos were guilty of this form of heresy. The accusation fell into the realm of heresy (and thus the jurisdiction of inquisitors) because the Conversos were Christian, at least in name. If, in fact, they were secretly remaining Jewish, the argument followed that an Inquisition was justified to get to the truth and to find and punish the heretics among the Conversos. But asking the pope to set up a tribunal was only a first step.

Under the rules and definition of heresy, only a Christian could be accused of the crime. It was important for the monarchs as well as the pope to emphasize one point: the Jews had converted voluntarily and had not been forced to become Christians. Of course they were given no other options, as they were otherwise confined to ghettos and banned from economic activity or even from leaving the country. Conversion was the only course left open; but to justify a charge or suspicion of heresy, the Inquisition had to be based

on the claim that those Conversos secretly practicing as Jews were knowingly committing heresy, since they had been baptized by their own choice and not by force (*sin premio ni fuerza*). Otherwise, a defense against charges of heresy could be that a Converso had never wanted to be Christian in the first place, and that because of this, the baptism itself was invalid. If this could be established, then there would be no legal basis for a charge of heresy. The Inquisition had power only over baptized Christians. This fine point was important because if a person's parents had been forcibly converted, then a Converso could not be legally bound to Christianity either. So the king needed to make the point that no one had been forcibly converted.

Going beyond the claim that Conversos and their parents or grandparents had willingly converted, the Inquisition was further justified with the charge that conversion itself had been done deviously, as part of a plan to damage Christianity from within, a theme that became central in the subsequent charges of heresy often brought to tribunals and confirmed by confessions of those charged and interrogated. The fact that such admissions were made under torture did not appear to lessen the belief among Christians and inquisitors that there was good reason to believe this conspiracy existed.

Sensing that the impending Inquisition would frighten large numbers of Conversos and lead to an exodus from any city where tribunals were established, Ferdinand issued a declaration on January 2, 1481, forbidding any person from leaving Seville while an Inquisition was operating there. By "any person," the coded language really referred specifically to any Converso. Everyone realized that the king did not intend to prevent all movement in Seville, and that this restriction would apply only to anyone likely to be called before the tribunal, meaning Conversos. The language was equally clear to the Conversos, many of whom defied the order and left the city. The fear came not only from the impending Inquisition, but also from the fact that the monarchs had appointed Dominicans to run the tribunals. Dominicans, well known for their fierce anti–Semitism, were obviously the worst choices from the Converso point of view. They knew they could not expect a fair hearing from these inquisitors.

The fears came true and the extreme punishments handed to Converso suspects led even Pope Sixtus IV to protest the extreme sentences being handed down. But a response from Ferdinand and Isabella led the pope to withdraw his objections immediately. It was clear that the monarchy was in charge in the Inquisition, not the pope. And yet, the whole office was a hybrid. It maintained the public persona of a religious office, existing for the purpose of protecting Christian values and working in God's name to destroy heresy. In practice, it was an expedient avenue for Ferdinand and Isabella to solve its growing Converso problem. The monarchs, knowing that half measures would

not rid Spain of racial tension, favored an extreme Inquisition that would satisfy the Old Christians and solve the problem with finality.

No one at the time would have dared to accuse the monarchs of ulterior or political motives in forming the Inquisition. First, they could have been arrested by the monarchs and imprisoned for voicing dissent. Second, the voices of racial suspicion of Conversos were strong and the whole idea of an Inquisition aimed at those Conversos was popular among the Old Christian society. Finally and most important, voicing disagreement with the purpose or operation of the Inquisition could itself bring a person to the attention of the inquisitors. Support for heretics was itself a form of heresy, so the ever-present threat of being investigated and brought under suspicion kept would-be critics silent.

Even the pope could be silenced by the monarchs, as history has demonstrated. The pope needed the allegiance of Spain and did not want to risk a break with the monarchy. Additionally, the Inquisition satisfied another purpose of the Church. It removed the conflict not only from Spanish political life but also from clerical life. The belief that Conversos were working against Old Christians kept ex–Jews under suspicion, so the Inquisition was a way to silence Conversos or do away with them as a recurring problem for Spanish clergy and for the pope as well.

The conflict between the monarchs and pope involved more than levels of control over the Inquisition and its tribunals. Both interests relied on claims of approval from God. To the monarchs, the "divine right" to rule had been frustrated by recurring racial discord and the Inquisition was a way to eliminate this roadblock. To the papacy, making its own claim to infallibility, the claims of kings were problematical but the papacy was also a political institution. The popes of the age recognized the need to placate the monarchs, even to the extent of allowing them to pick their own inquisitors, to accomplish both a political and a religious goal. The conflict, kept below the surface for most of the period, did not prevent either side from curtailing the Inquisition.

The Church and Its Loss of Power

The inability or unwillingness of Pope Sixtus IV to influence Ferdinand and Isabella is an example of the problems the Church faced during this period. The Humanism movement spreading throughout Europe along with the paradox of witch hunts and the Spanish Inquisition are other reasons that the Church was so willing to let the Spanish monarchs run the tribunals.

To the Church, the Inquisition was an effort to bring Christians back

into line with traditional Church doctrine as well as strengthen its own political power. The development of the printing press and the movement forward of science and art — in spite of Church efforts to curtail those developments — meant that the Church was losing its temporal power. This was caused in part by corruption in the papacy, including widespread nepotism, sexual misconduct, and theft of Church assets. Although history associates the Spanish Inquisition with the Church and not with Ferdinand and Isabella, who instituted it, the real power behind it belonged to the Spanish monarchy. Ferdinand was a skilled politician who was able to benefit from the Inquisition both politically and financially, while deflecting any criticism to the Church. For example, widespread confiscation of Converso wealth enriched the monarchy and inquisitors. Not only Conversos, but also their children, were robbed of all their property if and when guilty verdicts were passed down. When this policy was criticized, Ferdinand "in a proclamation of October 29, 1485, declared that the confiscations were made by order of the Pope, in discharge of his [Ferdinand's] conscience and by virtue of his obedience to Holy Mother Church."[7]

This claim was misleading, since the pope had never ordered specific confiscations. However, Ferdinand relied on the pope's creation of the Inquisition to justify his claims and to imply that his financial motives were not in question. So in the short term, Ferdinand was aware of public opinion and used his political skills to maintain control. But in the long term, his larger goals remained unchanged. The desire to unify Spain under a single religion and a single rule had much to do with the establishment of the Inquisition, with the Church a partner in creating that office.

As a ruler, Ferdinand was ambitious and politically astute. He knew that he needed to use the Church and the papacy to advance his own objectives, and this was made possible by the Church's greater need for Ferdinand's allegiance. He used Spanish racial hatred to incite the Inquisition and then, once it was established, to support it. This enabled him to maintain a balance between Church and Spanish society while upholding his own reputation as a loyal Christian and effective ruler. This required great skill because Ferdinand surely realized that the Church was losing its grip on the Christian world. The events of the day, including the exploding Reformation in Europe and growing Humanism, made it possible for Ferdinand to make effective use of the Church through the Inquisition as a *political* tool. The evidence of how effectively Ferdinand accomplished this is in the current-day belief in the Spanish Inquisition as a crime of the Church and not of the Spanish monarchy. The absolute control that Ferdinand held over the inquisitors and their tribunals makes this point. It is also evident by the fact that as soon as Ferdinand died, the effectiveness of the Inquisition immediately declined. Its most effective

term was between its origin in 1481 and Ferdinand's death in 1516. He was not only an ardent supporter of the Inquisition, but its founder and manager.

For the Church in this period, the development of the Inquisition was far beyond its control. The Renaissance as a cultural movement that started in Florence and quickly spread throughout Europe accompanied the Reformation as a challenge to the long-held beliefs and superstitions of traditional Christians. With this change in the arts and sciences came challenges to Catholic supremacy, often bold and direct challenges as in the case of Martin Luther. His example showed people that the claim to supremacy by the Church was not absolute. The Church tried through its many forms of Inquisition to stop the movement, but it could not. Ferdinand was only one aspect of the loss of influence and power for the Church, but it was an important one. The ability Ferdinand showed to defy the pope and maintain control over the Inquisition as a political tool coincided with many other forms of Church decline.

The Renaissance is most often viewed as a movement in the world of art, and while this was an important aspect of it, the period also involved challenges to Church authority on many levels. This was not only political, but spiritual in nature. It had once been heresy to even question Church authority, a crime that was punishable by death. But as the Renaissance moved quickly forward, it created social and political change, including the questioning of old beliefs.

To this day, the Church holds on to the belief that the Marrano and Morisco problem was not racially motivated but that these groups posed a very real threat to the Church, and in fact, that non–Christians hiding behind the cloak of Christianity was a common occurrence. This belief is that at the time leading up to the Spanish Inquisition

> the purity of the Catholic Faith in Spain was in great danger from the numerous Marranos and Moriscos, who, for material considerations, became sham converts from Judaism and Mohammedanism to Christianity. The Marranos committed serious outrages against Christianity and endeavored to Judaize the whole of Spain. The Inquisition, which the Catholic sovereigns had been empowered to establish by Sixtus IV in 1478, had, despite unjustifiable cruelties, failed of its purpose, chiefly for want of centralization.[8]

The Black Plague

One final contributor, and perhaps quite a significant one, was the Black Plague in Europe. This devastating plague resulted in the death of millions

of Europeans, and many subsequent social changes. The plague itself was cited as God's punishment for sin, and in Seville, which was especially hard hit in 1481–2, when about one-third of the population perished, the apprehension was extreme:

> Like a two-headed dragon, Plague and Inquisition were joined in what seemed like a wider diabolical plan. The important signs of the End Times were manifest: wars and rumors of war, pestilence, chaos, hate, poverty, famine, sacrilege, and heresy. Blame was heaped on familiar culprits: the pestilence had come from the south, from the flea-ridden, rat-infested ships that came from the heathen lands of the east to the last Moorish state ... or from the Jews, fouling the water supplies. The vials of God's wrath were full ... Seville was the Lord's threshing floor, where in His harvest the wheat was separated from the chaff. Pestilence and Inquisition were His instruments. It was as if vultures perched on the gargoyles of the cathedral of the stricken city.[9]

Many cited the Black Plague as punishment from God, including the Church. The Black Plague was pointed to as proof of the need for accelerated punishments of heretics. But another change was underway at the same time. Many Christians, once sure that the papacy was infallible, realized that even with its assumption of spiritual power, the papacy, like all humans, was powerless to stop the plague. This shook Christian faith to its foundations and only encouraged the growth of the Humanism movement and the Reformation. It was for the first time possible to challenge Church authority and, unlike in the past, warnings that such a challenge would spell the end of salvation had no effect. If anything, the Black Plague held the power to punish, not the Church.

Rather than looking to the Church as a guide to all things and an integral and controlling force in life, people began realizing that they could make choices, including the choice to challenge papal authority. The free will that Augustine had written about many centuries before led to growing self-awareness and the recognition that people had lives outside of the control of the pope and the Church.

Before the Black Plague, the Church was involved in virtually every aspect of Christian life. The sacraments themselves provided cornerstones for the major events of birth, marriage and death as well as the assurance of salvation to every Christian. Even with the claim that heretics were the cause of the Black Plague, European Christians no longer accepted such ideas on faith. The timing of the Reformation, after the Black Plague, the Great Witch Hunts, and the Spanish Inquisition, was not coincidental. This was a series of logical steps.

10

Martin Luther

> By God's grace, I know Satan very well. If Satan can turn God's Word upside down and pervert the Scriptures, what will he do with my words — or the words of others?
>
> — Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, Part 3

Over 1,500 years, many heretical movements came and went, either defeated by the Church or simply absorbed by other movements and sects. That remained true until a movement that in many respects was accidental. Martin Luther, following on the ideas planted by Wyclif and Huss, began the Reformation in an attempt to reform the Church, not to defy its doctrine. Luther recognized the internal corruption as a destructive influence. Not intending to be a heretic, he was treated as one. Any individual who questioned the supreme authority and infallibility of the Church and the papacy must be a heretic, no matter their intentions.

Unable to reform a Church whose leaders refused to entertain any suggestion of flaws within its ranks, Luther's efforts split the Western Christian world in two, between Roman Catholic and Protestant. Including the Great Schism between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, the history of the Roman Church, based largely on real or perceived heretical movements, is one of new factions being created; the Christian world was constantly splitting into an ever larger number of different denominations.

Today, approximately half of all Western Christians call themselves Catholic, with the remainder belonging to Protestant denominations. In 1995, 968 million people worldwide identified themselves as Catholic (50.2%) and 960 million as Protestant (49.8%).[1]

By definition, the Roman Catholic Church may have only one denomination. While certain sects or individual churches might depart from a single doctrine, the Church itself recognizes only the doctrine it supports and

enforces. The Protestant movement has not been so singular in its beliefs. There are between 20,800 and 23,000 distinct and separate Protestant denominations practicing in the world today.[2]

Only a very small percentage of Protestant Churches are described as Lutheran today; more than half belong to one of the Baptist or Methodist sects. However, it all began with Martin Luther and his protests against corruption within the ranks of Church bishops and priests, including the pope himself.

Wyclif and Huss, the True Beginnings of Reformation

Nearly 150 years before Luther came to the attention of Church leaders as a possible heretic, two other men — John Wyclif in England and John Huss (Jan Hus) in Bohemia — set in motion a series of events, questioning the authority of the Church on many levels. The Reformation did not begin as a movement away from the Church or to set up an alternative Christian doctrine. In the case of Wyclif and Huss as well as that of Martin Luther, the origins of dissent were found in the corruption among Church leaders, and in the attempt to reform that situation. It is tragic from the point of view of the Church that infallibility has always meant that no one may criticize any aspect of the Church or its leadership. To do so makes the critic a heretic. This blind spot was the actual cause of the Reformation as a breakaway movement, not the statements or writings of its leaders.

Wyclif was such a threat to the Church that many years after his death in 1384, the Church was compelled to exhume his remains and condemn them to burning at the stake. Huss was condemned while alive and sentenced to death. In both cases, the heresy consisted of questioning Church authority.

Under a more traditional version of heresy, a person would be accused of error or intentional defiance of established doctrine. Wyclif was focused on corruption within the clergy and also in the papacy. While the Church punished the "heresy of dissent" with the same vigor as it punished the heresy of doctrinal disagreement, it also continued to insist on its own total power and infallibility. The Church failed to realize that a cultural and social change was underway. While corruption within the Church was the spark that brought Wyclif and Huss into public view, the whole concept of Church domination was going out of favor in Europe. The Church either did not recognize this evolving social trend, or was determined to undermine it by stepping up its anti-heretical policies.

Challenges to Church claims to supreme power were not entirely religion-

based. However, the Church reacted to critics by assuming that they were, and that any form of dissent or criticism was just as much a form of heresy as the denial of God or other anti–Christian belief. The Humanist movement coincided with the questioning started by Wyclif and Huss. Humanists questioned whether it was necessary to seek a priest's intervention with God, or even whether the Church had a legitimate claim to power in the first place. After the 14th-century Black Plague, when a large portion of Europe's population died, people realized that the Church was not all-powerful, as it had always claimed. The pope's power did not include the ability to cure the sick or to end the plague.

At the same time, many other changes were underway. With the invention of movable print, books were for the first time widely published and distributed and a growing number of common citizens were learning to read and gaining education far beyond what they could have gotten before, when the Church controlled not only book distribution, but education as well. Although the changes taking place in Europe were not described in terms of salvation in direct terms, people were gradually realizing that the Church was *not* God and that their salvation might not rely on the approval of priests and bishops. This was a significant change in many ways, as people began to question Church power and authority even within their own minds and without speaking their doubts.

Wyclif and Huss were guilty of the crime of speaking such ideas out loud and publishing books that directly challenged papal authority and Church claims to infallibility. Dissent in the past had been kept to a minimum under threat of the Inquisition and the very real possibility of a death sentence. Any matter of dissent or criticism was treated as the highest possible crime against God, even when the criticism was aimed at Church and papal corruption and not at matters of doctrine.

In the times of Wyclif and Huss, one of the greatest problems critics saw within the Church was the practice of selling indulgences, the forgiveness of sins in exchange for treasure. Pope Clement VI (1342–52) wrote the bull *Unigenitus*, in which he stated that indulgences were not only allowed but *approved* within God's plan. The bull stated in part that those paying for forgiveness of sins were

> partakers of God's friendship. Now this treasure is not hidden in a napkin or buried in a field, but he entrusted it to be healthfully dispense — through blessed Peter, bearer of Heaven's keys, and his successors as vicars on earth — to the faithful, for fitting and reasonable causes, now for total, now for partial remission of punishment due for temporal sins ... and to be applied in mercy to them that are truly penitent and have confessed.[3]

The practice was only a part of the issue that both Wyclif and Huss had with the Church. The corruption of selling indulgences was part of a larger political problem evolving within the Church. As Europe began moving toward for-

mation of independent nations rather than city states, direct challenges to the Church itself were inevitable. The conflict grew from the claim by the Church that it had both spiritual authority and temporal power. Wyclif challenged this claim directly and, due to the quick distribution of his writings, the challenge spread quickly through Europe and found support in many countries.

The Church called Wyclif a heretic almost immediately. Any challenge to the Church, even on the matter of its claim to temporal power, was blasphemy and heresy. For many years after Wyclif's death, his followers, called the Lollards, were persecuted through the Inquisition, and many were burned at the stake. Wyclif died of natural causes, and probably was not arrested and placed on trial only as a matter of geography. In England, the power of the Church was much less than elsewhere on the continent, and Wyclif had not only popular supporters, but powerful allies in the nobility as well.

Huss did not fare as well. He was promised safe passage to the Council of Constance in 1414 to explain why he had denied the pope's claim to infallibility. In spite of the pledge of safe passage, Huss was arrested and later tried on charges of heresy, found guilty and burned at the stake. He, like Wyclif, had not only made statements but had published his ideas critical of the Church.

The most controversial of books penned by Huss was *De Ecclesia*, written in 1413, the year before his arrest. The book consists primarily of the same material written by Wyclif earlier. Both men challenged claims of papal infallibility and power.

The experiences and writings of Wyclif and Huss certainly led to the theories underlying the Reformation. Just as significantly, Luther learned from the experience of Huss that a promise of safe passage was not reliable. Huss had been denied safe passage on the argument that the promise was not enforceable if the individual was a heretic. Luther certainly knew that the Church considered him a heretic, and as a result knew that promises of safe passage were meaningless. In 1518, Luther was ordered to appear in Rome to admit the errors of his teachings. Luther refused to make the journey, partly because he had no intention of reversing his positions, and partly because he had learned from the fatal experience of Huss.

Luther's Struggle with the Church

In Luther's time, there was much more taking place in Europe than a gradual reform movement aimed at correcting the widespread corruption in the Church. The Age of Enlightenment was beginning and, while it would not reach its height for two centuries, the seeds were planted in Luther's time.

The spirit of independence, learning, and questioning of authority provided the perfect environment for Luther, and his beliefs quickly found widespread followers where, only a few decades before, the authority of the Church and the papacy were never questioned or doubted.

The Age of Enlightenment encompassed reform in the Church as well as in intellectual pursuits, science, art, and even politics. Admiration of reason over faith became a driving force, taking increasing levels of power away from the Church and investing that power in individual rights, the development of nations rather than city states, and the idea of individual freedom rather than subservience to a doctrine.

This movement took place not in any one area, but throughout Europe. Many believe that the evolution of the rights of individuals led to revolutions in America and France 200 years later. Whether that is true or not, it certainly created the environment for Luther's Church-based revolution. The concept of values or ideas controlled by individuals was directly contrary to Church teachings. Religious faith relied on mandates passed down to the people by the pope, on the premise that God's word was vested in the Church itself and could not be challenged. To doubt this or to offer alternatives was heresy even when, as in the case of Luther, it was not the demand for more freedom but the challenge to corruption that sparked the movement.

Luther was interested not in creating a new Christian sect, but in reforming the Church to do away with practices like selling indulgences. The internal corruption had become intolerable to Luther and many of his contemporaries. His disillusionment began during a visit to Rome. He had originally wanted to study law but changed his mind and joined the Augustinian order, taking his vows in 1506. In 1510, he went to Rome for advanced study in theology. He quickly realized the extent of corruption among the clergy in Rome, where priests and bishops led lives of leisure and excess. Luther had envisioned leading a life of poverty and piety. The situation was so bad in Rome that Luther began questioning whether the Church had wandered away from Christianity itself. For example, among the clergy in Rome, the term "good Christian" was used by the clergy to refer to a person as a fool.

Luther's objection to the clergy's lavish lifestyle was only the beginning of his disillusionment. In his home of Wittenberg, a papal emissary, Dominican friar Johann Tetzel, changed Luther's views of the Church dramatically. Tetzel was traveling around Europe raising money for Pope Leo X (1513–21), who wanted to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Tetzel was raising money by selling indulgences, even when those sins were extreme.

Tetzel's practice was offensive enough, but many of his claims were outrageous and deeply offended Luther. For example, Tetzel, according to Luther, claimed to have "grace and power from the Pope to offer forgiveness even if

someone had slept with the Holy Virgin Mother of God, as long as a contribution would be put into the coffer."[4]

Tetzel also claimed that he had greater power even than Saint Peter and said he had saved more souls that Peter. He further stated that God was bound by acts of the pope, so if the pope forgave sins, God had no choice but to forgive those sins as well. Anyone who challenged these claims, according to Tetzel, risked being brought before the Inquisition and charged with heresy. Finally, Tetzel claimed that payments bought forgiveness not only for past sins, but for future sins as well.

For Luther, Tetzel's bizarre and exaggerated claims were the final straw in his own disillusionment with the Church. He published a complaint about selling of indulgences, entitled *Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*. Today, this document is better known as *Luther's 95 Theses*. The document was a call for reform of the corrupt practices and was not meant as a challenge to the Church and certainly not a call to form a new sect of Christianity. Luther sent copies of his *Disputation* on October 31, 1517, to his bishop, Hieronymus Scultetus, and to Albrecht, archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg. Most dramatically, he posted the document on the door of the Wittenberg Church, intended to prompt a public debate of the issues his writings raised. Within a matter of a few weeks, copies of his *95 Theses* had been made and distributed widely.

Among the 95 theses, the most controversial directly challenged the Church's right to forgive sins in exchange for payment. Number 6, for example, claimed "the pope has no power to remit any guilt." In point 32, Luther wrote that anyone believing that letters of pardon ensured their salvation "will be eternally damned along with their teachers."

The document was viewed by the Church as not only a direct challenge to its divinely granted authority, but also as an act of blasphemy and heresy. However, the publication marked a turning point in Church history. For the first time, a challenge to Church authority had been made in writing, without resulting in the immediate arrest and silencing of the offending writer. While Luther was certainly at risk of being brought before the Inquisition, the document prompted a popular response in agreement with Luther and against the Church and its corruption. Luther had simply wanted a debate and reform of the corrupt practices. The combined negative reaction by the Church and positive reaction among the people made such an internal reform impossible.

Although the Church was upset at Luther's challenge, the pope did not respond to it for three years. This indicates that Church leaders either did not take Luther as a serious threat, or simply did not realize how popular his claims were among Christians in Germany and, increasingly, throughout the rest of Europe.

Leo X condemned Luther's *95 Theses* as blasphemy, especially since blame was pointed directly at the pope. Leo was especially worldly and his nepotism and enriching of relatives was notorious, not to mention his own lavish lifestyle, all funded with the selling of indulgences. Aside from the reaction from Rome, Luther was at first deeply concerned by the more localized negative reaction to his *95 Theses* among German monastic orders and bishops. In a self-serving argument, critics of Luther "proved" he was in error by citing papal infallibility itself. However, during this same age, the very idea of papal infallibility was being questioned and challenged within the Church, so critics such as Dominican friar Tetzel were not convincing. Tetzel and others were unable to point to scriptural passages contradicting Luther's claims or supporting the use of indulgences.

During the three years between publication of the *95 Theses* and papal response, Luther began preaching and writing about his complaints. At first hesitant, he gradually improved in his speaking style as a growing number of followers encouraged him to be even bolder in his challenges to the Church in Rome. His primary themes were challenges to papal authority, infallibility, and the right to forgive sins in return for payment. He told his followers that he had committed no heresy in pointing out corruption.

In 1518, Luther spoke before an assembly of Augustinian monks in Heidelberg. Several of the monks attending this speech later left the Church and became reformers, following Luther's example. That same year, Leo appointed a commission to investigate Luther. The commission wrote in its conclusion that Luther was "an ignorant and blasphemous arch-heretic." Luther responded to this report by advising the head, a Dominican and theology professor named Silvester Mazzolini, to not make himself even more ridiculous by writing books.[5]

This was an aggressive response to a report issued by a papal commission and, predictably, it led to the issuance of an order to Luther on August 7, 1518, to appear in Rome within 60 days. He was told he was expected to appear in person to recant his statements and admit his errors. Luther had no intention of going to Rome and exposing himself to likely arrest and condemnation before a tribunal of the Inquisition. Later the same month, the pope ordered Frederick III, elector of Saxony, to arrest Luther and deliver him to the local papal legate for transfer to Rome. Frederick instead arranged a meeting between Luther and the papal legate, Cardinal Cajetan, and the meeting took place October 12–14. The cardinal assured Luther he would have safe passage, but also demanded a full retraction and submission to the will of the pope. Luther refused. As a result, Cajetan threatened Luther with excommunication.

Luther, fearing arrest, escaped and, on November 28, wrote to the pope

directly to request a general council and avoid a final determination of excommunication. The following year, 1519, Papal Nuncio Karl von Miltitz met with Luther and tried to smooth over the matter by blaming most of the problems on the deceased Dominican friar, Tetzel. Luther took Miltitz' advice and wrote to Leo X directly on March 3, 1519. Luther expressed humility and stated his complete devotion to the Church. However, he also refused to retract his statements or beliefs.

Realizing that he was about to be excommunicated, Luther declared that the papacy itself was anti–Christian, and called papal power a stronghold of Satan. In 1520, Luther published three papers that formed the basis for a new Christian movement, the beginnings of the Protestant Church. These papers, *Address to the German Nobility*, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *Freedom of a Christian Man*, all further criticized the papacy and the Church in stronger language than ever before. In these works, Luther defined the principles that became the central themes of the Reformation: direct communication between Christians and God without the need for priests, denial of the exclusive spiritual power of priests to speak for mankind, and denial of the infallibility of Church or pope.

Church Reactions to Luther

By the definition of the day, Luther at this point was clearly a heretic. Challenging priests as go-betweens between mankind and God meant they also were not needed for forgiveness of sins. Proposing that people could communicate directly with God was blasphemous, as was the criticism that the pope held no claim to power or infallibility.

Instead of fading into obscurity as the Church had hoped, Luther was gathering support and his statements were becoming a movement. On June 15, 1520, Leo published a bull of excommunication, *Exsurge Domine* (Arise O Lord), sub-titled *Condemning the Errors of Martin Luther*. The bull ended further discussions and conclusively condemned Luther and expressed no interest in any reform within the Church. The bull read in part:

> No one of sound mind is ignorant how destructive, pernicious, scandalous, and seductive to pious and simple minds these various errors are, how opposed they are to all charity and reverence for the holy Roman Church who is the mother of all the faithful and teacher of the faith; how destructive they are of the vigor of ecclesiastical discipline, namely obedience ... we condemn, reprobate, and reject completely each of these theses or errors as either heretical, scandalous, false, offensive to pious ears or seductive of simple minds, and against Catholic truth.... We enjoin, however, on Martin that in the meantime he cease from all preaching or the office of preacher....[6]

It became official. Under Church mandate, Luther was not allowed to preach or follow any other practices as a priest. Excommunication meant that Luther no longer could receive or administer the sacraments. The condemnation extended to anyone following Luther or reading his writings. It appears that Leo did not appreciate the extent of Luther's following by this time. It was not simply a small but vocal minority of dissenters, but a movement gaining momentum throughout Europe.

The following year, Luther was also ordered to appear before Emperor Charles V to explain his defiance of Church authority. Charles convened a general assembly (a "diet," or group of legislators) in the town of Worms, and the meeting took place between January 28 and May 25, 1521. The Diet of Worms is significant because it defined the political split between Catholic and Protestant Europe. Luther spoke for himself, by this point a gifted orator and encouraged by a large gathering of his supporters. He told the diet that he would retract any of his statements or writings that could be proven to be in error based on reference to scripture.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Diet of Worms issued an edict (*Wormser Edikt*) demanding that Luther reverse his heretical statements and demanding his immediate arrest. The edict read in part that

> we forbid anyone from this time forward to dare, either by words or by deeds, to receive, defend, sustain, or favor the said Martin Luther. On the contrary, we want him to be apprehended and punished as a notorious heretic, as he deserves, to be brought personally before us, or to be securely guarded until those who have captured him inform us, whereupon we will order the appropriate manner of proceeding against the said Luther. Those who will help in his capture will be rewarded generously for their good work.[7]

The ruling also ordered that all of Luther's books be burned, agreeing with Leo's bull of excommunication. This was probably the moment of greatest danger for Luther. He sensed that he was about to be arrested and taken before a tribunal of the Inquisition, which would no doubt have led to condemnation and a death sentence. He quickly departed, but rather than returning home, wisely took refuge at Wartburg Castle, the home of his powerful ally, Fredrick III. It was while Luther was thus hidden away that he began work on one of his most important books, a German translation of the Bible.

By the time Luther emerged from this protective retreat to return home, the situation had evolved in his favor. His ideas were now so popular that neither Church nor secular authorities were able to move against him. The movement had taken hold. Lutherans, as his followers came to be known, were persecuted throughout Europe even though Luther himself was never arrested. The Inquisition moved against Lutherans in Belgium and Holland

as well as in Spain, where writings by Lutherans had been smuggled into the country and distributed. At this point, when the Spanish Inquisition was less influential than it had been during the time of Torquemada, Lutherans became favored targets.

The Church View of Protestants as Heretics

It was clear that the Church and its leaders were not at all prepared to take on a movement as strong as the Protestant movement, which was widespread and quickly became popular among the people. The pope underestimated the popularity and strength of Luther's message. Luther's original idea had been to work within the system to reform it, but the Church and the pope, in their self-described infallibility, considered challenges like this audacious at the least and clearly heretical at worst. Any challenge to papal authority, even when clearly based on fact, was not allowed, and was treated as a violation of the required blind faith in Church authority. This claim to infallibility was a blind spot because it prevented Church leaders from taking Luther seriously, and also from addressing internal corruption as a real problem.

The Church view was that its own total power and authority was unquestionable and, with the force of the Inquisition to back up its position, no one would dare to challenge the Church directly. Luther had never intended to begin a new movement, and the Church actually forced the movement upon him by demanding that he abandon all that he had been saying. This, combined with the popular support he received, set a course that could not be reversed.

The blindness of the pope and Church leaders came from the fact that for centuries they had had successes in defeating one heresy after another. Luther was one man, and not an organized movement like the Cathars had been; so it was going to be relatively easy to crush him as the Church had crushed so many others in decades and centuries before. It never expected Luther to become widely admired or to gain so many supporters in such a short period of time.

This reaction among the public only alienated Christian Europeans from the Roman Church, especially as the Church issued edicts condemning Luther and finally excommunicating him. Even at this point, Luther continued to hope that the pope would reverse his ruling and reason with him. He still wanted the corruption to be addressed, and for the papacy to return to its spiritual origins based on Christian teachings and philosophy—and not to rely on temporal power, authority and enforcement actions against any and all dissenters.

The popular support of Luther and the continued corruption within the Church leadership made the Protestant movement inevitable. It made Luther bolder than ever before and he along with his supporters realized that even the power of the Church and the pope could not force them into compliance. Leo had by this time abandoned any guise of humility, and had turned the papacy into a money-making venture for himself and his family. His reign was one of the most corrupt in the history of the Church, so the success of the Protestant movement was in large part derived from the corruption of the papacy itself, at least as much as by Luther's challenge to papal authority. The idea that people did not need priests or a pope to be in communication with God was revolutionary, but given the ungodliness of the papacy at that moment, the argument made sense.

It cannot be known what would have happened to Luther or his movement if Leo had seen the light and taken immediate action to remove corruption from the highest offices of the Church. Or if Leo had passed away and been replaced by a new pope interested in true reform, it is likely that Luther's momentum would have slowed. But these changes did not occur, so as the Church continued to insist on its singular authority, even in the middle of its own corrupt practices, the Protestant movement gained more momentum than ever before.

The Church called Luther a heretic. This made him susceptible to the Inquisition and, most likely, to a finding of guilt and a death sentence. But another important change accompanied the Protestant Reformation. The Church had lost its exclusive grip on Christianity and could no longer enforce its rules against all dissent. For the first time, an individual was able to openly criticize the Church and even to challenge the pope, without the consequence of arrest.

Other social changes accompanied the Protestant movement in Europe. Besides the continuing corruption within the Church and Luther's growing public support, governments were becoming centralized for the first time. This freed up secular rulers from Church domination as nationalism took root. In Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella had desired a unified Spain and now, in the time of Luther, that was becoming a reality. In Germany, the nobility reclaimed land that had been taken by the Church, and moved toward centralized government free of Church domination. This trend was not only based on national identity, but also on the desire to be free of the rule of the Church and the long-standing threat of the Inquisition.

In addition to the Church leadership becoming corrupt and building wealth for itself, it was widely understood that the Inquisition had become very profitable. Inquisitors had enriched themselves by seizing lands and wealth of accused heretics, and the motive to accuse and convict people with

large holdings added to the corruption of the Inquisition as an institution within the Church. The whole Reformation movement became more than a religious breakaway from the authoritarian Church; it was also a political, social and cultural change that included taking power from the Church and its inquisitors, and creating a more just rule of law, an independent and equitable justice system, and a nationalistic sense that replaced a spiritual identity.

Simply naming Luther as a heretic and excommunicating him did not end the movement or silence him. Once Luther refused to present himself in Rome to explain himself, and an order of arrest was not followed through, the whole inquisitorial power of the Church began to unravel. Even so, the Church was not ready to accept these changes without a fight. The Reformation was treated as a heresy and all of its supporters were under threat of the Inquisition and its consequences. The Church's Counter-Reformation was an initiative under which the Inquisition was to be established more strongly than ever before. The Church intended to bring citizens of newly nationalistic countries back under Church control.

To accomplish this, the Church continued to rely on its long-standing practice of making declarations that it expected to be taken as the Word of God, and not to be questioned. At the same time, the Church leadership realized at long last that it needed to reform itself. The Council of Trent was an extended series of conferences aimed at resolving internal problems and ending the Reformation. Conferences of the council extended over three periods: 1545–49, 1551–52, and 1562–63. Protestant leaders had hoped that the outcome of the Trent conferences would include a softened Church position on the Reformation and the opening of dialogue between Reformation leaders and Church officials. Instead, the Council of Trent strengthened the Church view that all Protestants were heretics. Consequently, there would never be any attempt at dialogue between Protestant and Church leaders.

The Council of Trent's organizers had invited Protestant leaders to attend and take part in discussions. However, they denied them any voting rights. Rather than reaching any basis for discussion, the result was to end forever any hope of compromise. At the same time, the council did achieve some limited reforms. It abolished the practice of selling indulgences, the single practice that had sparked Luther's protests in the first place. By this time, however, the Protestant movement was well underway and could not be brought back into the Church.

Making any hope of compromise impossible, the council also ruled that the Church's position on all spiritual matters, including interpretation of the Bible, was final and could not be debated any further. Anyone who did not agree completely with Church interpretations of biblical verse would be immediately

and conclusively deemed a heretic. The council moved away from any possibility of reform in other areas as well. It declared, for example, that all art, music and other creative expression had to conform to Church rulings and needed Church approval. The composition of polyphonic music was banned. The council ruled that:

> Since the sacred mysteries should be celebrated with utmost reverence, with both deepest feeling toward God alone, and with external worship that is truly suitable and becoming, so that others may be filled with devotion and called to religion: ... Everything should be regulated so that the Masses, whether they be celebrated with the plain voice or in song, with everything clearly and quickly executed, may reach the ears of the hearers and quietly penetrate their hearts. In those Masses where measured music and organ are customary, nothing profane should be intermingled, but only hymns and divine praises. If something from the divine service is sung with the organ while the service proceeds, let it first be recited in a simple, clear voice, lest the reading of the sacred words be imperceptible. But the entire manner of singing in musical modes should be calculated, not to afford vain delight to the ear, but so that the words may be comprehensible to all; and thus may the hearts of the listeners be caught up into the desire for celestial harmonies and contemplation of the joys of the blessed.[8]

A similar restrictive ruling was made concerning paintings. The Church extended its authority, and that of the Inquisition as its enforcement arm, to artists, ruling that in visual works of art:

> every superstition shall be removed ... all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust ... there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.... And that these things may be the more faithfully observed, the holy Synod ordains, that no one be allowed to place, or cause to be placed, any unusual image, in any place, or church, howsoever exempted, except that image have been approved of by the bishop.[9]

The extended sessions of the Council of Trent dealt with numerous other issues involving Church policy. However, in terms of how it treated dissent or perceived dissent in the Christian world, the council assumed universal authority in all things, both spiritual and temporal. Its reaction to the Protestant Reformation was not to encourage dialogue but to condemn everyone who followed Luther and other leaders, and to extend Church authority into areas such as music and art. The council had moved Church policy backward to a more conservative and traditional role in the Christian world. No dissent was to be tolerated, whether in the Protestant movement or among composers or artists.

Church unwillingness and inability to hold dialogues with Protestant leaders only strengthened the movement, instead of shutting it down. The changes underway ultimately led to the end of the Inquisition and its unlimited power. Although the Church established a new initiative called the Roman Inquisition, specifically to limit Lutheran influence in Rome and surrounding territories, the Church had forever lost the power to punish dissent and to intimidate would-be dissenters through the ominous threat of the Inquisition. Heresy itself was still defined as the worst of all crimes against the Church, but the Church had lost the power to quiet the voices of dissent through the threat of punishment.

On a more subtle level, Christian Europeans adopted the idea that salvation did not rely on conformity with the Roman Church. The threat of punishment under the Inquisition was only one aspect of the massive social change underway. Equally important, Christians for the first time questioned whether the Church even had the power to excommunicate. In other words, that the Church truly spoke for God became doubtful in the minds of Protestants, and this removed forever Church domination of the Western Christian world. True believers would continue to adhere to long-standing doctrine; however, it was no longer exclusively owned by the Roman Church.

11

The Growth of the Reformation

> There [in the papacy] instead of the ministry of the word, prevails a perverted government, compounded of lies, a government which partly extinguishes, partly suppresses, the pure light. In place of the Lord's Supper, the foulest sacrilege has entered, the worship of God is deformed by a varied mass of intolerable superstitions; doctrine (without which Christianity exists not) is wholly buried and exploded, the public assemblies are schools of idolatry and impiety. Wherefore, in declining fatal participation in such wickedness, we run no risk of being dissevered from the Church of Christ.
>
> —John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 2

As Luther's movement expanded, a series of new breakaway movements also took hold. Just as the leaders of the Roman Church had always feared, once a heresy was allowed to flourish without being quelled, it would expand. The Protestant Reformation did expand and the Roman Church found itself unable to exert the power it had once held, or to stop the chain of events from unfolding.

The major movements following Luther's were the Swiss Reformation (beginning approximately 1522–26), the Anabaptist movement (1525–28), Calvinism (1538–64), and the Anglican movement (1536–1605).

The Swiss Reformation —1522–26

Luther's conflict with the Roman Church had originally been narrowly focused on internal corruption, notably on the practice of selling indulgences. There were many additional forms of corruption of concern to Luther, and the widespread problems quickly helped Luther's initial complaint grow into a continent-wide movement. The Church's refusal to consider any disputes as anything but heresy also accelerated the movement.

However, not everyone agreed with Luther on all of the points of theology that he raised. As his new church evolved, many of the positions he articulated created rifts within the Protestant movement and additional breakaway movements soon followed. The first of these has been termed the Swiss Reformation. Its primary leader was Huldrych (alt. Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531). Zwingli was a graduate of the Universities of Vienna and Basel, and a strong proponent of the Humanist movement. He was ordained in Constance in 1506. His criticism of the Roman Church began soon thereafter. He wrote *The Ox* in 1519 and *The Labyrinth* in 1516, both critical of the mercenary system and also indirectly accusing the French and papal powers of corruption. These were not direct assaults on the system, but rather satirical works.

He was named *Leutpriestertum* (the peoples' priest) in the Grossmünster (great minister) Church in Zürich in 1516. In this capacity, he became a vocal critic of the Roman Church and in 1522 he criticized the practice of fasting during Lent. He also criticized the use of images in churches, favored marriage for members of the clergy, and introduced a new communication liturgy, replacing the traditional mass. All of these reforms and opinions were considered forms of heresy by the Roman Church.

The Swiss church soon formed into two groups. Zwingli headed an alliance of cantons (states) intent on enacting his reforms, while many cantons remained faithful to the Catholic point of view. In 1529, war nearly broke out over this disagreement. Tensions remained high. In the same year, Zwingli met with Martin Luther. They agreed on several important doctrinal points, but disagreed on others. Most important among these was the question of whether Christ was present in the Eucharist, or Communion. Luther believed that Christ was present, but Zwingli viewed the sacrament as symbolic. They were unable to reconcile this difference of opinion, and it

Ulrich Zwingli. Artist: Hans Asper, 1549. From Kurt Spillmann, Zwinglis politische Pläne in der Ostschweiz. Separatdruck aus dem "Rorschacher Neujahrsblatt," *1962, 52. Jahrgang.*

became a primary point of separation between Luther's followers and the Swiss movement.

The situation was chaotic throughout Europe at this time. The two major powers had been the Roman Empire and France, but multiple smaller states were beginning to resist centralized power, including the city states of Milan and Savoy, and the Papal States. Among the political conflicts was Zwingli's rejection of the mercenary system requiring Swiss men to fight in foreign wars. The widespread objections to oversight by foreign powers gradually led to a Swiss movement favoring a nationalism expressed through use of the concept of fatherland (*patria*) in place of the rights of individual cantons, and more important, in place of the right of France and Rome to dictate policy over the Swiss. This political movement became a central theme in the Swiss Reformation, which was not only based in religion but also in the Humanist movement and in resistance to the old order identified with the Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire.

Like Luther, Zwingli had begun his conflict with the Roman Church when, as a teacher, he became critical of the practice of selling indulgences. This was done independently of Luther and, in fact, Zwingli began his critical teachings 12 years before Luther's movement began. The spirit of reform did not reside in any one individual, but was emerging in many parts of Europe at approximately the same time. Zwingli and Luther both found that their criticisms of Church corruption were received enthusiastically by their audiences.

The actual beginning of Zwingli's movement took place in 1519, three years before his public criticism of the practice of fasting. On January 1, 1519, he gave his first sermon in the capacity of pastor at the Grossmünster. He announced his intention to preach on the topic of the Gospel of Matthew, but further said his thoughts were going to be based solely on the scripture and not on opinions stated by Church leaders. This was a revolutionary idea. Before this time, priests were relied upon to tell congregations what the Bible said and how that message applied. For the first time, Zwingli was giving his congregation direct access to the Bible. This new concept attracted large audiences and enthusiastic support.

Zwingli's new ideas were not limited to sermons in Church. He gave additional sermons in the market square every Friday, the day that most citizens and peasants from nearby rural areas came into town to buy and sell. In 1522, the movement began in earnest when the city council of Zürich banned the practice of mercenary service in foreign armies. It also allowed evangelical preaching, a departure from the sole right of Church priests to speak to congregations. Finally, in the same year, Zwingli's followers broke the fast of Lent. Zwingli also married, a direct violation of the rules requiring clerical celibacy and banning marriage.

The Swiss Reformation was as much political as spiritual. A year later, on January 19, 1523, the city of Zürich issued 67 new articles codifying the Swiss Reformed Church. These new theses were offered up for debate with the Church and the Catholic vicar-general, Johann Faber (alt. Fabri), represented the Roman Church in a series of debates which were to begin January 29. However, the city strongly favored the reforms and the debate was mostly for show.

Faber wanted the debates to be held in Latin and he was furious when, upon arriving, he discovered that the process was to be held in German. This was so that those attending, about 600 citizens, would be able to understand the debate. Only the educated knew Latin, and most of the citizens would not have been able to follow the debate in Latin. Further aggravating the Catholic point of view, the Bible was available for the debate not only in Latin, but also in Greek and Hebrew. Faber refused to take part in the debate. However, the burgermeister presiding over the debate declared that with no response from the Church side to the positions supported by the Reform Church, Zwingli would be allowed to continue preaching. This forced Faber to respond. The debate was a turning point and the Church was overruled. Even the claim to temporal power in the name of God did not persuade the politicians in Zürich. The ruling was made in Zwingli's favor.

The movement accelerated after this and turned violent. Rioters broke into Catholic Churches and destroyed paintings and other property, including idols. On April 12, 1525, several political and legislative moves made anti–Church ideas official. The mass was officially abolished on that date. The following month, a civil court was given jurisdiction over marriages, taking that right away from the Church. And in 1526, the Zürich city council claimed jurisdiction over the power to excommunicate.

In spite of these important reforms, Zürich's leaders were concerned about the effects of the Edict of Worms, which had been issued in 1521. Under this ruling, Luther's writings had been banned and Luther labeled a heretic. In addition, the edict denied Luther's assertion that the Church had no right to absolute authority of the pope in all matters. Luther's revolutionary belief was that salvation came from faith and not through the legalistic Church-controlled systems and requirements; finally, the edict denied Luther's claims that all Church doctrine had to be based on the scriptures.

This important range of disagreements concerned Zürich and the Swiss Reform Church as well, since the same strong condemnations could easily be applied to their rulings and challenges to the Church. In response to the edict, Zürich created *das Christliche Burgrecht* (the Christian Civic Union), which included not only Zürich but also Bern, Basel, Constance and many other areas of Switzerland. The league raised its own army to fend off any effort by

the Church to enforce its rules. In response, the Catholic cantons formed their own army as well. The union entered into an alliance with Ferdinand of Austria on April 22, 1529. The pact, called *die Christliche Vereinigung* (the Christian Alliance), provided the Reformation states with protection from a powerful neighbor.

In 1531, the Swiss conflict reached the tipping point and in that year Zwingli supported an attempted food blockage to the cantons continuing to support the Catholic view. The Catholic cantons responded with armed attacks, during which Zwingli himself was killed. His legacy lived on in the form of 13 cantons that operated within Switzerland with a high degree of independence. The right of every canton to form its alliances independently and without central control further aggravated the conflicts between Catholic and reform centers. There were in addition both political and military considerations, with both sides trying to acquire additional territory. The official political structure placed all of the Swiss cantons under the authority of the Holy Roman Empire, but by the early 16th century, the non–Catholic confederation of cantons no longer acknowledged Rome's authority, and the Church and Empire were not able to back up their claim to jurisdiction through military power.

The Anabaptist Movement—1525–28

At the height of the Swiss Reformation, a new breakaway movement began, also in Zürich. On January 21, 1525, a group of priests and theology students met in the home of Felix Manz for a Bible study. The group concluded that the Bible forbade infant baptism, requiring that people reach adulthood before being baptized. This led to a series of 16 baptisms that same day, with attendees baptizing one another.

The practice of adult baptism, also called "re-baptism," was outlawed by the Zürich council on March 7, 1526. They determined that anyone found guilty of this practice was to be put to death.

Manz became the first Anabaptist martyr. He was drowned by fellow Protestants on January 5, 1527, in the Limmat River in Zürich due to his beliefs. He had previously pledged to stop the practice of re-baptizing and had left the city, but had then returned and resumed the practice. Soon after this, Manz's followers — now termed Anabaptists — fled persecution in Switzerland. One group was led by Jacob Hutter and adopted the name Hutterites. Members of the group believed they should live communally and share all possessions in common. Hutter personally founded and started at least 86 colonies of Anabaptists before his death. The basic belief in adult baptism

was at odds with the Swiss Reformation as well as with the Roman Church, both of which continued to insist that infant baptism was essential for salvation.

While the Anabaptist movement is closely associated with Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation, its beliefs were at odds with the Swiss doctrine and its close association with the newly evolving Swiss state. In addition to a belief in adult baptism, the Anabaptist theology fully rejected infant baptism on the theory that acceptance of the Christian faith was possible only after the act of public confession of sin and claim of faith. The exercise of free will was central to this requirement. Perhaps even more radical was the Anabaptist belief that church and state must be maintained separately and not allowed to influence or control one another.

After its beginning in Zürich, Anabaptism spread quickly to other regions, notably to Germany. By the end of the 16th century, Anabaptists were being arrested and executed, by both Roman Church and Protestant authorities. A sect of the surviving Anabaptist movement active in northern Germany and the Netherlands was led by Menno Simons (1496–1561), whose followers eventually formed the only surviving sect of Anabaptist beliefs, the Mennonites. Simons spoke of the importance of pacifism combined with spirituality and to the modern day, Mennonites keep themselves separate from the rest of society, shunning military service and dedicating themselves to a simple and pious life.

Another group of Anabaptists in Switzerland, the Alsace region of France, and the Palatinate of Germany eventually became known as the Amish Mennonite Church, and like the Mennonites, today keep themselves apart from the rest of society and ban the use of modern tools. Originating as the Alsatian Anabaptists in 1693 and led by Jakob Ammann, many of the followers emigrated to the United States in the early 18th century and continue to speak a German dialect known as Pennsylvania Deutsch (commonly but inaccurately called "Pennsylvania Dutch").

Like the Swiss reformation beliefs from which Anabaptism grew, a majority of Anabaptist sects believe in salvation as the result of faith in Jesus Christ and not in a person's good works. They also believe that mankind has direct access to God, a direct challenge to the Roman Church contention that God must be accessed through communication with a priest. Anabaptists are led by ministers chosen through votes by the male members of the congregation. Ministers are ordained for life and are not paid for their service. Some progressive sects allow women to serve as ministers.[1]

Beliefs also directly defied Roman Church beliefs in other ways, leading to numerous executions of Anabaptists on charges of heresy. Even fellow Protestants engaged in persecution of Anabaptists due to their beliefs, considered

too extreme even by Protestant standards. These included the refusal to swear oaths or to acknowledge the right of courts of law to settle disputes between believers, based on a specific biblical passage:

> If one of your number has a dispute with another, does he have the face to go to law before a pagan court instead of before God's people? ... If therefore you have such everyday disputes, how can you entrust jurisdiction to outsiders with no standing in the church? ... Must Christian go to law with Christian — and before unbelievers at that?[2]

Anabaptists further shunned bearing arms under any circumstances, including serving in the military, and serving in any political capacity within a temporal government. And while Anabaptists did not believe in the use of force against the unfaithful, they did adopt a policy of shunning them until they repented, again based on biblical verse:

> you must have nothing to do with any so-called Christian who leads an immoral life, or is extortionate [outrageous], idolatrous, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a swindler; with anyone like that you should not even eat ... within your fellowship, you are the judges: "Root out the wrongdoer from your community."[3]

Some Anabaptist sects have also been associated with "charismatic manifestations," including dancing, speaking in tongues, and other instances of falling under the power of the Holy Spirit. The "gifts of the spirit" are also based on biblical verse and are believed in not only by Anabaptists, but also by many Catholics, Lutherans and other Protestant sects. The verse concerning these charismatic manifestations is:

> To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another varieties of tongues, to another interpretation of tongues.[4]

The "speaking in tongues" (*glossolalia*) as one of these named gifts is a particular favorite among many Pentecostal Christian sects today, but its authenticity has been challenged for many reasons. First, it is the only gift that can be artificially created and claimed; second, the speech patterns and syllables used by those claiming to be able to speak in tongues, according to one expert, is not "a specimen of human language because it is neither internally organized nor systematically related to the world man perceives." For that reason, the practice was described not as language but as "only a facade of language."[5]

This issue — whether speaking in tongues is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit or a device used by believers to deceive others — adds to the controversy over the evolution of not only the Anabaptist and related movements, but the

entire Pentecostal movement as well. In addition, it lends an argument to those in the Church who cite the practice as evidence of a false "sign" that supports accusations of heresy or blasphemy among Pentecostals. This debate has been underway for 400 years (early "prophetic processions" were identified in Zürich as early as 1525), and in Germany many Anabaptists were described as "excited by mass hysteria, experienced healings, glossolalia, contortions and other manifestations of a camp-meeting revival."[6]

Although the controversy over the authenticity of speaking in tongues continues to be debated concerning Anabaptists as well as Pentecostal sects, the Anabaptists have contributed to modern religious *and* political frameworks. They represent a major formation of Protestant belief not only following Luther but the Swiss Reform movement as well. Their original demand for separation between church and state formed one of the major tenets of law in the United States, and whether this grew solely from Anabaptist theology or from many sources, this demonstrates the importance of reform movements in modern religious and political spheres.

Calvinism (1538–64)

At the same time that sweeping changes were underway in Lutheran, Swiss Reform, and Anabaptist movements, another major figure emerged: John Calvin (1509–64). Born in France, he attended the University of Paris, where he studied theology and excelled as an intellectual. After graduating, he undertook further studies of law in Orleans and Bourges. All of Calvin's studies, both in theology and law, took place in institutions known for Humanistic learning and philosophy, which had a strong influence on Calvin and the development of his own set of beliefs.

At some point between 1528 and 1533, Calvin became a devoted adherent of the Protestant movement. Calvin himself described this by explaining that "God subdued my soul to docility by a sudden conversion."[7]

Between 1531 and 1533, Calvin's theological philosophy grew rapidly. This was the first period in Calvin's life in which he was free from his father's influence. His father had insisted that Calvin study law, but Calvin was intensely interested in reforming the French Catholic Church, which he believed to be corrupt and abusive to its members. He became convinced that he was chosen by God to lead a spiritual rebirth of the Christian world.

Although the Roman Church continued to exert a strong political influence in Europe, its Inquisition in France and Germany had by this time lost its legal power to frighten people into silent obedience. Only in the Roman-controlled regions of the Papal States and Rome itself was the Church

able to punish accused heretics. The Inquisition remained in force for many years after Calvin's time, but the strength of the Protestant movement had effectively ended the period of terror associated with the Inquisition.

This does not mean that localized anti-heretical actions were over. Calvin lived in Paris at the time that the Parlément of Paris authorized a hunt for heretics. Calvin fled Paris in 1533 as the anti-heretical spirit grew and in 1534 many heretics were arrested and burned at the stake. Calvin traveled throughout sections of France as well as Italy and Switzerland. On October 18, 1534, Paris and many other French cities were plastered with placards vilifying the Catholic Church. One of these denouncements was posted on the king's bedroom door. This led to a reaction among Catholic-controlled Parisians, who blamed Lutherans not only as heretics, but also as traitors to France.

This day became known as the "Day of the Placards." Many suspects were arrested and executed, and widespread suppression of Protestants followed. Calvin, fortunate to be out of Paris during this time, was working on his first major publication. In 1536, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published in Basel. A second edition was published in France in 1541, and had a direct and strong influence on the growth of the Protestant movement there. Although Calvin's ideas were not that different than those of other Protestant thinkers of his day, Calvin's primary theme was his desire to organize a "new Christian" and more godly society. He strongly believed in the theory of predestination, that God has set the course of history in advance. This idea, first proposed by Augustine, is based on several biblical passages. Among these are:

> [In speaking of Christ's crucifixion] By the deliberate will and plan of God, he was given into your power and you killed him, using heathen men to crucify him. (Acts 2:23)
>
> I speak God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning to bring us to our destined glory. (I Corinthians 2:7)
>
> He [Christ] was predestined before the foundation of the world, but in this past period of time he has been revealed for your sake. (I Peter 1:20)[8]

Calvin was able to explain his views of predestination not only in terms of faith but also from a legalistic point of view. The revolutionary aspect of Calvin's theology was based partly in his legal training and in most issues his belief system was the same as that of Luther. Even so, the two men resented one another as competitors. While Calvin believed in predestination and offered legalistic explanations for it, Luther was a proponent of the opposite philosophy, free will. He believed that people made a conscious choice to be saved by grace, which was based on faith as well as good works. Luther was strongly opposed to the mixing of Church and state, and Calvin believed the two had to work together as a union. These were the primary differences

between the two; however, both strongly agreed that Christian faith should rely on the Bible and not on the pope or on the power of priests. To both Luther and Calvin, Christians were able to communicate directly with God. To the Roman Church, priests served as an essential conduit and authority, and without the intervention of priests, the individual could not be in communion with God.

During the time that Calvin's beliefs were developing and his followers growing, the Roman Church convened the Council of Trent. This council began in 1545 and met over an 18-year period. The original purpose was to bring the Protestant movement back under the control and authority of the Church and to end the schism, even while it grew rapidly throughout the period. However, Catholic authorities were not sincere in negotiating or compromising with Protestant representatives. As a consequence, the council strengthened many Catholic doctrines while driving Protestants away from the Church permanently. Among the rulings that came out of the Council of Trent were several provisions clearly at odds with Protestant beliefs. These included the importance of the sacraments, the saints and angels, the use of Latin in all worship, and most of all, the sole right of the clergy to interpret the Bible. The council reiterated the supremacy of the pope and confirmed many other traditional policies of the Church. In other words, in spite of the original stated intention of reconciliation, the Council of Trent reinforced the Protestant schism.

Politics also were involved in the council. For example, the French Church refused to participate even though it represented an important faction of the Roman Church. The conflict between France and the Hapsburgs (which dominated the papacy during this period) was a serious problem, and the French Church announced that neither the pope nor the council had any right to dictate to the French or to become involved in French internal matters. So even though the French Church remained Catholic, it defied the right of the central Roman Church to control its decisions. The Protestant schism was only one problem for the Roman Church. Within Catholic ranks, it met defiance as well.

Conflicts of Doctrine: Predestination Versus Free Will

After leaving Paris, Calvin eventually settled in Geneva. The Swiss Reformation had made Geneva a center of Protestant thought. When Calvin arrived there, a conflict over control of the city was underway between secular and Church authorities. As this conflict was resolved against the Church,

Geneva enacted several religious reform measures. Just as the city leaders of Zürich had done 10 years earlier, Geneva in 1535 abolished the Mass. However, Geneva went even further by dissolving all monasteries, and renouncing papal supremacy and authority.

Calvin was one of those who supported the most radical reforms and even supported a government-controlled theocracy. Supporters of this idea wanted to legislate complete control by the government over religious practices, including demands for compulsory attendance at church. The struggle and debate went on for three years until, in 1538, those favoring milder reforms — so-called Libertines — won the political fight. Calvin fled Geneva and went to Strasbourg.

He returned to Geneva in 1541 after the Libertines lost power. He worked for the next 14 years to reform the Church, imposing his beliefs about doctrine, Church organization, moral behavior, and his own version of the liturgy. Calvin's services emphasized sermons, and he banned the use of musical instruments during services. Psalms replaced hymns as the preferred method of worship.

In 1541, Calvin wrote a series of Ecclesiastical Ordinances, encouraged by the city council to codify the law and remodel the Church based on practices in Apostolic times. This meant banning all bishops and internal hierarchy; all ministers were treated as equals. Ministers were charged with upholding a congregation's moral discipline, aided by the elders and deacons. These were lay members of the congregation, but were elected to their positions by the city council. Thus, Calvin's desire for a theocratic Church began to be realized and, eventually, Geneva became a theocracy based on Calvin's ordinances and the political/spiritual combination of leaders.

In 1555, the city council passed an ordinance giving the Church consistory the power to excommunicate any offenders in the community. A strict moral code was enacted and enforced and strict codes of behavior included a ban on all work or pleasure on Sunday as well as extravagant attire. Anyone excommunicated was banished from Geneva. Lewd expressions or singing was punishable by piercing of the tongue. And blasphemy was punishable by death.

In many respects, Calvin's Church, aligned with the political power controlling Geneva, was operating its own Inquisition. Just as the Roman Church had for decades punished heretics through imprisonment, banishment and death sentences, the Geneva theocracy proved to be just as stern in enforcing its own version of how the community should operate and conform to the *spiritual* rules enforced by the *political* establishment.

Calvin came to recognize the flaw in combining church and state and expressed the belief that the state was obligated to obey the doctrine of the

Church. This led to understandable political conflicts between Calvin and the Geneva council, which was operating on the belief that political control incorporated religious belief and enforcement belonged in the political realm. The debate was over whether the political interests had delegated power to the consistory or had recognized the consistory's inherent right to enforce Church rules and a moral code.

Calvin wanted to dominate the political interests. He established new regulations requiring that meals taken in public must include saying grace beforehand. He also worked with local law enforcement to close down taverns. The unpopularity of this move led him to replace them with "evangelical drinking places" where attendees were allowed to drink alcohol while being required to participate in Bible studies. This was very unpopular, and Calvin saw that he had gone too far, so he allowed the taverns to reopen.

The primary criticism of Calvinism among other Protestants was based on his strong belief in predestination. The Protestant movement under Luther's beliefs had been based on escaping the Roman Church's rigid doctrines, but Calvin's ideas were viewed as more extreme than even those of the Roman Church in many respects. He believed that the very small number of people who would achieve eternal salvation (the "elect") had been chosen by God before the world even existed, and that all others (the "reprobates") were predestined for eternal damnation. To the more liberal Protestant Christians, this belief system meant that anyone not within the elect could not change their fate no matter how pious their lives, because their lack of divine grace was in God's hands and not in men's.

To the Roman Church, predestination was tempered by the belief that even while God had unwavering and complete knowledge of the future, mankind was able to find salvation through acceptance of Christian beliefs, faith and baptism. The conflict between free will and predestination is explained in the Roman Church view:

> God possesses an infallible knowledge of man's future actions. How is this prevision possible, if man's future acts are not necessary? God does not exist in time. The future and the past are alike ever present to the eternal mind as a man gazing down from a lofty mountain takes in at one momentary glance all the objects which can be apprehended only through a lengthy series of successive experiences by travelers along the winding road beneath, in somewhat similar fashion the intuitive vision of God apprehends simultaneously what is future to us with all it contains. Further, God's omnipotent providence exercises a complete and perfect control over all events that happen, or will happen, in the universe. How is this secured without infringement of man's freedom? ...
>
> The predestination of all future human acts by God is so interpreted as to shut out any possibility of freedom. An inflexible internal necessity turns

> man's will whithersoever God preordains. With Calvin, God's preordination is, if possible, even more fatal to free will. Man can perform no sort of good act unless necessitated to it by God's grace which it is impossible for him to resist. It is absurd to speak of the human will "co-operating" with God's grace, for this would imply that man could resist the grace of God. The will of God is the very necessity of things. It is objected that in this case God sometimes imposes impossible commands. Both Calvin and Luther reply that the commands of God show us not what we can do but what we ought to do. In condemnation of these views, the Council of Trent declared that the free will of man, moved and excited by God, can by its consent co-operate with God, Who excites and invites its action; and that it can thereby dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification. The will can resist grace if it chooses. It is not like a lifeless thing, which remains purely passive. Weakened and diminished by Adam's fall, free will is yet not destroyed in the race.[9]

This explanation was contradicted directly by Calvin's own belief:

> We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which He determined what He willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is ordained for some, eternal damnation for others.[10]

The conflict between the Roman Church and Calvin rested on the inflexibility of Calvin's belief. It not only collided with established doctrine, but also removed from the Church, the pope and the priest any power to change the fate of the individual. Under Calvin's belief, the elect could never fall from God's grace no matter what; and equally important, the reprobate could never achieve salvation. A basic tenet of the Roman Church doctrine has always been that anyone can be forgiven for their sins and accomplish salvation through relatively simple acts of accepting Christ and being baptized. Calvin did not agree and, of course, this defined him and his followers as heretics.

Calvin's Five Points

Calvin's theology often is summarized in what are called the Five Points, also called the doctrines of grace. Calvin himself had died by the time these points were articulated in 1619. The acronym TULIP is used to describe these primary points of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

Total depravity (or, total inability) refers to the fact that because of the fall of man (original sin), everyone is a slave to sin. People are not naturally inclined to love God wholly, but are inclined to pursue their own self-interests.

In this belief, the Roman Church agrees and, in fact, points to the need for belief in Christ to overcome original sin.

Unconditional election refers to the predestination of eternal salvation or fate, determined by God before the world was even created, regardless of an individual's piety or lack of piety. The Church is completely opposite in its doctrine, and believes that salvation comes from the exercise of free will in choosing to accept Christ.

Limited atonement is also called "particular redemption," and implies that the forgiveness of mankind's sins by Jesus' sacrifice only affected the elect but excludes the reprobate. The Church does not subscribe to this limitation, but believes that all of mankind was meant to be forgiven by Christ's sacrifice.

Irresistible grace (also called "efficacious grace") is the belief that God has decided to save only some people (the elect) and not others and that, as a result, God's grace cannot be resisted by those whom he has identified to be saved. The Church does not acknowledge any exclusive rights of a predestined elect, but believes that all can be saved.

Perseverance of the saints claims that because God is all-powerful, his will cannot be contradicted by humans. So the term "saint" is applied to those set apart by God to be saved (the elect), and not those canonized by the Roman Church. The Church, understandably, holds to its doctrine that a saint is not an elect, but rather an especially divinely blessed individual whose sainthood is the result of exceptional divine inspiration.

The reasons for the Church attitude toward Calvin and his followers as heretics is quite clear. They extend even beyond the adherence to Protestant beliefs, going specifically to the doctrinal disputes over predestination versus free will. Followers of Calvin are most likely to believe that they are among the elect; otherwise, what would be the point in accepting these beliefs? And like all Christian sects to one degree or another, the accompanying belief is that everyone outside of that belief system will not attain salvation. However, the Roman Church considered this rigid predestination system completely heretical, not only because it contradicts the main theme in Christianity that anyone can be saved by believing in Christ, but also because it robs the pope and the priests of their role in connecting mankind to God. Under the "rule" of predestination, everyone is already assigned to salvation or damnation, regardless of how they lead their lives. Of course, Calvinists also contend that the elect will naturally lead pious lives because that is also part of God's predestined plan. It excludes, however, the sinner whose inspirational and sunned conversion is a recurring Christian theme, demonstrating the power of Christ to lead even the most evil into his grace.

As the great Reformation movement grew throughout continental Europe, another important change was taking shape in England. Led by King Henry VIII, the Anglican movement changed forever the relationship between the Roman Church and the Church of England. This was a reform movement closely associated with the Protestant Reformation, but equally affected by the pope's attempts to control English political developments through military intervention.

The English Revolt Against the Roman Church (1536–1605)

While the Protestant Reformation swept across continental Europe, a separate revolt against the authority of the Church was underway in England. Movements breaking away from the Roman Church were occurring rapidly and the various Protestant churches that formed as a result spread rapidly without fear of the Inquisition or of the power or authority claimed by the pope. In the 16th century, the once universally recognized power of the Church had disappeared, and was replaced by more independent, regionalized sects. All had in common the belief that individuals could be in communion with God without the need for priests or pope. The heresy of that idea was taken seriously by the Church; but it was powerless to stop the schism.

In England, King Henry VIII defied the pope in spite of being excommunicated and had himself declared the ultimate head of the Church of England. The pope's power was denied in England and the newly organized Church there defined a new and permanent Anglican nation where it once had been Catholic.

The change from Catholic to Anglican was not quick or simple. It took many years and was based in a series of political and social changes. It culminated in the pope's attempt to defeat the English with the use of Spain's powerful navy, the Spanish Armada, as part of an effort to defeat the Anglican ruler and put a loyal Catholic in control. Once that failed, Catholic influence and control in England came to an end. It was called heresy, but in the end, it was a combination of military power and popular support that decided the course of events.

King Henry VIII (lived 1491–1547, reigned 1509–47) is remembered for his six marriages. However, the more significant role he played in English history was in the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Church. Henry's dispute with the Church — also called the English Reformation Movement — was the result not only of his disagreement with the rules for dissolving marriage, but also of the Church's involvement in political and military events,

which Henry viewed as meddling and as attempts to control his country. The dispute led to the establishment of England as a predominantly Protestant country.

Before Henry and the Roman Church became antagonists, Henry had been honored by Pope Leo X (1513–21) on October 11, 1521, with the title "Defender of the Faith." This title was bestowed on Henry for writing a book entitled *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, criticizing Luther in defense of the Roman Church. Leo, known for his abuses of office and for excessive nepotism and extravagance, enriched his own family at the expense of the Church and encouraged the selling of indulgences to raise money for various wars and crusades as well as to build St. Peter's Basilica. This practice was what prompted Luther to publish his protests of the Church and its practices, which led to the Reformation itself. Although Henry was initially a defender of the Roman Church, he later became a leader of a similar breakaway movement in England, and was excommunicated for heresy, not just once but twice.

Although Henry was accused of heresy by the Church, he never directly challenged doctrine. However, by eventually declaring himself the supreme head of the Church of England, he was defying the pope's authority. That in itself was enough for the pope to excommunicate him and to declare him a heretic. However, other than those steps, the Church of the 16th century had no power to enforce its demands on Henry (or any other monarch), or to make him conform to Church rules or acknowledge the supremacy of the pope.

Aggravating Henry's desire for control over the Church of England were Rome's attempts to control political affairs, even resorting to allying itself with England's enemies in an effort to overthrow the English monarchy with military might. Henry believed that it made no sense to allow Rome to rule over England and its affairs from afar. In the years of 1536–40, Henry took control over the political aspects of England through a series of legislative changes. He also suppressed monasteries and reduced the power that the Church had exerted through their influence.

Monasteries had owned large parcels of land that were maintained by tenant farmers. In fact, about one-fifth of English land was held by monasteries. However, Henry transferred ownership to non–Church farmers and began the process of closing down the widespread network of monasteries permanently. Henry enacted new rules, ordering priests to preach against the use of relics, pilgrimages, and even the use of candles in churches. In a new 1545 catechism, the *King's Primer*, mention of the saints was excluded and Latin ritual was reformed so that mass was to be conducted in English. Shrines were dismantled and destroyed.

These changes were radical and were welcomed by many, but not by all

of England's citizens. An uprising in opposition to his reforms took place in 1536–37 and was known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. Protests in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire were based on objections to Henry's dissolution of English monasteries and the breakaway from the Roman Church. Besides these objections, Catholic protesters demanded an end to tax collections and the removal of heretics from the English government. An estimated 40,000 protesters briefly occupied Lincoln Cathedral (in the town of Lincoln and also called St. Mary's Cathedral).

The movement's leaders were captured by the king's forces and hanged. Over the next year, additional members of the uprising were captured; in all, 216 leaders were executed, including nobles, politicians and members of the clergy. Henry's swift and strict retaliation did not immediately end the protests, however. It was not only the Catholic-based objection to Henry's split with the Roman Church that was behind the Pilgrimage of Grace and subsequent protests. Economic complaints included a protest against the Statute of Uses, a law devised by Henry to collect taxes based on land ownership outside of royal control. Henry had also lost control in the northern regions of England due to his treatment of wives Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn.

The uprisings did lead to repeal of the Statute of Uses, which was replaced by the Statue of Wills. For the first time, landowners were allowed to decide who would inherit their assets after death, by expressing their will in a written document. Before this, it was possible for land to be taken over by the monarchy. The statute and the resulting document (the will) became part of English common law. Henry also promised to reform the government and remove heretics, which never occurred. However, the uprising did not end the dissolution of monasteries; by 1540, most English monasteries had been closed. In retaliation for the uprising, land owned by its leaders was seized by the government. The protests did little to end the move toward reform and challenge to the authority of the Roman Church.

Henry's six marriages were a significant problem because the Church forbade divorce. In Henry's desire to produce a male heir, he attempted to annul his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon. All of her children had died as infants except one daughter, Mary. In addition to the lack of a male heir, Henry had fallen in love in 1525 with a woman in Catherine's entourage, Anne Boleyn. Henry's argument that his marriage to Catherine had not been legal did not convince the pope. At this point, Henry began challenging the pope's authority to decide the issue. Catherine was banished from court. Parliament, conceding to Henry's wishes, passed a new law forbidding the Church from publishing any canons without the king's permission.

The Ecclesiastical Appointments Act of 1534 reformed the Church further, and required members of the clergy to appoint bishops elected by the king.

Also in 1534, the Supremacy Act named the king the sole and supreme "Head in Earth of the Church of England." Finally, the 1534 Treasons Act provided the death penalty to anyone refusing to acknowledge the king's role as head of the Church of England. Parliament also passed the Act Concerning Peter's Pence and Dispensations (also known as the Peter's Pence Act or the Ecclesiastical Licenses Act). It outlawed payments to Rome, which were called "Peter's Pence."

Pope Clement VII (1523–34) declared the annulment of Henry's first marriage invalid and refused to grant a divorce. He excommunicated Henry but it made no difference. The course had been set for the schism between the Roman Church and Henry's Church of England, and the pope's authority was no longer recognized. In the pope's view, Henry's defiance was heresy; in Henry's view, the Roman Church had no power or authority as either a spiritual or political force.

Clement's successor, Pope Paul III (1534–49), excommunicated Henry for a second time in his bull, *Eius qui immobilis*. Paul included in his condemnation not only the king but all of his heirs, writing that Henry

> ought to be deprived of Church burial and we smite [him] with the sword of anathema, malediction and eternal damnation.... We decree and declare that all the sons of King Henry ... born or to be born, and the rest of their descendants ... are deprived of all dignities and honors whatsoever.... And all the subjects of the same King Henry we do absolve and utterly release from their oath of fidelity, from their allegiance and from all kind of subjection to the King.... Commanding them nevertheless, on pain of excommunication that they utterly and entirely withdraw themselves from obedience to the said King Henry...[11]

The reforms Henry enacted as part of his break from the Roman Church made him a heretic in the eyes of the Church. But in England where Henry ruled, excommunication had no sway and the entire series of events changed English history from that point forward. England would never be dominated by the Church again, except for the brief reign of Henry's first daughter, Mary.

The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth

King Henry VIII died in 1547 and was replaced by his only male heir, the son of Jane Seymour (Henry's third wife), Edward VI (lived 1537–53, reigned 1547–53). Only a child during his reign, Edward was aided by the duke of Somerset in the role of regent. Edward died at the age of 16 and was replaced by Lady Jane Grey, Edward's cousin. He had named her as successor before dying, placing her ahead of Edward's sisters, Mary and Elizabeth.

Grey ruled for only nine days before Mary (lived 1516–58, ruled 1553–

58) was proclaimed rightful queen and put on the throne. Grey and all of her supporters were removed to the Tower of London, where they were executed. This ruthless treatment characterized Mary's rule. She was intent on reversing her father's reforms and returning England to the control of the Roman Church.

Over 300 dissenters during her reign were burned at the stake, earning her the nickname "Bloody Mary." During Mary's reign, she held her sister Elizabeth a prisoner on charges that she had supported a planned Protestant rebellion against her. Citizens of England turned against Mary when her secret plans to marry Prince Philip of Spain became known. This led to questioning of Elizabeth and her sentencing to the Tower of London and later, her removal and sentencing to house arrest. When Mary died in 1558, Elizabeth became queen at the age of 25.

Queen Elizabeth I (lived 1533–1603, reigned 1558–1603) renewed her father's efforts at building England independent from the influence of the Roman Church. However, whereas Henry had not intended a complete break, but had only wanted to have control of the Church of England as part of the larger Roman Church, Elizabeth did make a complete break. She established the Anglican Church (alt. Episcopal Church), and within a few years all English citizens were required under the law to become members, under the Act of Uniformity.

Immediately upon being named queen, Elizabeth and her advisors became fearful of a crusade against England, promoted by the papacy. Under a new Act of Supremacy passed on May 8, 1559, all government officials were required to swear their loyalty to Elizabeth or risk being removed from office. The laws defining heresy and its punishment were repealed.

In 1563, Anglican doctrine was fine-tuned and published as the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*. These grew out of a series of past declarations opposing the Roman Church's doctrine, including the *Ten Articles* of 1536, the *Six Articles* published in 1539 reversing many reform positions, and the *King's Book* of 1543 that was closest to the original Catholic doctrines. In 1552, the *Forty-Two Articles* were drafted in which the doctrines of Calvin were emulated. The Calvinist doctrines were modified in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of 1563 and finalized in 1571 within the core Anglican worship text, the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The articles are broken into several sections:

Articles I–VIII discuss Catholic doctrine, specifically on the nature of God and the Holy Trinity, scripture, and basic creeds.

Articles IX–XVIII are on the topic of personal religious practice, including the nature of sin, the soul, salvation, faith and the sacraments.

Articles XIX–XXXI are on the topic of public policy and religion, church councils, worship, ministry, and theology.

Articles XXXII–XXXIX conclude with positions concerning clerical celibacy, excommunication, and other Church traditions.

The legal changes enacted in this period strengthened the Church of England. No organized persecution of Catholics occurred until 1570 when the Roman Church interjected itself into both the spiritual and political life of England. In that year, the intolerant Pope Pius V (1570–2) strengthened the Inquisition in Rome and tried to reverse the Protestant movement in England. Before becoming pope, Pius had himself been an inquisitor known for his severity, and under his tenure the number of heretics brought to trial and sentenced grew significantly, including members of many wealthy families. As pope, he had a special palace built in Rome to hold trials of accused heretics, and attended many of those trials in person. At the same time Pius issued a bull, *Regnans in Excelsis* (Ruling from On High), declaring that Elizabeth was not the rightful queen of England and excommunicating her, calling her "Elizabeth, the pretended Queen of England and the servant of crime." The pope further accused her of removing the rightful nobility of England from office and replacing them with heretics.[12]

The pope favored removal of Elizabeth and replacement with her Catholic cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, cousin to Philip II of Spain. Philip also condemned Elizabeth as a heretic. The political conflict continued for many years until Pope Sixtus V (1585–90) offered a large sum of cash to Philip if he would use Spain's military might to invade England and remove Elizabeth from power. In 1588, Philip launched the famous Spanish Armada against England, resulting in the unexpected defeat of Philip's forces. The pope, citing the defeat, refused to make the promised payment.

The Roman Church's efforts to defeat Elizabeth and punish her and other heretics failed. So the promised English Inquisition never materialized. However, the attempted use by the pope of Spain's military forces did lead to a counter–Inquisition led by Queen Elizabeth. She declared all priests guilty of treason, as well as anyone who sheltered priests. Under Elizabeth's orders, many English Catholics were arrested and executed.

The Reign of James I

Following Mary's reign, persecution of English Catholics continued under the reign of King James I (lived 1566–1625, reigned 1603–25), who was the only son of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was named king upon the

death of Elizabeth, who had died without any direct heirs. James' reign cemented the dominance of Protestants over Catholics permanently, in spite of resistance among Catholics in England at the time. Catholics intended to assassinate James in the infamous Gunpowder Conspiracy of 1605. The goals of the conspirators were ambitious: the removal of James and his entire family as well as the entire Protestant ruling class. When Parliament opened its annual sessions on November 6, 1605, 36 barrels of gunpowder had been planted beneath the parliamentary chambers. The explosives expert, Guy Fawkes, planted the barrels but the plot was discovered and the conspirators were arrested. The incident accelerated persecution of Catholics in England rather than eliminating Protestant rule.

By this point, Catholic influence in England had ended. The Roman Church's attempt to influence events by way of military and political power, in addition to excommunication and the naming of monarchs as heretics, could not stop the course of events. The geographic distance between England and Rome was a factor in England's ability to break away from the Roman Church; however, the religious and political mood of the time was equally important in the gradual social and spiritual reforms.

After the Gunpowder Conspiracy, James encouraged strengthening laws to quell Catholics in England. The Popish Recusants Act, passed immediately after the attempted assassination, outlawed Catholics from the practice of law or medicine, and also banned them from the roles of guardian or trustee. It also allowed magistrates to search Catholic homes for weapons. It further imposed an oath of allegiance which included a denial of the pope's right to depose English monarchs. Any Catholic refusing to swear this oath or to attend a Church of England parish church could forfeit up to two-thirds of his land. Most important of all, the act defined obedience to the Roman Church rather than to the king as high treason.[13]

A sect of the Church of England, the Puritans, objected to earlier English translations of the Bible, so James authorized a new English translation of the Bible, today known as the Authorized King James Version, started in 1604 and completed in 1611. The new Bible was designed specifically for the Church of England and included a lectionary for morning and evening prayer, unique to the Church of England. This was no small undertaking. The New Testament was translated directly from texts in Greek known as *Textus Receptus* (Received Text); and the Old Testament was translated from the Masoretic Text (MT), considered the authoritative Jewish Bible, written in Hebrew.

Most of the additional books, the Apocrypha, were translated from Greek (one exception was the book of II Esdras, translated from the Latin Vulgate). None of the King James Version was authorized or acknowledged by the Roman Church any more than any other publications or doctrines of the

Church of England. The Apocrypha was especially popular among the Puritans. The Apocrypha is considered a separate section and was included as such, a third section belonging to neither Old or New Testaments. Different versions exist, but in the King James Version, the Apocrypha included the books of I Esdras, II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Rest of Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiastus (alt. name Sirach), Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy, Song of the Three Children, Story of Susanna, the Idol Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, I Maccabees and II Macabees.

The Church of England as a part of the broader Reformation movement against the Roman Church was considered heretical just as Luther, Calvin, and other leaders and their movements were. However, the Reformation also marked a turning point in Church history. It was no longer able to enforce its mandates through the Inquisition except in the Papal States and in Rome itself. Swift retaliation against Catholic-led political and social movements marked the reign of James I as it had the reign of Elizabeth I. By continuing the tradition of combining independent spiritual worship with political and military power, England was the only country in Europe that nationalized its religious beliefs and incorporated them into a new Christian sect.

The Success of the Anglican Church

The success of the Anglican Church paralleled other Protestant movements in Europe. The changes underway had a lot to do with the Humanist movement, the spread of literacy, and severe corruption within the Church. The worldly popes of the day, selling indulgences to pay for ill-conceived wars, construction projects, and lavish lifestyles for themselves and their families, alienated even the devout Christian. The timing was perfect for a change, and no charges of heresy or threats of the Inquisition made any difference.

There were many reasons for the success of the Reformation and, in particular, of the Anglican Church. These included:

1. *The Church of England and its breakaway from the Roman Church were uniquely nationalistic.* In Germany, France, Switzerland and elsewhere in continental Europe, Luther and Calvin (among others) met with great success because the mood for reform was widespread. However, in England, the Reformation was coupled with a nationalistic trend. The Church of England had always been a part of the Roman Church. Henry VIII intended to continue that tradition while taking control of the policies and doctrine in England. This led to his excommunication, but that made no difference. The combined power of the king and the

nationalistic sensibilities of the English isolated the island nation from the rest of Europe and, specifically, from the control of the Roman Church.

2. *The reforms instituted by Henry VIII were politically popular.* Henry was a beloved king and his reforms — notably closing the monasteries and side-stepping the papacy — were popular in a political sense. Henry came to rely on Parliament and the passage of laws he approved of, much more than on any perceived rights claimed by the Roman Church. Over many decades and even after Henry's death, the pope's attempt to defeat the English by offering to pay Spain furthered the political will of the English and isolated the Catholic interests from the increasingly independent-minded Protestant English trend. In a political sense, the timing of the Reformation could not have been better. The country was isolated and under-represented in Rome; however, the pope demanded full faith and loyalty from the English and believed the will of the Church could be enforced from afar.
3. *Changes were incremental over many decades and reigns.* The English monarchs were not swayed by the threat of excommunication or by the act itself. Two popes excommunicated Henry, but he was not influenced in any way. The acts of excommunication were more likely to encourage him to go even further in his reforms. But Henry did not close monasteries, end payments to Rome, or defy the pope's mandates against his divorce all at once. These changes, and the changes made by his successors, occurred over time just as new laws that strengthened the Church of England were passed not all at once, but over many years. Elizabeth I was the first monarch to declare the independent Anglican Church a separate faith from the Roman Church; and when she discovered that the pope had encouraged Spain to attack England, steps were taken against English Catholics. Under the reign of James I, Catholicism was virtually outlawed by the legislative requirement that every citizen swear an oath of allegiance to king and deny the temporal right of the pope. In many ways, actions by the Roman Church not only were ineffective, but encouraged the continuation of reforms in England.
4. *Geography played a role as well.* The distance between Rome and London was an important factor in preventing the Church from enforcing its mandates against England. The pope had no army to direct in a crusade against the English, and his attempt at turning Spain and the Spanish Armada against Elizabeth was a disaster. As a consequence, England could not be coerced by the pope and excommunication was no longer an effective tool in controlling the actions of remote kingdoms. The history of Europe was changing in many ways beyond geography. People

were beginning to question old superstitions and newly created nations wanted independence from the Roman Church. The geographic limitations of the power of the papacy meant more than the once all-powerful threats of eternal damnation as well as the more immediate threat of the Inquisition. Although the Church was slow to realize it, the entire mood of Europe had changed and the Church would never again be able to control events through political power, the Inquisition, or the threat of excommunication. The Church of England appealed to the popular idea of a locally controlled Church based on the combination of the monarchy and a distrust and resentment of the Roman Church.

As the Reformation in its many variations became an established religion in Europe, in Rome fears of the new movement's spread led to the creation of the Roman Inquisition. Originally meant to stop Lutheranism from moving into the area, it soon deteriorated into an attack on a new form of heretic: the scientist. The next chapter shows how the Roman Church expanded its investigations into heresy, moving away from the traditional questioning of doctrine and focusing more on advances in astronomy and other sciences as new threats.

12

The Roman Inquisition

> It would be an evil example for the world if such honors were rendered to a man who had been brought before the Roman Inquisition for an opinion so false and erroneous; who had communicated it to many others, and who had given so great a scandal to Christendom.
>
> — Pope Urban VIII, comment regarding a monument erected to Galileo, quoted in Andrew Dickson White, *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*

As the Reformation swept across Europe, the Roman Church gradually realized that behavior among Christians could no longer be controlled. In the past, the Church had used the threat of excommunication to keep the flock in line. When that was no longer working, the Church stepped up its Inquisition. This had been effective in some areas; but the tribunals resulting in public executions of heretics and other offenders were only effective locally, and only in the short term. The sheer number of people abandoning the Church and following one of the growing number of Protestant sects made it impossible to exert authority under the old rules. Geography also played a role. The more remote the center of Protestant trends, the greater the difficulty for the Church. However, local control remained possible.

This led to the formation of the Roman Inquisition. This new initiative began specifically to keep Lutheran and other Protestant influences away from Rome and the Italian peninsula. While notable figures like Luther and Calvin had been able to avoid arrest and trial, the threat remained quite real, and so the Church decided to protect its immediate vicinity from the heresies spreading rapidly throughout the rest of Europe.

The Church continued to base all of its actions on the assumption that it continued to hold the right to temporal as well as spiritual power, above all other political or spiritual leaders. This right was never doubted because Church leaders also relied on the concept of infallibility. Not only could Church leaders never doubt their own infallibility, but it was heresy for anyone

else to do so. This prevented the Church from even considering any form of compromise with Protestant leaders. However, on the Italian peninsula, control was still possible, through the Inquisition and the supreme power claimed by the Church.

The Church was not entirely lacking in allies. In many parts of Europe, Inquisitions continued, especially in Germany, where the Great Witch Hunts continued to burn accused witches and other heretics, and in other cities in Europe where Catholic leaders arrested and executed Protestants, at times in great numbers. In Spain, the Inquisition aimed at rooting out and punishing Conversos had run its course, and tribunals turned their attention to the threat of Lutherans.

The Beginnings of the Roman Inquisition

In spite of the original purpose of the newly formed Roman Inquisition, the office soon expanded beyond the hunt for Protestant heretics. The office became associated with its infamous attacks on artists and scientists. It became heresy to put forth scientific theories that contradicted the official doctrine of the Church. The Roman Inquisition also began to focus on behavior among the clergy, an internal oversight that continues to modern times.

Among the best-known conflicts between the Roman Inquisition and science is the Galileo incident. Galileo was able to *prove* his theories concerning the movements of planets; even so, once brought before the Inquisition, he was forced to recant his theories and to swear allegiance to the Church and to its doctrines. This was part of a gradual turning point. It had once been the case that a "heretic" was an individual who did not accept Church doctrine and who knowingly denied or contradicted that doctrine. During the Roman Inquisition, the definition was expanded to include anyone who disagreed with or criticized the Church. This even included artists whose artistic expressions were perceived by a tribunal of inquisitors to contradict the standards of expression that they thought should be followed.

The office was created by Pope Paul III (1534–49), who published a bull on June 21, 1542, entitled *Licet ab initio*. Under this bull, the new office was given the title "Congregation of the Inquisition," but was widely known by the shorter name of Holy Office (*Sanctum Officium*). Paul appointed as the first grand inquisitor of the new office Cardinal Giovanni Caraffa, who would later become Pope Paul IV (1555–59). Caraffa was an extremist when it came to heresy. He described the purpose of the Holy Office: "No man must debase himself by showing toleration toward heretics of any kind."[1]

Caraffa was especially interested in bringing Calvinists before his tri-

bunals. But this did not limit his scope or his focus on the punishment of heretics of any kind. He even said that if his own father turned out to be a heretic, he would personally gather the wood to burn him.[2]

Caraffa continued his strict zealotry during his tenure as pope. In 1559, he published the first edition of the List of Prohibited Books (*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*), also named after him as the Pauline Index. Notable on this first list were many writers of the Reformation movement, including Luther and Calvin. A manuscript reviewed by inquisitors was labeled on the title page as either *nihil obstat* (nothing forbidden) or *imprimatur* (let it be printed). The index became a critical part of the Inquisition and its attempt to control Christian learning. It defined as heresy the act of owning or reading any of the books on the list. This initial ruling was formalized in 1563 at the Council of Trent. At the conclusion of this council dictated by Pope Pius IV (1559–65), the document describing and defining what was prohibited included:

> **Sec. II:** The books of those heresiarchs, who after the aforesaid year originated or revived heresies, as well as of those who are or have been the heads or leaders of heretics ... whatever may be their name, title or nature of their heresy, are absolutely forbidden. The books of other heretics, however, which deal professedly with religion are absolutely condemned. Those on the other hand, which do not deal with religion and have by order of the bishops and inquisitors been examined by Catholic theologians and approved by them, are permitted. Likewise, Catholic books written by those who afterward fell into heresy, as well as by those who after their fall returned to the bosom of the Church, may be permitted if they have been approved by the theological faculty of a Catholic university or by the general inquisition.
>
> **Sec. VII:** Books which professedly deal with, narrate or teach things lascivious or obscene are absolutely prohibited, since not only the matter of faith but also that of morals, which are usually easily corrupted through the reading of such books, must be taken into consideration, and those who possess them are to be severely punished by the bishops. Ancient books written by heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted, but may by no means be read to children.
>
> **Sec. X:** ... all the faithful are commanded not to presume to read or possess any books contrary to the prescriptions of these rules or the prohibition of this list. And if anyone should read or possess books by heretics or writings by any author condemned and prohibited by reason of heresy or suspicion of false teaching, he incurs immediately the sentence of excommunication. He, on the other hand, who reads or possesses books prohibited under another name shall, besides incurring the guilt of mortal sin, be severely punished according to the judgment of the bishops.[3]

The index continued to be published in several editions until 1966, when the Vatican suppressed it. On June 14, 1966, Pope Paul VI (1963–78) removed

the legal force of the index. However, the Inquisition office (under the new name, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) claimed that the index retained its "moral force" (*suum vigorum morale*). This opinion seems to imply that a "good Catholic" will not read forbidden books. So the index continues to be published unofficially, contradicting the pope's own order. The statement to this effect read that the office's "Index retains its moral value ... in the sense that it is appealing to the conscience of the faithful ... to be on their guard against written materials that can put faith and good conduct in danger."[4]

Even the current pope, Benedict XVI (2005–), affirmed this when he himself was a cardinal and the head of the Holy Office. He wrote in that role in 1985 that the index retained moral value "for the more unprepared faithful."[5]

Enforcing the Inquisition's Mandate

The Roman Inquisition had influence over more than just which books an individual could read without suffering an automatic excommunication. More grand inquisitors rose to the office of pope than individuals from any other Church office. In the role of both inquisitor and pope, many of these set policies over operation of tribunals and other matters.

When Caraffa began reigning as Pope Paul IV, he appointed Michele Ghislieri to the role of grand inquisitor. Ghislieri later rose to the position of Pope Pius V (1566–72) and under his rule, the use of torture during interrogations was once again permitted after it had been previously banned. Pius V was a zealot like his predecessor and during his early years as pope, he authorized and took part in many trials of heretics, resulting in burnings at the stake or beheadings of those found guilty.

Unlike previous Inquisitions, however, the Roman Inquisition was the first one organized under the centralized authority of the Church in Rome. In past Inquisitions, the grand inquisitors, appointed by the Church or by monarchs, had full control and authority, although inquisitors were usually taken from the ranks of the Dominican order. The delegation process was the cause of many abuses by especially ambitious inquisitors throughout Europe. Under this central control, the pope was the ultimate authority and decided who would be brought before tribunals and accused of crimes. In addition to heresy, tribunals were authorized to accuse people of loss of faith (apostasy), bigamy, blasphemy, witchcraft or sorcery, alchemy, Judaizing, usury, and numerous minor infractions against the Church or, more vaguely, against the spirit and principle of Christianity, as determined by the tribunals themselves.

This is where tribunals aimed at artists came into play, for example. A painting deemed by an inquisitor to be lewd or anti–Christian could lead to the arrest and trial of the artist. With the pope's complete control over this process, any disputes between Inquisitional tribunals and courts involving spiritual law (so-called Episcopal Courts) were usually settled in favor of the Inquisition. This further expanded the jurisdiction of tribunals, as well as broadened the list of offenses.

The tribunals themselves were highly organized. They included an inquisitor, vicar, notary, and many lesser officials as well as legal and theological experts on Church law. Any time an inquisitor recommended the use of torture during interrogation, or a sentence of death, the procedure also required participation by a bishop or cardinal in the role of episcopal vicar. In previous Inquisitions, Dominican inquisitors had been delegated complete power to bring charges, question the accused or witnesses, select methods used in interrogation, accept pleas, and pass sentence. Even witnesses could be tortured to ensure their testimony against an accused heretic. Understandably, this unlimited power led to many abuses by Dominican inquisitors. Thus, the purpose of the more structured and centrally controlled procedure of the Roman Inquisition was to ensure a fairer system.

A final sentence imposed on anyone found guilty in the tribunals of the Roman Inquisition had to be approved by the Sacred Office. In some areas, jurisdiction was not as absolute. In Naples, the tribunals were operated within the Episcopal Courts, and in many other cities, inquisitors needed approval by local rulers before arresting, trying, sentencing and executing accused offenders. Secular legal rules were imposed on these tribunals as well.

In Venice, where long-standing rivalry between the papacy and secular courts continued, accused heretics were tried by a tribunal of three lay judges, called *Tre Savii sopra eresia* (three wise men who know heresy). The tribunal coordinated investigations with secular authorities, the papal nuncio and the inquisitor. In 1551, Rome succeeded in reducing the role of this tribunal to one of observers only.

The procedure in the tribunals was much more equitable than in past Inquisitional tribunals. Inquisitors had to comply not only with the rulings of the Roman Church, but were also required to operate within local secular law and rules of court. The act of determining guilt was subject to greater safeguards than in the past. For example, the accused were allowed to present a defense for themselves for the first time. It was even possible to be acquitted. Witnesses and anyone making direct accusations were required to write depositions under oath. The accused had to be provided a written transcript of proceedings and time for review so he could prepare a defense; in past Inquisitions, the accused often did not even know what witnesses had said against them.

Another important change was that accused heretics were allowed to have an attorney to assist them. However, the process remained primitive in many aspects. For example, while the accused and witnesses could not be tortured before the hearing, the use of torture was allowed after the defense had presented its case. This was permitted only when evidence of guilt was strong, according to the inquisitor's opinion. First offenders were less likely than repeat offenders to be sentenced to death. They were more likely to be sentenced to life in prison, with parole often taking place after three years. Prison sentences often meant house arrest, since there was a shortage of prisons in Rome.

Sentencing Under the Roman Inquisition

Even with a relatively enlightened reform of the Inquisition, the Church continued to treat heresy as the most serious crime, a form of spiritual treason. Sentencing was reformed to protect the accused, but once a person was judged guilty of heresy or other spiritual crimes, sentencing could be — and often was — extreme. The term "heretic" was not restricted to someone who abandoned the Christian faith as it had been in the past. Following the teachings of Luther or Calvin was a primary form of heresy as well.

A person found guilty by a tribunal could not be sentenced without approval of the Holy Office in Rome. Any confessions obviously coerced by way of torture were thrown out. This was especially applicable to the crime of witchcraft. Under interrogation including torture, some victims accused of witchcraft or heresy confessed to bizarre crimes. In other parts of Europe, these confessions were allowed by Dominican-controlled tribunals. However, under the rules of the Roman Inquisition, a person could not be found guilty unless the confession was reasonable and believable.

These reforms counteracted the desire by the most zealous inquisitors to gather as many confessions as possible, even justifying torture with the claim that the innocent would find the strength to resist pain based on faith in God. Sentencing also included penalties less severe than life in prison or burning at the stake.

In fact, the extreme sentences passed down in other Inquisitions were few compared to lighter penalties. These included the public reading of penance, saying of prayers, or imposition of fines. Some heretics were required to wear a penitential garment (*sanbenito*) and cap (*coroza*) for a specified time. Only when the accused was described as obstinate or unrepentant, or when the form of heresy was extreme, was it likely that a death sentence would be handed down.

Tribunals were also required to meticulously record all proceedings. The written record was designed not only to provide evidence, but also to identify defendants beyond the initial accused. Torture was used to extract the names of people who were guilty of the same crimes or worse. Consequently the number of arrests and trials was high and a high rate of guilty verdicts was passed down. The fact that torture was used to extract confessions and additional names was not made public, and not specified in the written record of interrogations. The Holy Office pointed to its high volume of arrests and convictions as proof that the Inquisition was necessary and important; the use of torture to control and determine outcomes was not highlighted. The Church position, officially, was that heresy had to be found and punished.

If evidence was weak, it was possible for the accused to win acquittal. But conviction was much more likely, with weak evidence simply resulting in less severe punishments. An acquittal was possible if and when a defendant's attorney was able to bring doubt to witness testimony during cross-examination, or when the defense produced witnesses to contradict testimony of others. Torture was supposed to be used only in cases of the most serious heresy, or when guilt seemed obvious but the accused refused to admit it. Inquisitors had to get advance permission from an advisory council of the Holy Office to use extreme measures. If the defendant did not change his statement even under torture, evidence had to be thrown out and could not be used, meaning the person might be acquitted and released. Realistically, though, this rarely happened. Inquisitors had complete control over the severity of torture applied as well as its duration, meaning a confession was possible in practically every instance.

While a legal defense is taken for granted today, under rules of the Roman Inquisition provision of counsel was a new idea. If the accused could not afford representation, an attorney was provided free of charge. However, if the attorney determined that the client was guilty of the charges, he was obligated to resign from the case or face changes of heresy himself. The attorney could rationalize a client's heresy with a defense of insanity or drunkenness, and could also ask for postponements to gain time to find witnesses. The inclusion of a legal representative was an important advance in law, although it was nowhere near the modern-day rights of the accused. This did provide a chance for an accused heretic to gain an acquittal or a lighter sentence, whereas in the past there had been little chance of that. The accusation of heresy was practically conclusive in past Inquisitions.

The same advancements applied to new rules for witnesses, who now had to give testimony under oath. Perjury was itself a serious crime, and a witness caught in a lie under oath could also be imprisoned. The Holy Office even acknowledged that in past Inquisitions, many guilty verdicts had been

entered based on false testimony of witnesses. The incentive had been there in some cases. For example, an inquisitor may give a guilty person's land and other assets to accusers or witnesses in exchange for testimony, so that an ambitious or jealous individual had a good reason to testify against a neighbor.

In addition to the rare death sentence, imprisonment was common. Because jail space was limited, some were sentenced to imprisonment in monasteries. The severity of this varied, with some people kept in cells and even in chains, but others allowed freedom within the grounds.

The Inquisition was not limited to the use of tribunals and sentences for those pronounced guilty of heresy. The Church augmented its effort with the use of the Jesuit order. In 1540, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was created as a special order that answered directly to the pope and to no one else. This special order became the Roman Church's most important enforcement unit for fighting heresy throughout Europe, with special focus on Protestants.

Known for their exceptional intellectual abilities, the Jesuits led under guidelines written by a Spanish knight and founder of the order, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). The Jesuit constitution stressed complete loyalty to the pope under the principle of strict discipline, or *perinde ac cadaver* (the discipline of a corpse).

Dominicans had always focused on Inquisitions with tribunals and punishments, but Jesuits were more interested in converting heretics and educating people. This was accomplished with the creation of schools, hospitals and missions both in Europe and elsewhere. Ignatius had first visited Pope Paul III in Rome in 1537 to ask permission to ordain his followers as priests. This request was granted and for the next three years members of the order remained in Rome to assist the Church in its anti–Protestant efforts and as part of the Roman Inquisition. On September 27, 1540, the order was officially created by Paul III with his bull, *Regimini militantis ecclesiæ* (To the government of the Militant Church).

The first priority of the Jesuits was the conversion of non–Catholics, especially those who had joined Protestant sects. Ignatius demanded complete loyalty and unquestioning obedience from his members. In his Formula, the opening statement read:

> Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church his Spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should [agree to] ... a vow of perpetual chastity, poverty, and obedience...[6]

The emphasis in the order's early years was to actively fight against Protestants, not only on the Italian peninsula but throughout Europe. In this effort the

Jesuits had considerable success, returning many fallen-away converts back to the Church. However, the Church was not able to enforce its doctrines everywhere. It had control only in the immediate vicinity of Rome and throughout the Papal States. The ongoing Inquisitional tribunals elsewhere relied on local secular authority to enforce their activities, including executions. However, this activity was quickly ending in most countries as the influence and power of the Roman Church gave way to nationalistic movements and to the trend toward increased individual rights. Even so, the Church continued to declare its authority and to demand strict obedience among all Christians. On January 26, 1564, Pope Pius IV issued a bull, *Benedictus Deus* (the Blessing of God), specifying that all Christians were obligated to strict obedience to the Church and to the pope. Failing to follow this rule meant excommunication.

The Evolution of the New Inquisition

The Church was doing all it could to curtail the spread of the Protestant movement, employing the combination of the Inquisition and the Jesuit movement. At the same time, the Church attempted to reconcile the differences between the major Protestant sects and Catholicism. In the interest of religious unity, discussions began in 1540 at Hagenau and continued at Worms. By December of that year, the Roman Church had agreed to compromise its positions on original sin and, by February 13, 1541, a copy of the proposed agreement was delivered to Luther. He concluded that a compromise between the two sides would not be possible.

The extended negotiations at Regensburg during 1541 involved theologians from both sides as well as political representatives. A sticking point was insistence by the Church that any unresolved religious and ecclesiastical questions would be settled by the pope, and that by agreeing to the principles in the proposed agreement, Protestants were to be bound by its terms, including a provision banning any writings critical of the agreement. This proposal was unacceptable to Luther. The outcome was no agreement and increased distrust between the two sides.

The Church was not successful in creating Christian unity, and the Protestant movement continued to expand. However, the Roman Inquisition was successful in preventing Lutheranism and other Protestant sects from taking hold anywhere on the Italian peninsula. As the office of the Roman Inquisition progressed in its newly formed procedures, tribunals began expanding beyond investigations of Protestants and other heretics, and began censoring literature, art, music, and the sciences. At the same time, it also turned its

focus internally and began setting rules of behavior for priests and nuns (also termed "Regulars").

Supervision of the clergy was strict and specific. The rules had been set down at the Council of Trent, which included the sweeping provision that any Regular,

> under the pretext of preaching, or lecturing, or of any other pious work, place himself at the service of any prelate, prince, university, community, or of any other person, or place, whatsoever, without permission from his own Superior; nor shall any privilege or faculty, obtained from others in regard hereof avail him anything. But should any one act contrary hereto, he shall be punished as disobedient, at the discretion of his Superior. Nor shall it be lawful for Regulars to withdraw from their own convents, even under the pretext of repairing to their own Superiors; unless they have been sent, or summoned, by them. And whoever shall be found to be without the order aforesaid in writing, shall be punished as a deserter from his Institute by the Ordinaries of the places. As to those who are sent to the universities for the sake of their studies, they shall dwell in convents only; otherwise they shall be proceeded against by the Ordinaries.[7]

Eventually, the Sacred Office would be restricted to supervision of clergy. However, before this became the sole activity under the jurisdiction of the Roman Inquisition, a significant effort was undertaken to control the sciences and artistic expression. To many people, the persecution of Galileo characterized the Roman Inquisition.

Science and the Great Debate

Advances in science aggravated the task the Roman Church had given itself. Wanting to preserve its control over the Christian world, the Church faced many problems. Literacy freed people from reliance on the educated clergy class and put literature into the hands of the common man; the Humanist movement questioned the role of the Church, and favored the rights of the individual. Evolution of nations in place of feudal city states and the Church also meant growing awareness of individual rights. All of this was occurring on top of the massive shift in the Christian world as a result of the Protestant movement.

The scientific debate ultimately defined the Roman Inquisition more than any spiritually-based investigations. Galileo became a central figure in this debate, but he was not the first scientist to contradict long-held Church beliefs. The problem for the Church was that the Bible identified the earth as the center of the universe. A series of scientists, however, observed correctly that the sun, and not the earth, was at the center (at least of the solar system).

Even with proof of this, the contradiction between science and the Bible fell into the newly defined heresy of the 17th century.

As the political power of monarchs gradually replaced the past power of the Church, science and individual rights moved forward hand in hand. This was not coincidence. It would not have been possible for science to progress as long as the Church held the power to silence anyone it chose. When the Church controlled access to education, it also controlled scientific opinion. In the 17th century, this situation was changing rapidly. The List of Prohibited Books limited the spread of information to a degree, but it could not change the truth. Eventually, censorship proved ineffective. The printing press enabled widespread publication of literature and no one, not even the pope, could hold back the advances in science.

Part of the revolutionary spirit of the Reformation was spiritual, but an equally important part was expansion of literature, the arts and science. Just as the Church had feared, these rapid changes also brought into question the authority and power of the pope, and the right of the Church to dominate all aspects of Christian life. In the past, Christian life had revolved around the Church and spiritual rituals; priests held all of the power over education and beliefs. Once the Church lost this total control, it would never be able to recapture it. The Reformation was based on a new system of beliefs as well as of expression, learning and science, and the structure of nations and politics. A frustration for the Church was that with each new revision to the List of Prohibited Books, it needed to increase the new books included, as book publication grew faster than the Church could control.

In 1564, the Council of Trent formalized the procedures for adding books to what came to be called the Tridentine Index. There were three steps. First, the Congregation of the Index (a new committee created by the council) had to determine the nature of heretical writings. Second, a list of books proposed for inclusion was sent to the inquisitor. Third, the inquisitor approved the list and then distributed it to all publishers and booksellers, who were required to sign pledges to not publish or sell any of the books on the list. Any publisher who refused to agree to these terms or who published or sold any of the books would be charged with heresy and brought before the Inquisition tribunal.

Among the many ideas the Church considered to be opposed to Christian doctrine was the scientific heliocentric theory, the belief that the sun was stationary and the earth revolved around it. According to the Church, the earth was the center of the universe, and this belief was being challenged by astronomers. The Church was quick to label this theory as heresy. The long-standing position of the Church was based on ancient writings of Aristotle and justifications by Dominican scholar and Doctor of the Church Thomas

Aquinas, who argued that a compromise between reason and faith were needed and, in fact, that they coexisted in the Christian world.[8]

This argument was one of the central themes of the Dominican order. Dominicans accepted the argument offered by Aquinas that God revealed himself through nature. Included in this series of beliefs was the idea that the earth was stationary — the geocentric model. Even notables like Martin Luther and John Calvin supported this idea; Luther referred to the heliocentric theory as "the over-witty notions of a fool."[9]

Calvin also agreed with the Church in its doctrine about the earth as the center of God's universe. He asked:

> How could the earth hang suspended in the air were it not upheld by God's hand? By what means could it maintain itself unmoved, while the heavens above are in constant rapid motion, did not its Divine Maker fix and establish it?[10]

Numerous biblical citations further pointed to the earth as central and disputed the idea that the earth resolved around the sun. The great problem for the Church was that if science could prove otherwise, then its doctrine as well as the Bible would be proven to be wrong. Among the biblical verses most often cited were:

> The earth is established immovably. (Psalms 93:1)
>
> He has established the earth immovably. (I Chronicles 16:30)
>
> ... you fixed the earth on its foundation so that it will never be moved. (Psalms 104:2–5)
>
> The sun rises and the sun goes down; and then it speeds to its place and rises there again. (Ecclesiastes 1:5)
>
> [God] made the earth and fashioned it, and by himself fixed it firmly. (Isaiah 45:18)[11]

The debate between science and the Church began with the writings of Copernicus. Scientists who followed confirmed the Copernicus' findings, but even the proof found in observations of the sky was not enough for the Church. The claim itself was heresy because the Church believed otherwise.

The Science of Copernicus

Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) was a Polish astronomer and the first to challenge the geocentric model of the universe. In his landmark book, *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Orbs* (*De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*), published one year after his death, Copernicus claimed that the earth rotated around the sun once every year. Copernicus dedicated the book to Pope Paul III and in the introduction, he even anticipated that his ideas would be chal-

lenged, stating that "some who discover that I here ascribe certain motions to the terrestrial globe will shout that I must be immediately repudiated."[12]

Copernicus anticipated by more than a century how controversial his observations would be. Even so, he wrote that his theory could be proven mathematically. His most controversial statement in this book was found in chapter 10 ("The Order of the Heavenly Spheres"), in which he wrote:

> ... the moon and the earth traverse a grand circle amid the rest of the planets in an annual revolution around the sun. Moreover, since the sun remains stationary, whatever appears as a motion of the sun is really due rather to the motion of the earth."[13]

The book was translated into English in 1576 by Thomas Digges, who also published *A Perfit Description of the Coelestiall Orbes*, supporting Copernicus' theory and further providing mathematical proof. A new theory was offered by a Danish astronomer named Tycho Brahe. After he noticed the sudden appearance of a new star in the constellation Cassiopeia, he questioned the belief that the universe beyond the moon was fixed and unchangeable. Tycho disagreed with most astronomers of the day who argued that the new star was formed below the orbit of the moon. Tycho published a new book in 1573, *De nova stella* (The New Star). The Copernican argument was kept alive throughout this debate and in 1610, a theologian named Paolo Antonio Foscarini published a book, *Lettera ... sopra l'opinione ... del Copernico*, arguing that the heliocentric theory conformed with biblical verse and Church doctrine. The response by the Church was to place *De Revolutionibus* on the List of Prohibited Books, where it remained until 1835.

The next phase of the debate involved a Dominican friar named Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), who became convinced that the heliocentric theory was correct. His statements brought him to the attention of the Naples tribunal of the Inquisition. Bruno left Naples in 1576 to avoid possible arrest, but in Rome he was again in danger from the local Inquisition. He then moved to France and renounced the Dominican order. During the next seven years, he published several books and lectured on the topic of astronomy. In 1584 he published *Cena de la Ceneri* (*The Ash Wednesday Supper*) and *De l'Infinito Universo e Mondi* (*On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*). Bruno's claim that the universe was not restricted but infinite, including an infinite number of stars and planets, was heresy in itself, but he further expressed his belief that many planets held intelligent life. Staying one step ahead of the Inquisition, Bruno moved to Venice in 1591. He was arrested and tried for heresy and then sent to Rome for a second trial. He was imprisoned for the next eight years and interrogated many times. In 1600, the Roman tribunal concluded that he was a heretic and sentenced him to death. Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600.

Bruno's death sentence was rare, but he had committed not one but several acts of heresy. These included subscribing to the Copernican theory of the universe, claiming the universe was infinite, and speculating that intelligent life existed beyond the earth. During this same period, another scientist and astronomer named Galileo was beginning to formulate ideas of his own.

Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) is considered a leading figure in what has come to be known as the scientific revolution. This was an outgrowth of Humanism and the Reformation, but it was also more. It included new ideas about the natural world, including theories of astronomy and other disciplines. Galileo wrote that physics

> is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering around in a dark labyrinth.[14]

This belief in mathematics was not directly a challenge to the Church reliance on the Bible; however, in his application of mathematics to develop theories about the universe, Galileo and his proof of theories contrary to Church doctrine led him into a direct confrontation with the office of the Inquisition. In the same publication, Galileo took a risk by referring to mathematics as the language of God. Such a claim was risky given the power of the Inquisition to define for itself what heresy was, and to punish offenders based on that definition.

Before expressing any controversial theories, Galileo was a pioneer in designing a new and improved telescope. This design allowed observers to see sunspots, the moons of Jupiter, and much more. It also led to his mathematical tracking of planetary movements. Beginning in 1610, Galileo disputed the widely held belief in the geocentric theory, and was outspoken in his support of Copernicus and heliocentrism. In 1611, Dominican friar Niccolo Lorini wrote a complaint about Galileo to the office of the Inquisition. Galileo responded that his beliefs were based on proof and observation and at that point the Inquisition was not ready to confront him by placing him under arrest. On December 20, 1614, Dominican Tommaso Caccini denounced Galileo in a sermon delivered in Florence. He claimed that science and mathematics were forms of heresy because they contradicted the Bible. He put out a call for Galileo's arrest as a heretic, but the Church response was that the only heresy he had committed was the claim to have seen sunspots (in Galileo's Letter on Sunspots, written in 1612 to Augsburg Magistrate Mark Wesler [1558–1614] and published in Rome in 1613). Galileo also claimed in this letter that the sunspots appeared to be on the surface of the sun and that, because they moved, the sun must also turn on a rotation.

This heresy did not lead to a trial, but on February 26, 1616, the Inquisition banned him from speaking in public, teaching, or writing and publishing anything about the heliocentric theory. The Inquisitional tribunal said that to believe such things was "false and contrary to scripture."[15]

The incident did lead to a continued investigation of Galileo by the Inquisition, however. Pope Paul V (1605–21) ordered Jesuit Robert Cardinal Bellarmine to warn Galileo about the danger he was in. Bellarmine, author of *Disputations about the Controversies of the Christian Faith against the Heretics of This Time (Disputationes de Controversiis Christianæ Fidei Adversus Hujus Temporis Hæreticos*), advised Galileo that he was under permanent ban from all oral and written communications about heliocentrism.

Galileo took the warning seriously and reversed his position about the Copernicus theory. But when Pope Urban VII (1623–44) took office, he gave Galileo permission to write as long as he treated the idea as a mathematical theory only, and not as fact. Galileo immediately began work on his best-known book, *Dialogue concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (*Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*), which was published in 1632. The book documented the idea that the earth moved in an orbit around the sun, in spite of the restrictions placed on his statements, and in direct contradiction of Church doctrine. The Inquisitional tribunal issued a statement that Galileo was under "grave suspicion of heresy," and he was forced to publicly recant the claims made in the book. The tribunal sentenced him to house arrest for the remainder of his life and *Dialogue* was added to the List of Probihited Books, remaining there until 1835.

Galileo's conviction and sentence remained on the books for over 300 years, until October 31, 1992, when Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) expressed regret for the Church's treatment of the scientist. The Galileo episode was the culmination of problems with not only the Roman Inquisition, but the entire approach taken by the Church in investigating heresy. In this case, Galileo's ideas were considered both scientifically false and heretical. In a sense, it was partly his vocal style that brought him to the attention of the Inquisition. For many years, the Church had tolerated the debate over science even while calling heliocentrism heretical. The execution of Bruno in 1600 was a clear reminder to scientists like Galileo that the Inquisition was a very real threat. Because Galileo defied his restrictions by publishing *Dialogue*, the tribunal considered him not only a heretic but also a recidivist, making his crime much more serious. His forced recantation read in part:

> I swear that I have always believed, I believe now, and with God's help I will in future believe all which the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church doth hold, preach, and teach. But since I, after having been admonished by this Holy Office entirely to abandon the false opinion that the Sun was the

> center of the universe and immoveable, and that the Earth was not the center of the same and that it moved, and that I was neither to hold, defend, nor teach in any manner whatever, either orally or in writing, the said false doctrine ... I have been judged vehemently suspected of heresy, that is, of having held and believed that the Sun is the center of the universe and immoveable, and that the Earth is not the center of the same, and that it does move. Nevertheless, wishing to remove from the minds of your Eminences and all faithful Christians this vehement suspicion reasonably conceived against me, I abjure with sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I curse and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally all and every error and sect contrary to the Holy Catholic Church ... and if I know any heretic, or one suspected of heresy, I will denounce him to this Holy Office, or to the Inquisitor and Ordinary of the place in which I may be.[16]

The scientific revolution, led by Galileo, was a starting point in modern astronomy and physics and, in spite of his recantation, was the end of old thinking and the beginning of science's modern age. It also symbolizes the last days of the Inquisition. The public perception of Galileo's punishment was negative not only because Galileo was popular in his day, but also because most scientists recognized the flaws in Church doctrine. In a desire to hold on to the old ways, the Church used both the Inquisition as a threat and the Jesuit order as its enforcement arm, to try to keep the Christian world in compliance. But silencing dissenters became more difficult every year as scientific knowledge continued to grow.

The scientist was not forgotten by any means but became a hero to science as well as to anti–Church followers critical of rigid doctrine. He even managed to write one final book in 1638, entitled *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences* (*Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche, intorno a due nuove scienze*). In spite of a ban on further publishing, Galileo's last book was not controversial and he published it not in Italy but in the Netherlands. The two sciences — the science of materials and the law of falling bodies — became one of the observations that Galileo is remembered for more than his controversial astronomical writings. He observed that items of different weight fell at the same rate of speed, which influenced later theories about the laws of both motion and gravity.

The offense committed in publishing this book was twofold. First, he was under orders to not write or publish. Second, he published his new book without the prior consent of the Congregation of the Index. Even so, his ideas were so compelling and provably true that the Inquisition had no interest in further investigating the aging Galileo. His heresies remained controversial and, for many, are still questionable today, in spite of what scientists now know about the solar system and the universe. His works were significant as scientific breakthroughs and, equally, as steps that began the end of the Roman

Inquisition and pointed out the unreasonable Church policies in investigating and punishing heretics.

Although the Galileo incident began ending the Roman Inquisition, it did not bring an end to heresies. During the 17th and 18th centuries, new challenges arose to Church authority as the Protestant movement continued to grow. The next chapter continues with heresies of this period.

13

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

> This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone. It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it.... Experience shows, even from earliest times, that cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty.
>
> — Pope Gregory XVI, encyclical *Mirari Vos* — On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism, August 15, 1832

The great social and cultural changes that began in the 15th and 16th centuries — the Reformation, Humanism, expanded literacy, developments in science, and a move toward nationalism — all continued into the next two centuries. Over time, the Church lost more power and was not able to enforce its mandates. The concepts of supreme power and infallibility were no longer universally accepted. As a consequence, the Church's attempt at battling heresy became unsuccessful, not only as the Reformation continued to spread, but also as internal splits and debates began to occur.

The Age of Enlightenment

The period that has become known as the Age of Enlightenment was characterized by reason and intellect more than any other force. Older, traditional Church beliefs relied on faith and even superstition and in an era when literary rates were low and clergy were also the sole educated class, the Church had been able to hold on to its power. Now, however, changes — or in the Church view, heresies — were taking place rapidly.

Church power diminished in the 17th century and this change only accelerated in the 18th. This was a century of revolution. All around the globe, citizens were revolting against the authority of colonialism, monarchies, and the Church. The American Revolution (1775–83), the French Revolution (1789–99), the Irish Rebellion of 1798, and wars for independence in Latin America (wars in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico all occurred in this time period, as well as many smaller revolts and revolutions).

A common theme in the revolutionary century was growing demand for individual rights (the rights of man and the concept of a social contract). Writers of the era, including John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, saw their ideas being expressed in new national constitutions. While this is usually explained as a series of revolts against political control by powerful nations and kings, and resistance to the feudal system, it was just as much a continuation of the Reformation, aggressive doubt about Church authority based on past abuses, and the demand for freedom and national identity.

There was no central organization to the age, but a unifying theme based on respect for science, logic, and reason, as well as the desire for freedom both in the political sense and in the practice of religion. The idea that a person could be called a heretic and imprisoned or executed for individual beliefs was so offensive to the overall movement that there was nothing the Church would have been able to do to hold on to its power or to reverse the course of events. The Inquisition had become obsolete, and authoritarian might based on blind faith was not an acceptable premise for political control. The ideas were expressed in new constitutions and declarations like the Declaration of Independence; philosophically the same ideas were expressed by new thinkers like Immanuel Kant. He wrote an essay whose first line defined the age: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity."[1]

The essay further questioned the role of religion, stating that adherence to a fixed set of doctrines prevents "further enlightenment of mankind forever." He called it immoral for one generation to impose its beliefs on the next, because change in opinion was required for social progress. He also applied this to religion, stating that any religious doctrine that prevents public debate, criticism or disagreement was simply wrong, a form of what he called "religious immaturity." A Church-operated control over doctrine made the institution a political force whose policy was intended to control the development of reason itself.[2]

Two centuries earlier, Kant would have been at risk of indictment under the Inquisition and being burned at the stake as a heretic. But by this age, his views were popular and were widely held by citizens of the Western world, including many Catholics as well as Protestants. The entire outlook of the

Christian world was changing as part of the Age of Enlightenment; the idea of heresy as a crime was passing out of favor rapidly.

Developments in the sciences were equally important as a part of the massive changes underway. Galileo had started this process, and it was continued by Isaac Newton with publication in 1688 of *Principia Mathematica*. Newton was a scientific giant of his age, but just as Galileo had been silenced a half century earlier, if he had lived earlier his advances would not have been possible. Newton's ability to raise questions and examine them was possible only because the Age of Enlightenment made such freedom possible and he acknowledged this with his famous words, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."[3]

The advances in science, like those in philosophy and political and cultural thought, have been collectively called the breaking of the "sacred circle," a reference to long-standing domination by the Church over all of the scientific, political, cultural and philosophical thought before the Age of Enlightenment.[4]

Free Will and Jansenism

In the Age of Enlightenment, the long-standing arguments of grace and free will resurfaced. This debate went back to the fifth century and Augustine's arguments against Pelagianism. The major Protestant leaders had raised this issue once more and it characterized a long theological debate both within the Church and between the Roman Church and the Protestant movement.

The Pelagian belief questioned the existence of original sin, which was a basic doctrine of the Roman Church. This is the belief that all of mankind is responsible for the sin of Adam and Eve. This collective guilt is itself the origin and premise of the Church, and defines the need for belief in Christ and his mission to die for the sins of mankind. The debate deepened the split between Roman and Orthodox Churches as well and the differences in opinion never had been resolved. They arose once more in the Age of Enlightenment.

In the distant past, when literacy was the exclusive luxury of the clergy and the Church dominated every aspect of life, debates over such matters were strictly controlled and dissent was dealt with swiftly. However, with the widespread literacy and education outside of the Church seen in the modern age, the Church could not simply declare a heresy, arrest the offenders, and execute or imprison them. Public discussions became the new venue for debate over all matters. The emergence of cafes, debating societies, and salons encouraged debate and discussion, and the Church could not put a stop to it.

At the core of the debate was the question of God's grace and its effec-

tiveness, and an equally important question about human freedom itself. Logically, faith in God included belief in grace and free will. However, if an individual accepts God's absolute control over mankind, then an individual's acts are beyond that individual's control. Belief in grace made it necessary to conclude that human freedom could not exist. If human freedom exists, people have the power to make moral decisions even without grace and without the involvement of God.

This circle of logic became a point of debate not only among the citizens of Europe, but within the Church as well. The debate was ignited by the publication of the 1,300-page book *Augustinus* in 1640, two years after the death of its author, Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638).

Jansen (alt. Corneille Janssens) was bishop of Ypres in Belgium. He was in charge of the College of St. Pulcheria in Leuvan, a theological school for Dutch students. He became active in the school's resistance to the Jesuit movement. He was relocated to Madrid twice (in 1624 and 1626) due to the controversy and on his second visit there, he was almost arrested and taken before a tribunal of the Inquisition. He was a controversial and activist bishop because of his support of conflict not only with the Jesuits but also with Dutch Calvinists.

Jansen wanted to free Belgium from the control of Spain, which further brought his name to the attention of the Spanish Church and particularly the Inquisition. Critics within the Church criticized Jansen's interpretation of Augustine's ideas. After his death in 1638, Pope Innocent X (1644–55) condemned Jansen's ideas in his bull, *Cum Occasione* (issued May 31, 1653). This bull listed the five major points Jansen had commented upon in his book, and concluded that each were heretical. Innocent commented on each of these five points as "Declared and condemned as heretical."[5]

By this time, Jansen's ideas had attracted many followers, the Jansenists. The influential Jesuits persuaded Pope Innocent to require them to confess their errors and agree to the statements in the previously published papal bull. Jansenists were forced to sign a statement promising to obey all papal rules and acknowledging papal authority. The official Jansenist objection to the papacy was that, while the pope did have the authority to condemn heretics, he did not have the authority to deem Jansen's book as heretical. They also argued that condemning Jansen was the same as condemning the famous Church doctor, St. Augustine. Many refused to sign.

The debate between Jansenists and the Church (primarily undertaken by the Jesuits) continued for decades. Jansen's major premise had been that, according to Augustine, humans are incapable of good acts because human nature is sinful. Freedom, Jansen argued, is seeking pleasure. However, through Jesus, God gave mankind access to grace. This transforms selfish

pleasure into a higher form of freedom, replacing physical pleasure with the love of God. However, people are not responsible for their own acts. God alone determines who will be saved and who will not. In other words, free will plays no role in mankind's relationship with God.

The Campaign Against Jansenists

An anti–Jansen movement began in 1641, in which the primary accusation was that Jansen had repeated the errors made by Calvin in his views of predestination. Leaders of the movement, led by Jesuits, appealed to the Holy Office in Rome. The Holy Office reviewed the matter and issued an official document, *In eminenti*. This document concluded that Jansen's writings had been condemned by the Church and were heretical. Although the tribunal had hoped to settle the matter once and for all, the controversy did not end there.

The pope's bull did not settle the matter either. In 1656 a conference among French bishops resulted in passing on a formal request to Pope Alexander VII (1655–67) to settle the dispute. The pope issued a bull, *Ad sacram*, condemning Jansen's beliefs and affirming the previous view that these beliefs were heretical.

Followed on the pope's bull, the French bishops drafted a formula of faith in 1657 and demanded that all priests and nuns sign it. King Louis XIV (1643–1715) supported the bishops and also demanded that all clergy sign the formula of faith. Many refused, arguing that only the pope had the authority to demand a signature from priests and nuns. In support of the king's mandate, Pope Alexander issued another bull, *Regimini apostolici* (1665).

Several Jansenist priests who had refused to sign the formula of faith were scheduled to be put on trial, but Alexander passed away and the trials did not take place. Alexander's successor, Pope Clement IX (1667–69), offered a compromise. Jansenist priests and nuns would be allowed to sign the formula of faith, but with secret stipulations qualifying their understanding.

It was not merely the theological aspects of Jansen's beliefs that kept the movement alive for so long. His followers continued the strong anti–Jesuit sentiment as well, and this was especially popular in the French Church, which desired liberty from Rome's centralized control. Matters remained unsettled until after 1700, when the controversy resurfaced and took on new life. That year, King Louis, determined to wipe out the Jansenists, asked the pope to issue new rules stating that good Catholics could not remain silent. The renewed controversy arose over the same major point of contention between Rome and Jansenism: the question of whether the pope had the power to

decide questions of doctrinal fact. Pope Clement XI (1700–21) issued a bull, *Cum nuper*, on February 12, 1703, condemning the Jansenist position challenging the range of the pope's authority. Clement further urged King Louis and Archbishop Noailles of Paris to take swift action against the Jansenists.

The debate continued, however, when several Paris-based theologians refused to agree to the mandate of the Church. Again attempting to resolve the debate, Clement issued an Apostolic Constitution on July 16, 1705, *Vineam Domini Sabaoth*. The constitution attacked the Jansenist beliefs that were contrary to Church doctrine, restating the pope's absolute power to determine matters of doctrine. The document ends with the statement that all faithful members of the Church are required to condemn Jansenism as heresy.

The month after it was published, copies of the constitution arrived in Paris. On August 21, the Assembly of the French Clergy accepted the constitution with the added declaration that the document was binding for the entire Church once the bishops had accepted it. This claim to a binding requirement bolstered the French government's agreement with the pope, and the constitution became a part of French law on August 31. Any clergy who refused to agree to the new bull and law were suppressed by the government.

Even between the papacy and supportive governments, conflict arose, and this case was no exception. Clement objected to the statement by the French bishops implying that their adoption of the pope's mandate gave that mandate binding power. He wrote to King Louis XIV and to Cardinal Noailles that he did not approve of the bishops "usurping the plentitude of power which God has given exclusively to the Chair of St. Peter."[6]

In 1713, yet another bull was issued by Clement XI, in response to a work by Pasquier Quesnel (1634–1719). A Jansenist theologist, Quesnel had been banished from Paris in 1681. He wrote a controversial work, *Réflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament*, and the first complete edition appeared in 1692. This work set forth the principles of the Jansenist disagreements with Rome and brought attention to Quesnel, making him the leader of the movement. In 1703 he was arrested and imprisoned for three months, after which he escaped and relocated to Amsterdam. Clement XI issed a new bull, *Unigenitus*, on September 8, 1713, condemning 101 specific sentences in *Réflexions morales* as heretical.

Far from settling the dispute, the new bull further divided the Church. Jansenists disputed *Unigenitus* and called for a general council to resolve the matter, hoping a council would overrule the pope. The Church was divided between so-called appellants who supported a general council, and acceptants who supported the pope and his new bull. The pope issued yet another bull in which he declared that all who did not accept *Unigenitus* were excommunicated.

Quesnel died in 1719, so that the Jansenists lost their leader. By this time, the court of Louis XIV had turned almost entirely anti–Jansenist and those supporting the Jansenist beliefs were imprisoned or sent into exile. In Holland, where many Jansenists settled, the belief became a schism and the Jansenists ordained their own priests and bishops. The sect continued to exist into the 19th century.

The persistence of Jansenism created a long-standing debate in the Church over the meaning of free will and grace. The difference in this debate was that it was held for the most part in the open, without direct threat of arrest and trial under the Inquisition. The anti–Jesuit aspects of the movement added support to it. The concept that a group of Catholics was able to challenge the pope and his authority while remaining within the Church was a turning point in the history of heretical movements. The Church's response, inevitably, was to declare a belief a heresy and to then excommunicate its followers. Increasingly, the power of excommunication carried little weight and was not taken as seriously as it had been in the past.

The Molinists

The Jansenist movement was a direct result of the Reformation, even though its followers remained within the Church. This did not matter to the Church; it was still condemned as heresy and all who would not agree with the Church were excommunicated. While this internal dispute was taking place, another movement was also occurring, although not due to the Reformation but rather to questions over spirituality itself.

The movement known as Quietism grew from the teachings of Miguel de Molinos (c. 1628–97), a Spanish priest who resided in Rome from approximately 1670 forward. In 1675, Molinos published *Guida spirituale*, in which he expressed many of his spiritual ideas. These included the idea that the only path to union with God was to quiet the use of all human faculties. In other words, by emptying the imagination, powers of the mind, will and memory, the individual would find the union. By taking no actions, the Quietist would find God. Perhaps most unusual was his belief that in this quieted state, nothing needed to be done in response to temptation, since that would require a decision and the use of a human faculty. Molinos taught that it was not even necessary to dwell on eternal salvation or happiness. He opposed internal happiness derived from offering prayers. No acts were needed at all, not even penance for sins. Most troubling of all of Molinos' beliefs, especially to fellow priests and Church elders, was his claim that while priests owed outward loyalty to the bishop, inwardly a person's loyalty should be devoted only to God.

In Rome Molinos befriended Cardinal Benedetto Odescalchi, who later became Pope Innocent XI (1676–89). In 1681, a Jesuit named Paolo Segneri published the *Concordia tra la fatica e la quiete nell' orazione*, a harsh criticism of Molinos' beliefs. The Inquisition stepped in to investigate as a result, but concluded that the *Guida spirituale* was not heretical. In fact, the tribunal censured Segneri for his criticism of the work. However, the Jesuits did not abandon their position easily. They prevailed on the pope and also used their political connections, finally convincing Innocent that Molinos was a threat. The pope ordered him arrested in 1685. Over the next two years, many of his followers were also investigated under the Inquisition and several were placed under arrest. Molinos was charged with heretical writings and also with moral crimes. On September 3, 1687, he was forced to publicly confess his errors and was sentenced to life in prison. In 1688, Innocent published a bull, *Coelestis Pastor*, naming 68 propositions in *Guida spirituale* heresies. Molinos died in prison ten years later in 1697.

In spite of his earlier friendship with the pope, Molinos had fallen into both a spiritual and political conflict with the powerful Jesuits. The Jesuit belief held that God reveals himself *only* through Jesus, and that Jesus reveals himself only through the Roman Church. Molinos, as a mystic and spiritual teacher, contradicted these core beliefs not of the Church but of the Jesuit order, adding to the problems the Church faced in arguments over doctrine. Luther had taught in his movement that Christians were able to have communion directly with God and without the need of priests or the pope. This extreme heresy caused great problems for the Church, which insisted that priests were the necessary conduit between God and mankind. However, whereas Luther also believed that it was necessary to go to God through Jesus, Molinos believed that there was no need for any intermediaries.

The Protestant view was that the Church itself prevented communion with God and, in fact, because it was a corrupt institution, actually hurt that effort. Molinos believed that priests and Church were important pieces of the overall spiritual connection with God, but not the only means. Molinos preached a three-part process of piety. First, a believer needed to surrender completely to the Church. Second came belief and devotion to Jesus. Third, both Church and Jesus could be put aside and only God remained. This principle, *deiformes*, *sed non Deus* (Godlike, but not God), was the ultimate level of piety in Molinos' view. It was also what brought him into conflict with the Jesuits and ultimately with Pope Innocent XI and the Inquisition.

The Jesuit view was militant compared to what Molinos believed. Molinos rejected the proactive requirement to work endlessly to achieve grace. He believed that in the "soft and savory sleep of nothingness," the soul is able to wait until God's message comes. This disinterested love was the core of the Quietist movement.[7]

Although Molinos' ideas had been accepted originally as conforming with Church doctrine, the Church's position quickly evolved into disagreement. Quietism was heresy. The theory was at conflict with the saints, with the Gospels and with the Church's doctrine itself. The mysticism based on passive acceptance of God and the resulting love of fellow humans was simply too close to the ideas expressed by Reformation leaders. The rejection of the need for priests was itself heretical enough to get Molinos a life sentence. His down-playing of the sacraments as necessary for grace aggravated the situation even more. He had not been outspoken or actively opposed to the Church, and if the Jesuit order had not pursued him, his writings would probably have passed into history with little commentary, and Quietism would not have drawn much attention. It was the conflict with the Jesuit order that elevated his positions to the point of heresy. Even so, the Quietism movement did not last for long after Molinos passed away. This was yet another of dozens of heretical sects successfully suppressed by the Church.

Natural Reason as a Heretical Movement

The Age of Enlightenment was well-named because many of the giants of the age shunned superstition and blind faith in favor of what came to be known as natural reason. Locke, Spinoza, Bacon and Descartes all relied on natural reason to express their philosophies and, more specifically, on natural rights of the individual not only in morality but also in spirituality. The idea that the scriptures could be interpreted in a variety of ways became accepted, although to the Church, such a suggestion was clearly heretical. The Roman Church insisted that it was the sole source of how scriptures were to be interpreted. Any departure or disagreement was not acceptable.

In this debate, a new center of religious thought arose, promoting the belief that natural reason was a more powerful force in shaping a spiritual belief than the long-held reliance on revelation coming from God and conveyed through the Church. This belief, Deism, was developed in England and then in France. It came not only from notable scientists and philosophers of the era, but also from the spiritual ideas of the Reformation. The Protestant view held that individuals were inspired by the Holy Spirit directly, disputing the Roman Church's claim to be the sole conveyer of God's grace to the individual.

The movement was in a sense a revolt against the Church and its requirement of absolute obedience and faith. It was based on the belief that God created the universe, and that truth and understanding result from the use of reason, not on a spiritual level but within the natural world alone. Like adher-

ents of other movements of the age, including the Reformation and even Catholic sects, Deists believed that organized religion was not needed, and rejected the argument that God intervenes in human affairs through prophecy, revelations, miracles, or faith. Many Deists referred to God as the "Supreme Architect" or "Grand Architect of the Universe."

This was not a new idea. It was introduced centuries before as a part of the Gnostic belief system and also carried over to the Rosicrucian definition of God. Under that system, within the solar system, there exist seven separate worlds.[8]

The concepts predated Christianity. Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535–c. 475 B.C.E.) described God as the *logos* or "reason" and the term was applied to define order and knowledge within the universe. Plato called God the *demiurge*, meaning craftsman or artisan. This being was responsible for forming the universe and the term was later adopted and used by Gnostics.

In more modern times, the concept of a craftsman or architect has persisted. Freemasonry also has used the reference as a mystical one, with the often-cited abbreviation seen in Masonic buildings and writings, GAOTU, which is an abbreviation of "Grand Architect of the Universe." Critics of Freemasonry have pointed to this as proof that Masonic belief includes the worship of a false god, but in fact the reference is seen in Christian literature as well. For example, "The Grand Architect" was a description used by Thomas Aquinas in his definition of God. Calvin also referred to God as the "Architect of the Universe" in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.[9]

The Deist view went a step beyond these ideas, however. It was that the Supreme Architect's plan for the universe is not affected by any divine intervention nor suspension of the universal natural law. While Christianity and most other religions acknowledge divine involvement with mankind, Deists view doctrine as only interpretation rather than a source of doctrinal authority. As part of the Age of Enlightenment, Deism rejected both the divinity of Jesus and the sole reliance upon scripture. On the Protestant side, Deism eventually strongly influenced sects such as Unitarianism; within the Catholic faith, the move was viewed as clearly heretical.

The source of the word *Deism* is similar to that of *Theism*. Both come from the words for God. Deism is from the Latin *deus* and Theism from the Greek *theos*. Both of these -isms are based on belief in one supreme being, God the Creator, and both belief systems see this God as separate from the temporal world. However, Theists believe that God is actively involved with and interested in the world, while Deists believe the world was created to evoke its own destiny separate from God's influence.

The attributes of Deism that the Church found most disturbing were its rejection of any religion based on writings thought to reveal the Word of God

(central to Christianity), and also rejection of any miracles or prophecies. One description of the Deist philosophy explains that all Deists

> sought to destroy in order to build, and reasoned either from the absurdity of Christianity to the need for a new philosophy or from their desire for a new philosophy to the absurdity of Christianity. Each Deist, to be sure, had his special competence. While one specialized in abusing priests, another specialized in rhapsodies to nature, and a third specialized in the skeptical reading of sacred documents. Yet whatever strength the movement had — and it was at times formidable — it derived that strength from a peculiar combination of critical and constructive elements.[10]

The Church view of this movement was that it was a form of atheism. If not, at the very least, the belief was heretical because it contradicted so many basic Christian doctrines, notably the requirement for grace and acceptance of Jesus as a requisite for salvation. A typical criticism of the period was that "Deism is a denial of all reveal'd Religion."[11]

However, philosophers of the day challenged the old, long-standing Church claim to absolute authority, citing the weakness of religion as based not on reason, but on fear of the unknown. This was the claim put forth by Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–76), who was also skeptical of claims to miracles. Hume noted in his most famous work, published three years after his death, that Polytheism was "the first and most ancient religion of mankind."[12]

The claim that religion was fear-based defied the Church doctrine that religion was an inspired matter, based on love of Jesus and not on fear of damnation — even though the Christian doctrine is sprinkled with the constant threat of damnation for any Christian who questions the faith, commits mortal sins without confessing them, or loses faith. As Hume wrote,

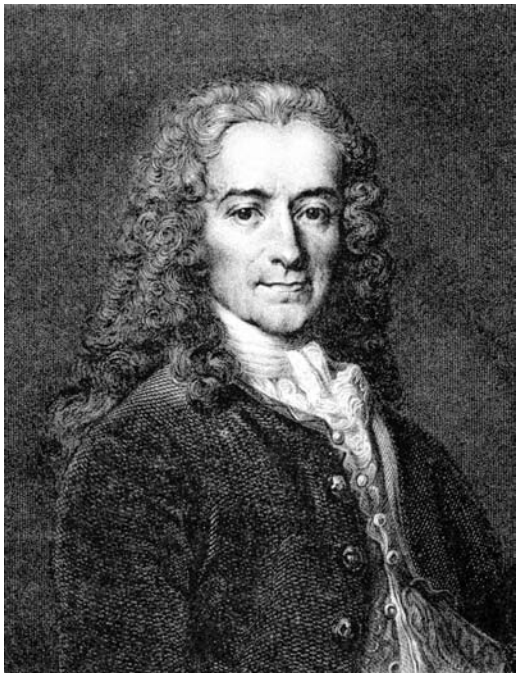
> The primary religion of mankind arises chiefly from an anxious fear of future events; and what ideas will naturally be entertained of invisible, unknown powers, while men lie under dismal apprehensions of any kind, may easily be conceived. Every image of vengeance, severity, cruelty, and malice must occur, and must augment the ghastliness and horror which oppresses the amazed religionist.... And no idea of perverse wickedness can be framed, which those terrified devotees do not readily, without scruple, apply to their deity.[13]

Deism was by no means an isolated belief system. In France, both Robespierre (1758–94) and Rousseau (1712–78) were Deists and during the French Revolution, the Cult of the Supreme Being (*Culte de l'Être suprême*) briefly became the official state religion. Robespierre declared the date 20 Prairial of Year III (June 8, 1794) as the national day of celebration of the Supreme Being. Every city was required to hold a celebratory event on that day. Robespierre declared the absolute truth and social unity of his newly-found religion.[14]

Deism in the Age of Enlightenment

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the debate between the Roman Church and Deism, like the earlier debate with the Protestant movement, centered on clear differences of doctrine; but all centers realized that the Church was losing its power and influence and that even its long-feared Inquisition was no longer effective in destroying dissent. The older threat of excommunication no longer held power, either. The Church had to resort to arguments of faith to hold onto its flock of devoted Christians.

The beginnings of the movement were compelling and difficult for the Church to attack. At the outset, Deism argued that every individual had a natural right to define and select religious truth, rather than relying on the Church to decide what was true and allowing it to punish anyone who dissented. This individual right fit well with the times, when politics, culture, the arts, literature and science were all moving rapidly away from superstition and toward individual liberty. The concept of political democracy expounded in the United States and France quickly translated to a similar approach to the basic concept of faith and definitions of religion itself.



Portrait of Voltaire. Artist: Moreau le Jeune, Paris, 1846.

This assumed freedom of choice was a direct challenge to the authority of the pope and even to the premise of faith in the Christian doctrine. It was a question of who had authority, the Church or the individual. The change led to a second step in adopting Deism, questioning the Church belief that God rewards good acts and punishes bad acts. A revolt against this paternalistic Church view was accompanied by the argument that the individual could arrive at revelation without needing organized religion or the guidance of priests.

Among the giants of the Age of Enlightenment, Voltaire (1694–1778; penname of François-Marie Arouet) was a

prolific writer and thinker. Even his pen name, which he adopted in 1718, is a clever anagram of *Arovet Li*, the Latinized version of Arouet. He did not believe that acceptance of any single religion or text was required for a belief in God. He adhered to the Deist ideal of respect for nature. He described himself as a Deist, arguing that belief in a supreme being was evident, but based on reason rather than on faith.

At the same time, Voltaire consistently promoted no one view but rather the concept of religious tolerance. He strongly objected to the clergy and its superstition and intolerance. He was directly critical in his work, *Treatise on Tolerance*, of the actions of many faiths against those believing otherwise. He also wrote in *Dictionnaire philosophique* that dogma and belief led to inhuman behavior among humans, including bloodshed in the name of God. In these writings and others, Voltaire was a vocal critic of organized religion.

Another leading writer of the age was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), who was a versatile intellectual—a philosopher, author, and composer. He is best remembered for his social philosophy, which also influenced his thoughts on religion. He described his philosophy in writing:

> The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said "This is mine," and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this imposter; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.[15]

Rousseau converted to Catholicism as a young man but later return to his roots as a Calvinist. His philosophical writings at times mask his strongly held religious views, however, and some critics have called Rousseau's beliefs contrary to both the Catholic and Calvinist views. However, Rousseau was, more than anything, a believer in tolerance and acceptance of all beliefs. He wrote in one of his most famous works, *Émile, or On Education*, that the relationship between the individual and society is paradoxical. People, he stated, have an innate human goodness, while society at large is corrupt. The opening sentence of the book is: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."[16]

The publication of *Émile* was so controversial that copies were publicly burned upon release. Within the book, religious tolerance was promoted through the character of the Savoyard vicar. The Church view saw this as advocating indifferentism, the belief that all religions are valid and equal. The Church viewed this as a heresy and the book was condemned both in Paris by Catholic leaders, and in Geneva by the Calvinists. Adding to his controversial writings, Rousseau believed in the need for religion but did not believe

in the Christian concept of original sin. He wrote that "there is no original perversity in the human heart."[17]

Rousseau differed somewhat from many of his contemporary Deists. His belief held that God's presence in creation and influence on mankind were good if only because God is good. In comparison, other Deists viewed God as a remote and abstract creator, not one involved directly in the affairs of individuals. Ironically, Rousseau's belief in God and the scriptures made him more of a threat to the Roman Church than Voltaire. Whereas Voltaire was clearly a non-believer, Rousseau claimed to be religious while rejecting many Church teaching and doctrines. The fact that his novels were widely read added to the perception that he posed a serious threat to Church dogma. However, even if the Church had wanted to silence Rousseau, his fame and popularity made his prosecution impossible. The Church considered him a heretic, but was powerless to silence him.

The Age of Enlightenment marked clearly the end of Church power and its ability to punish heretics through excommunication and Inquisition. However, heresies did not ebb away, but continued to arise even into modern times. At the end of the 18th century, many new movements surfaced, some growing out of the Reformation and the social changes of the previous decades, and many others arising to once more challenge old beliefs, notably the doctrine of infallibility.

14

Old Catholics and Modernism: Nineteenth Century Heresy

> Of all the despotisms, that of the doctrinaires or inspired religionists is the worst. They are so jealous of the glory of their God and of the triumph of their idea that they have no heart left for the liberty of real men. Divine zeal, preoccupation with the idea, finally dry up the tenderest souls, the most compassionate hearts, the sources of human love.
>
> — Michael Bakunin, *God and the State*

By the 19th century, the Roman Church had lost its power to inflict capital punishment or imprison accused heretics. The Inquisition, as a punitive court or body of laws, was in effect over. The office continued and still exists even today, but its emphasis is more on internal rulemaking and the enforcement of internal limits on activities of the clergy; beyond that, there exists virtually no authority or involvement in investigations of heresy outside of the Church itself.

The Roman Church has changed as well. Hundreds of years ago, when the clergy was the sole source of information and the Church had unlimited social and political power, Christians viewed the office of the papacy as a center of spiritual and temporal authority. Today, that is less common and the Church is viewed by many, including Catholics, as a large bureaucracy controlling its interests around the world, spiritual, political and financial. Like many governments, the Vatican has its own diplomatic offices and the pope communicates with world leaders. However, much of the old mysticism and superstition has disappeared and today's Church has abandoned its efforts to enforce rules against heretics — because it no longer holds the power to do so.

At the same time, many of the long-held doctrines are themselves challenged and questioned or even rejected outright. One group, the Old

Catholics, completely rejects the concept of papal infallibility even as defined in modern times.

The Old Catholics

Old Catholics as a group first appeared in 1853. Members of the See of Utrecht, the Archdiocese of Netherland Churches, refused to recognize the claim of papal infallibility. The basic tenet of the Old Catholics is that the Eucharist is the core of Christian belief. The "Church" represents reconciliation not only between God and mankind, but also among individuals within the Church and between congregations of Christians.

The origin of this idea, which the Roman Church rejects, is derived partly from the Reformation. New ideas and challenges to established Church doctrine encouraged others — including Catholics — to question the same doctrines for themselves. Central to this challenge was the question of papal authority. Just as Reformation leaders claimed the pope did not have unlimited authority, Catholic sects questioned that doctrine. The first Old Catholic Church was formally created in 1724 in the Netherlands based on the dispute about the meaning of communion. The official Roman Church doctrine states that the Eucharist (communion) is the sacrament of symbolically joining with Christ through consecrated bread and wine (and representing Christ's body and blood). The Old Catholic expansion of the Eucharist into a symbol of reconciliation between individuals contradicts the Church doctrine that it represents only a communion with Christ.

The Old Catholic Church was not simply one Church within the larger Church; it represented a separation from the Roman Church over basic doctrinal disputes. The meaning of the Eucharist and the assumption of papal authority were the main points of disagreement. However, the origins of this movement went back nearly 150 years. When the Reformation became popular in the Netherlands in 1580, Catholic Churches were taken over by the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church. Priests and nuns were evicted from monasteries and convents and properties were seized. A new law even made it illegal to receive the sacraments. Catholics were forced underground and the practice of the faith continued out of view of the Protestant majority.

Attempts to retake control of the Dutch Church, as part of the Counter-Reformation, did not succeed. Aided by the Jesuits, Catholic priests were sent to the Netherlands, but the debate continued on two levels. First was the very visible struggle between Catholic and Protestant forces for control over the Christian community. Less visible was a theological debate among Catholics as to whether the local Catholic Church remained under the pope's jurisdic-

tion. Church leaders referred to the archbishop of Utrecht as *partibus infidelium* (archbishop in the country of unbelievers). In 1691, Jesuits accused Petrus Codde, apostolic vicar of the Holland Mission from 1688 to 1702, of being a Jansenist sympathizer. He defended himself and in 1694 the charges were deemed as unfounded. However, they were made a second time, and Codde went to Rome himself in 1697. He was suspended in 1702 by Pope Clement XI (1700–21). This ultimately led to a complete schism between the Roman Church and the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht. By 1724, the schism was completed when the Old Catholic Church declared itself formally separate from the control of the pope and defined as an independent Catholic Church.

The Old Catholic Church appointed and ordained its own bishops although, predictably, the Roman Church refused to recognize their authority. All of the Old Catholic bishops were excommunicated by the Roman Church. In 1853, Pope Pius IX (1846–78) was granted promises of religious freedom by the Dutch monarchy, and so the Roman Church and Old Catholic Church coexisted. The Utrecht Church was named "Old Catholic" to distinguish it from the Churches loyal to the Roman Church and the pope. Although the Roman Church viewed the Old Catholic Church as a schism, it never labeled it heretical.

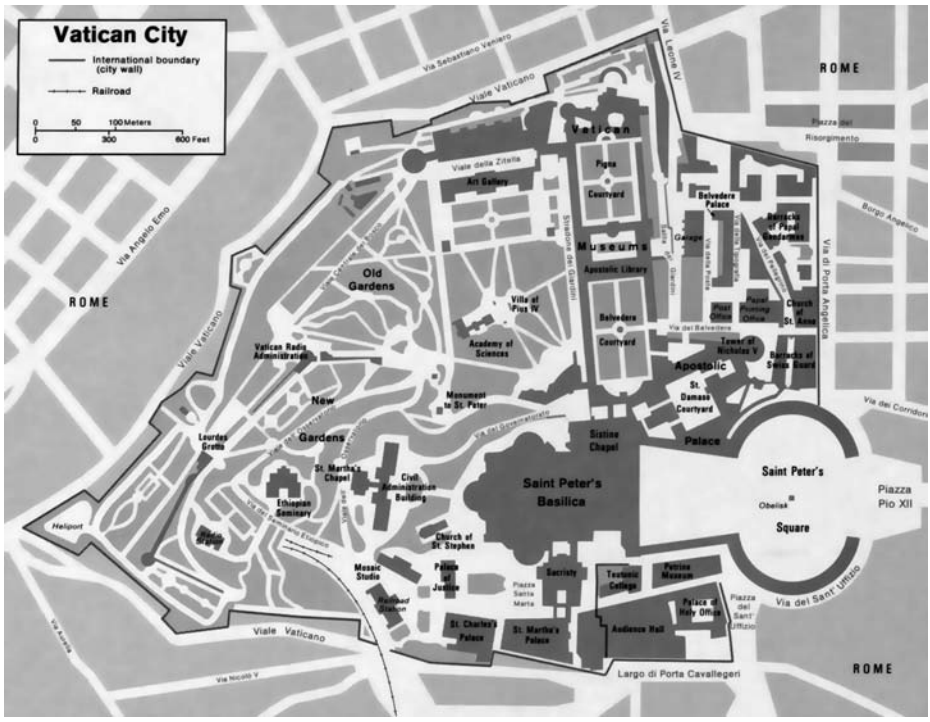
The origins of the schism were not based solely on disputes over the meaning of the Eucharist, but also on the question of papal infallibility. This issue arose during the First Vatican Council held in 1869–70.

The First Vatican Council

Vatican City (Stato della Città del Vaticano) is itself an independent state officially formed in 1929. However, the name is derived from Vatican Hill, which was so named long before Christianity. The entire Vatican covers only 110 acres and has a permanent population of slightly over 800 people. Even though Vatican City did not come into existence until the 20th century, the location led to its being named "The Vatican" for decades beforehand.

In 1869–70, an important turning point in modern Church doctrine took place when Pope Pius IX convened the First Vatican Council, which was also named the 20th Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church. It began officially after five years of planning, on December 8, 1869, and closed on October 20, 1870. Previous General Councils in Rome were held in the Lateran Basilica and are referred to as the Lateran Councils; this was the first held in the Vatican Basilica.

Among its several decisions, the council's best known and most controversial was its definition of papal infallibility. Although this topic had been



Map of Vatican City as of 1984.

debated for centuries and was nothing new, it was the Vatican's intention to elevate the claim of infallibility to a permanent and universally accepted power:

> The first idea of convening an Ecumenical Council in Rome to elevate the temporal power into a dogma, originated in the third centenary of the Council of Trent, which took place in that city in December, 1863...[1]

This was the primary motivation for convening the First Vatican Council. As secondary issues, the council also addressed the rising influence of new movements such as rationalism and a politically liberal movement — both challenged the Church's continuing claim to temporal and supreme authority on all spiritual matters.

The First Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of Christ (*Pastor Aeternus*) that came out of the council was a reply to a long-standing resistance within the Christian community to elevating infallibility to the level of official dogma. About one-fifth of all bishops at the time feared that the decision would alienate Catholics as well as create even more problems in attempting to reconcile or at least compromise on some issues with non–Catholic sects.

The Dogmatic Constitution was published on April 24, 1870, and adopted unanimously by the bishops in attendance. On the issue of papal infallibility, the mandate was approved by a vote of 451 to 88, with 62 favoring the ruling but only with amendments. The final statement on the issue reads that the pope is entitled to "full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church"[2] and states conclusively:

> We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable. So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema.[3]

This defined the concept as dogmatic, and the intention was to settle the dispute once and for all. Once a dogma was declared, in the view of the Church, questioning it would be wrong or, as the council stated, guilty of heresy. To be declared "anathema" (detested) automatically included excommunication. This was the last word, or at least so the Church elders hoped.

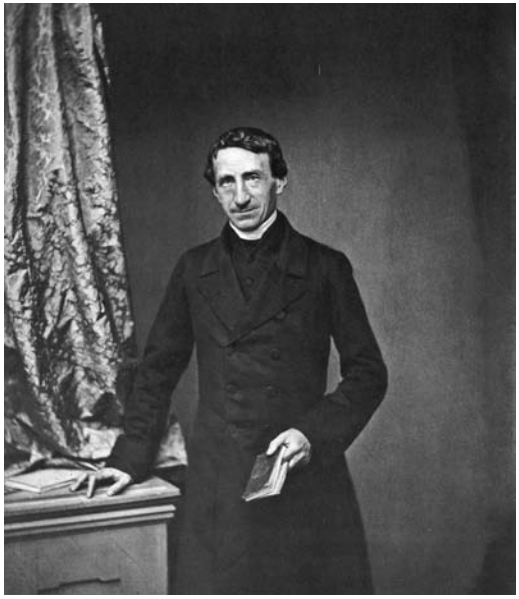
In response to the council's declaration concerning papal infallibility, many Catholic groups rejected the conclusion and formed their own splinter groups. These were supported by the Old Catholic archbishop of Utrecht, who offered to ordain priests and bishops for the breakaway sects. This led to formation of a new coalition Church called the Utrecht Union of Churches. In 1871, a Munich convention of Churches was held and in attendance were many of the breakaway groups as well as representatives from the Church of England.

The most notable attendee of this conference was Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890), historian and ex-priest. Döllinger was excommunicated for his support of the Old Catholic movement. The archbishop of Munich demanded that Döllinger submit to the authority of the pope and accept the new dogma of infallibility. Instead, Döllinger wrote a letter to the archbishop dated March 28, 1871, refusing to accept the new doctrine and declaring it contrary to scripture and Church traditions. This defiance made Döllinger a heretic under the wording of the new dogma itself. The bishop issued an order of excommunication in response.

Döllinger's criticism of the Church went back at least a decade earlier. In 1861, he published *The Church and the Churches*, a book declaring that the

Roman Church was not dependent on the temporal rule of the pope. On December 8, 1864, Pius IX issued the bull *Syllabus Errorum*, declaring war on liberalism and scientism. In response to the unyielding policies of the Church, Döllinger published two additional books critical of the papacy, *Past and Present of Catholic Theology* (1863) and *Universities Past and Present* (1867). He also participated in publication in 1869 of *Letter of Janus,* co-authored with Johann Friedrich and J. N. Huber, in which the pope's *Syllabus* was called an example of papal despotism and declared contrary to modern thinking. These publications and criticisms preceded the First Vatican Council, but probably influenced the council's strongly worded declaration of papal infallibility as dogma.

Rather than silencing criticism, the excommunication of Döllinger led to an acceleration in anti–Church protests, notably among the universities throughout Europe. Bishop Loos of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands joined with two other bishops to declare a new "non-infallibilist" movement, offering to ordain Döllinger as the new movement's first bishop. However, Döllinger declined the invitation, refusing to lead a widespread schism within the Roman Church. He did, however, continue to address conferences of the Old Catholic Church for many years, as well as voice support for the Church of England, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Churches, in the interest of working toward reunion among the various Christian sects.



Ignaz von Döllinger. Photograph by Franz Hanfstaengl (1804–77) ca. 1860.

The Old Catholic Church, at a conference in Munich in 1873, moved forward after Döllinger turned down the position as its first bishop, and ordained Joseph Hubert Reinkens (1821–96) to that position. Reinkens was a zealous leader and he helped organize the Old Catholic movement into a highly organized Church. Among his published works, the most important was *Cyprian and the Unity of the Church*.

Pope Pius IX placed Reinkens under interdiction. This is similar to excommunication in the sense that it forbids a

member of the clergy from administering the sacraments. As far as the Roman Church was concerned, Reinkens was still a priest and the Church did not recognize him as bishop of the Old Catholic sect. So although Reinkins kept his status as a member of the clergy, he was officially forbidden to administer and to receive the sacraments. In Germany, many priests and bishops further retaliated against the Old Catholics and their followers by refusing to administer sacraments to them and, in some instances, excommunicating them.

The Culture War in Germany

In Germany, the conflict between the Roman Church and Old Catholics became an issue of law when Old Catholics complained to secular authorities about the treatment they received at the hands of Church officials. Many German officials recognized Old Catholics as a branch of traditional Catholicism, as a step toward outlawing mistreatment of the sect's members. German policies regarding this conflict, broadly called *Kulturkampf* (culture war), included not only acknowledgement of the conflict but the passage of a series of laws as well.

Under the reign of Otto von Bismarck (lived 1815–98, prime minister of Prussia 1862–90) new laws increased secular powers while reducing the influence of the Roman Church in Prussia. Priests who resisted were arrested or taken out of their positions by authorities. Approximately half of all bishops in Prussia were imprisoned or exiled after the laws went into effect starting in 1871. One-third of all monasteries and convents were shut down. In addition, thousands of individual Catholics were imprisoned for aiding priests.[4]

The first of these laws was the *Kanzelparagraph* (Pulpit Law) of 1871. It outlawed any and all criticism of the state on the part of clergy and, under the *Strafgesetzbuch* (criminal code), imposed criminal sanctions for clergy disobeying the new law, reading in part:

> Any cleric or other minister of religion shall be punished with imprisonment or incarceration of up to two years if he, while exercising his occupation or having his occupation exercised, makes state affairs the subject of announcements or discussion either in public before a crowd, in a church, or before any number of people in some other place designated for religious gatherings in such a way that it endangers the public peace.[5]

One result of the new law was that a year later, priests and nuns were disallowed from teaching in schools and all members of the Jesuit order were exiled from Prussia. In December 1872, Prussia broke off diplomatic relations with the Roman Church and, under a new law passed in 1873, the state took over the power to supervise the education of clergy and created a new secular court

to try cases involving priests. These so-called "May Laws" led to closure of half of all seminaries in Prussia over the following five years. The Congregations Law of 1875 abolished all religious orders in the German Empire and ended state subsidies of Catholic Churches. That same year, the institution of marriage was legally made a civil ceremony and was removed from Church control. The sanctions against Catholic clergy remained in effect until 1878, when Prussia reconciled with the newly elected Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) and some rules against Catholic clergy were modified. Even so, the *Kanzelparagraph* remained on the books as law until 1953.

The root causes of this conflict between Old Catholics and the Prussian state on one side, and the Roman Church on the other, were part of the formation of the German Empire in 1871. This new state grew from the former North German Confederation, mostly Protestant states opposed to the southern Catholic regions. In addition to disagreeing with the Church sanctions against Catholics, the secular Protestant German government disagreed strongly with the concept of papal infallibility; the First Vatican Council and its resulting formalization of infallibility as a matter of doctrine increased the distrust in the German Empire between Protestants and Catholics.

The distrust between German Protestants and the Roman Church had been growing since the 1850s. The anti–Jesuit sentiment was especially strong, based on recognition of the Church's use of Jesuits to counter the Reformation by converting Protestants back to the Catholic faith. The distrust and at times hatred aimed at Jesuits expanded to a dislike of monastic life and even to clergy as a group. Monasteries and convents had been expanding rapidly over two decades before the new laws curtailed the trend. A rapid expansion of monasteries and convents was viewed by Protestants as a threat to freedom and criticized as a sign of medievalism and a backward trend among Catholics. For example, in the Diocese of Cologne alone, the numbers of monks and nuns increased tenfold between 1850 and 1872, and other regions experienced similar growth.[6]

In a trend reminiscent of heretical persecutions of the past, Protestant secular authorities now had the legal right to arrest members of the clergy, perform house searches to find evidence of disloyalty, and even march suspected priests through the streets before trial or exile. The Catholic press was not allowed to publish, and the state supported intimidation of Catholics. The anti–Catholic sentiment by itself might not have had the power to suppress the Roman Church's influence even in the largely Protestant northern German regions. However, with state power behind it, the Protestant sentiment was able to remove Catholic influence, or at least to control it.

In this environment, the Old Catholic Church thrived. Within the German Empire, the sect continued to operate separately from the Roman

Church, even after the reign of Bismarck. In the Declaration of Utrecht of 1889 the Old Catholics accepted Church doctrine issued prior to the year 1054 but rejected communion with the pope and other Roman Catholic doctrines. Most objectionable in the view of the Roman Church, in addition to the Old Catholic challenge to papal infallibility, were the doctrines allowing divorced members to remarry, supporting same-sex marriage, and leaving the question of birth control up to the individuals involved. These doctrines were directly and strongly disputed by the Roman Church.

Today, the Old Catholic movement is a hybrid sect that continues the traditional acceptance of selected Catholic doctrine, but also holds strong ties with the Church of England and other Christian faiths. It is also partially Anglican in nature. The Old Catholics have adopted the Anglican Communication, an association of international Anglican Churches, as part of the central authority, the Church of England.

The Modernism Movement

Modernism encompasses many changes in philosophy, science, art, literature, politics, and of course, religion. Within the culture of Christianity, Modernism may be viewed as an attempt to rewrite long-standing history and to question tradition, or to more keenly define the actual meaning of Christ's message and its significance in modern times.

Beginning in the 19th century, many Modernists influenced thinking on all of these levels. The Roman Church position, however, was that traditional, conservative interpretations of scriptures remain unchanged. More to the point, any questioning of these long-standing doctrinal articles of faith and belief were treated as heresy. This position remains a core position of the Church into modern times.

Modernists draw comparisons and contrasts between two historical versions of the basic Christian message. These are between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. The Modernist view is that these two entities are quite different from one another, implying that Church doctrine has become increasingly inaccurate or has been inaccurately interpreted over 2,000 years. One Modernist view is that Jesus did not intend to found a temporal institution in the form of "the Church" but instead meant to create a spiritually-based following. In this view, the creation of dogma on the part of humans (including the pope) is flawed because it interprets the message of Jesus in human, but flawed terms. These interpretations are affected and are ever-changing based on the experiences individual Christians have had.

To the Modernist, the meaning of Christianity is continually changing

to reflect new and evolving social points of view. To the Church, the doctrinal "rules" never change and only their interpretation by flawed thinking (heresy) changes over time. Because dogma is the interpretation of Jesus' message — according to the Christian Modernist — the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith are continually moving farther and farther apart.

The Modernist view of Christianity was influenced by advances in physics and other sciences, and created an "objective" or "rational" explanation of Christianity. This explanation contradicted the Church's desire to hold on to the mysticism of the Christian belief, including not only the scriptural message (as interpreted by Church leaders) but also the miracles of the saints and the power of faith and prayer. The Modernist view rejects much of this and has been broadly labeled as a form of realism or, in philosophy, as rationalist thought. Modernists in science, affected significantly by Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, directly contradict the Christian view of creation. The debate continues today. Even politically, Modernism challenged long-held social and cultural beliefs. The social and political ideas of Karl Marx revolutionized social thinking. However, the important point to make about both Darwin and Marx is that their theories became focal points for disputes between Christian and Modernist views.

Darwin's theory challenged the very basic belief among Christians that the world was created suddenly and quickly (in six days); modern science has been able to date organic fossils back millions and even billions of years. Marx's political system was clearly ungodly and formed a basis for anti-religious thought on a social and political level. Whether either man intended to directly challenge the Church is not what matters. The movement itself became a direct challenge to Church authority. Modernists in the religious sense challenged the Church's authority because of the distinctions between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith; this was the basis for the movement within the Christian world.

Within the Modernist movement, "Creationism" began to be called the "Creation myth" and the debate turned to a new form of Modernism itself: *Biblical* Modernism. This level of discussion evolved out of many political and social changes growing from the Restoration and the related realignment of power away from the Church and toward secular authorities, from states down to local levels. This evolution of philosophy would not have been possible only a few hundred years earlier. Even raising questions like those posed by Modernists was a capital offense within the Inquisition-managed Church. More than anything, else, Modernism demonstrated that the Church domination over Christian thought, like its domination over the politics of the past, was over.

Alfred Loisy, Intellectual Father of Modernism

Alfred Firmin Loisy (1857–1940) was a key individual in promoting the religion-based aspects of Modernism. He was a priest, theologian and professor from France who developed and promoted the concept of *Biblical* Modernism.

This concept includes several aspects, including rationalism. Under this system of belief, the Bible is interpreted by focusing on the text itself, but ignoring what Church doctors and fathers have determined it to mean. Rationalism grew from Luther's own beliefs concerning scripture; he wrote in *sola scripture* that the Bible itself was the highest authority on matters of doctrine; Loisy subscribed to this idea.

A second feature of Biblical Modernism is more philosophical than spiritual. Modernist thought has been influenced by philosophers such as Kant, and spiritual Modernism has tried to reconcile philosophical systems with essential Catholic doctrine, but not always successfully, especially in the view of the Church.

A final ideal within Biblical Modernism is an attempt to recognize the Church's doctrine with modern social and cultural trends that began in the Age of Enlightenment. This secularism is a belief that political and cultural desires and the common good should be kept separate from religious varieties of what represents "good." This created a major rift between Modernism and the Roman Church. Theologians within the Church have argued that social and religious structures cannot be separated but are part of the broader Christian plan. Modernists believe that the Humanist movement as well as the scientific revolution, both of which dominated intellectual philosophy over many decades, demanded that society move forward in social ideas even when the Church would not agree.

Loisy and other theologians subscribing to Modernism further believed that Church dogma is dynamic and changes as society advances in terms of politics, individual rights, and science. The Church had always defined such challenges as heretical; now, however, the Modernist argument came forward that dogma must change with the times, meaning even the definition of heresy has to change as well. The Church did not agree. In the past, a heretic was anyone who disagreed with the Church on matters of dogma. However, if Modernists were right about evolving dogma, it meant that older traditions of the Church, along with heresies growing out of them, could be reconciled to be non-heretical today.

Once Loisy came to the attention of the Church, he was labeled a heretic. In 1893, Pope Leo XIII published an encyclical that acknowledged biblical criticism as legitimate, but qualified this by claiming that it was allowed only when accompanied with the spirit of faith. The pope outlined the errors of rationalism and of Modernism itself, stating that

> Now, we have to meet the Rationalists, true children and inheritors of the older heretics, who, trusting in their turn to their own way of thinking, have rejected even the scraps and remnants of Christian belief which had been handed down to them. They deny that there is any such thing as revelation or inspiration, or Holy Scripture at all; they see, instead, only the forgeries and the falsehoods of men; they set down the Scripture narratives as stupid fables and lying stories: the prophecies and the oracles of God are to them either predictions made up after the event or forecasts formed by the light of nature; the miracles and the wonders of God's power are not what they are said to be, but the startling effects of natural law, or else mere tricks and myths; and the Apostolic Gospels and writings are not the work of the Apostles at all. These detestable errors, whereby they think they destroy the truth of the divine Books, are obtruded on the world as the peremptory pronouncements of a certain newly-invented "free science;" a science, however, which is so far from final that they are perpetually modifying and supplementing it. And there are some of them who, notwithstanding their impious opinions and utterances about God, and Christ, the Gospels and the rest of Holy Scripture, would faro be considered both theologians and Christians and men of the Gospel, and who attempt to disguise by such honorable names their rashness and their pride. To them we must add not a few professors of other sciences who approve their views and give them assistance, and are urged to attack the Bible by a similar intolerance of revelation. And it is deplorable to see these attacks growing every day more numerous and more severe. It is sometimes men of learning and judgment who are assailed; but these have little difficulty in defending themselves from evil consequences. The efforts and the arts of the enemy are chiefly directed against the more ignorant masses of the people. They diffuse their deadly poison by means of books, pamphlets, and newspapers; they spread it by addresses and by conversation; they are found everywhere; and they are in possession of numerous schools, taken by violence from the Church, in which, by ridicule and scurrilous jesting, they pervert the credulous and unformed minds of the young to the contempt of Holy Scripture.[7]

In the same year, Loisy was fired as professor at the Institut Catholique de Paris. This did not stop him, and his best known criticism of the Roman Church was in his statement that "Jesus came preaching the Kingdom, and what arrived was the Church."[8]

By 1907, Loisy was still writing and speaking about Modernism and, as a priest, he became a target. Pope Pius X (1903–14) issued a syllabus in 1907 calling Modernism a clear example of heresy. The syllabus began:

> With truly lamentable results, our age, casting aside all restraint in its search for the ultimate causes of things, frequently pursues novelties so ardently that it rejects the legacy of the human race. Thus it falls into very serious errors, which are even more serious when they concern sacred authority, the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, and the principal mysteries

> of Faith. The fact that many Catholic writers also go beyond the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church herself is extremely regrettable. In the name of higher knowledge and historical research (they say), they are looking for that progress of dogmas which is, in reality, nothing but the corruption of dogmas.
>
> These errors are being daily spread among the faithful. Lest they captivate the faithful's minds and corrupt the purity of their faith, His Holiness, Pius X, by Divine Providence, Pope, has decided that the chief errors should be noted and condemned by the Office of this Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition.[9]

Later the same year, Pius issued an encyclical condemning Modernism as the "synthesis of all heresies." He wrote:

> ... can anybody who takes a survey of the whole system [of Modernism] be surprised that We should define it as the synthesis of all heresies? Were one to attempt the task of collecting together all the errors that have been broached against the faith and to concentrate the sap and substance of them all into one, he could not better succeed than the Modernists have done. Nay, they have done more than this, for, as we have already intimated, their system means the destruction not of the Catholic religion alone but of all religion. With good reason do the rationalists applaud them, for the most sincere and the frankest among the rationalists warmly welcome the modernists as their most valuable allies....
>
> It is pride which fills Modernists with that confidence in themselves and leads them to hold themselves up as the rule for all, pride which puffs them up with that vainglory which allows them to regard themselves as the sole possessors of knowledge, and makes them say, inflated with presumption, *We are not as the rest of men*, and which, to make them really not as other men, leads them to embrace all kinds of the most absurd novelties; it is pride which rouses in them the spirit of disobedience and causes them to demand a compromise between authority and liberty; it is pride that makes of them the reformers of others, while they forget to reform themselves, and which begets their absolute want of respect for authority, not excepting the supreme authority. No, truly, there is no road which leads so directly and so quickly to Modernism as pride.[10]

The Church's statement against Modernism was similar to its past statements condemning heresy. Loisy, not only in subscribing to Modernism in general, but also for criticizing Church beliefs concerning creation itself (as Modernists call it, the "creation myth"), clearly was defined as a heretic in the view of the Church. The encyclical of 1907 included a ruling calling for censorship of books promoting Modernist ideas, with a call for "Episcopal Vigilance over Publications" which read:

> It is also the duty of the bishops to prevent writings infected with Modernism or favorable to it from being read when they have been published,

> and to hinder their publication when they have not. No book or paper or periodical of this kind must ever be permitted to seminarists or university students. The injury to them would be equal to that caused by immoral reading — nay, it would be greater for such writings poison Christian life at its very fount. The same decision is to be taken concerning the writings of some Catholics, who, though not badly disposed themselves but ill-instructed in theological studies and imbued with modern philosophy, strive to make this harmonize with the faith, and, as they say, to turn it to the account of the faith. The name and reputation of these authors cause them to be read without suspicion, and they are, therefore, all the more dangerous in preparing the way for Modernism.[11]

The Church took steps to ensure compliance with its censorship of Modernist writings. It assigned Monsignor Umberto Benigni (1862–1934) the task of organizing an unofficial body of censors. This group, called the *Sodalitium Pianum* (Fellowship of Pius X, called *La Sapinière* in France), had over 50 members and undertook often clandestine investigations, including opening and copying private letters, and checking the records of privately owned bookstores to find out who was buying Modernist texts.

The struggle against Modernism was not limited to monitoring priests and their statements or issuing opinions. In 1907, the pope excommunicated Loisy. And in 1910, the Church published an Oath against Modernism and required that all bishops and priests take the oath. This requirement remained in effect until July 1967, when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith finally rescinded it. Even so, today most priests in traditional orders are required to swear the oath. The oath demonstrates how seriously the Church took the threat posed by Loisy and others in the Modernist system. The oath read in part:

> I profess that God, the origin and end of all things, can be known with certainty by the natural light of reason from the created world ... sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers in exactly the same meaning and always in the same purport ... reject that method of judging and interpreting Sacred Scripture which, departing from the tradition of the Church, the analogy of faith, and the norms of the Apostolic See ... declare that I am completely opposed to the error of the modernists who hold that there is nothing divine in sacred tradition.... The purpose of this is, then, not that dogma may be tailored according to what seems better and more suited to the culture of each age; rather, that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different, may never be understood in any other way...[12]

Even in light of the Church condemnation of his beliefs, Loisy continued for the rest of his life to attempt to reconcile his Modernist views with the Church,

but without success. Even so, he considered himself a loyal Catholic and won an appointment as a professor of history of religions at the Collège de France, where he remained until 1931.

Other Leading Modernists

A Jesuit priest named George Tyrrell (1861–1909) was another theologian and scholar identified with the Modernist movement. He argued that contrary to Church teachings, the pope should not serve as an unquestioned autocrat, but instead as a spokesman of the Holy Spirit. Among his controversial statements was a criticism of the human view of scripture: "looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well."[13]

Tyrrell was expelled from the Jesuits in 1906 for his support of Modernist views and for adopting their challenge of papal authority. Tyrrell expressed the belief that Jesus had never meant to be a teacher of dogma, but had only wanted to express divine ideas rationally. For his criticism of the papacy and for claiming the right of every generation to adjust faith based on contemporary knowledge, Tyrrell was excommunicated by Pope Pius X.

In the United States, Modernism also attracted a large following. William Laurence Sullivan (1872–1935) was a Unitarian minister, author and critic. He wrote *Letters to His Holiness: Pope Pius X* in 1910, which holds the distinction of being the last work by an author in the United States to be placed on the List of Prohibited Books. The book was critical of a broad range of policies and historical positions of the Church and authorship of the third edition was listed as "By A Modernist."[14]

Sullivan had been ordained as a Pauline priest in 1899 but 10 years later, after studying Modernism, he resigned to join the Unitarian Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Ernesto Buonaiuti (1881–1946) was a philosopher of religion and historian. When 24, he founded the magazine *Rivista storico-critica delle scienze teologiche* (Historical-critical Review of the Theological Sciences) to publish on his views of religion and culture in Italy and edited a second magaine, *Ricerche religiose* (Religious Research). Both magazines were placed on the List of Forbidden Books and, on January 25, 1925, Buonaiuti was excommunicated due to his support of Modernism. Notable in his writings leading to his excommunication were two publications in 1908, *Il programma dei modernisti* (The Modernists' Program) and *Lettere di un prete modernista* (Letters from a Modernist Priest). Both of these were considered radically anti–Church. Buonaiuti recounted his conflict with the Church in his autobiography, *Il*

pellegrino di Roma (The Pilgrim from Rome), published in 1945. In this book, Buonaiuti described himself as a "loyal son" even after being excommunicated. A prolific author, Buonaiuti wrote thousands of articles and dozens of books, including the three-volume *Storia del Cristianesimo* (The History of Christianity), published between 1942 and 1943. In the final volume, he described Christianity as a social program "which imposed a progressive conceptual enrichment and an increasingly rigid disciplinary organization. To live and bear fruit in the world, Christianity was condemned to lose its nature and degenerate."[15]

Louis Duchesne (1843–1922) was a priest, teacher and religious historian ordained in 1867. He had great influence on the philosophy of Alfred Loisy when the two met in Paris. Among his writings, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église* (Early History of the Christian Church), written 1906–11, was criticized by the Church as Modernist and was placed on the List of Prohibited Books in 1912.

Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925) was a Catholic layman, author, and Modernist who tried in vain to find middle ground between Modernism and the Church. He insisted, however, in following the principles of free inquiry even of matters of faith. He developed a concept in theological philosophy called the *Three Elements*. These are the human soul, movements of Western civilization, and religion. He expanded these elements by describing them as historical/institutional, scientific/intellectual, and mystical/experimental. He used this model to describe the conflict and friction between the three groups as a means for defining the complexity of existence itself.

The numerous clerical and lay philosophers and leaders of the Modernist movement were all considered heretics by the Church. However, the movement did not stop and has become an important part of the debate in modern times. Like the Old Catholics, Modernists did not simply go away, but became a major cause for criticism of the traditional Church and its insistence on supreme authority based in infallibility. The conflict between tradition and modern thinking or enlightenment has not ended. Today, even among Catholics, the debate between traditionalist and Modernist views continues.

15

The Modern View: Politics of the Roman Church

> Joseph Ratzinger has stood still because as a Bavarian Catholic in the Hellenistic tradition, interpreted in Roman terms, he wanted to stand still. To this degree he represented and represents a different basic model of theology and church, as different from mine as in astronomy Ptolemy's geocentric picture of the world is different from Copernicus' heliocentric picture.
>
> —Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth: Memoirs Volume II*

After centuries of policies designed to punish heretics, in the 20th century, the Church evolved into a legalistic institution. Its programs are designed to keep the clergy in line and to publish mandates about "proper" behavior among good Catholics. Issues like birth control have become major points of debate. It was easy in centuries past to invent heretics, torture them into confession and burn them at the stake. However, in modern times, popes are more focused on instructing their flocks on birth control than on ensuring compliance with doctrine.

With the 19th century characterized with the disputes from Old Catholic and Modernist movements, the Church struggled as it always had with precisely how to deal with dissent. It continued to rely on the threat of excommunication long after dissenters stopped taking that threat seriously. In the 20th century, one of the most significant events was a three-year meeting among cardinals and bishops, the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (Vatican II), designed to articulate policies concerning dogma and to contend with ongoing Modernist challenges.

The Second Vatican Council

The Second Ecumenical Council was opened on October 11, 1962, during the tenure of Pope John XXIII (1958–63). Sessions continued for three years

and did not end until November 21, 1965, when Pope Paul VI (1963–78) held the papacy.

The need for this council was urgent in the eyes of the Church. The Modernist movement had not dissipated and vocal critics and dissenters from within the Church had made the task of discouraging heresy more difficult than ever. In the modern era, theologians were more willing than in the past to vocally criticize Church policies, knowing that the worst that could happen was an edict of excommunication. The Christian world was better educated than ever before in its history, and political, cultural, and technological changes led to many of the faithful calling for revisions to outdated Catholic traditions — including relaxing some of the more rigid dogma relating to issues like birth control. Before contraception even existed, there was no question. All unions between couples potentially led to creation of a new life. However, contraception made it possible to have sex without such a high risk of pregnancy. The Church had in the past held to the policy that using contraception was not allowed. Many hoped that with the new council, the Church elders would revisit this policy and moderate it.

Pope John XXIII formally announced the new council with the constitution *Humanæ Salutis* (For the Salvation of Men) on December 25, 1961, nearly a full year before sessions began. The pope did not consult with the Curia beforehand, so the announcement came as a surprise to everyone. Many Catholics, especially those who had been calling for a relaxation of some of the stricter Church doctrines, were hopeful that the new council would lead to many reforms. This hope was based in part on statements made by John XXIII, including his words before the sessions began, that the time had come for the Church to open the windows and let in some fresh air.[1]

Organizing a major council required preparation from many inside commissions, coordination, and planning of an agenda. Among preparations, members of the Curia proposed 987 specialized sessions. In addition to Church leaders — bishops, cardinals, and secular theologians — many *periti* (experts) were asked to attend as well. Later sessions included more than 2,000 attendees, compared to Vatican I, in which only 737 people took part.[2]

Besides the expected Catholic leaders and experts, 17 different Orthodox Church and Protestant denominations also sent observers. More than 30 representatives from outside of the Church also attended the earlier sessions and by the fourth period, over 100 were present. This was the first truly international council; in Vatican I, the vast majority of attendees were from Europe only. In total, besides Church representatives, attendees from 86 governments and international bodies were there.

The first session opened on October 11, 1962. Pope John began with a reading of the opening declaration, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (the Mother Church

Rejoices). He warned against "prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster" for the Church. He emphasized that the pastoral nature of the Church was more important than its doctrine, and that the task of the clergy was to teach Christ's message even in the modern world. He asked attendees "to use the medicine of mercy rather than the weapons of severity" in formulating their decisions and producing documents as part of the council's work.[3]

Among the issues this first session introduced were matters of the liturgy and the nature of revelation. The session ended on December 8 with plans to reconvene by the following summer. However, Pope John passed away on June 3, 1963, which delayed the schedule. Pope Paul VI announced as one of his first acts that the council would reconvene that fall.

The second session of the Council began on September 29, 1963. Pope Paul's opening statement identified four goals for the session: to clearly define the nature of the Church and the role of bishops; to "renew" the Church; to restore Christian unity; and to begin a dialogue with political and spiritual centers of the contemporary world. Approved by large margins were two decrees. The first of these was *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), approved by a vote of 2,147 to 4. Its primary aim was to accomplish greater lay participation on the liturgy. Among the new policies were provisions allowing non–Latin mass. Past popes had only gone to the extent of instructing that attendees memorize Latin responses during mass. Guidelines were included governing revisions of the Latin liturgy into native languages.

The second decree was *Inter Mirifica* ("Among the Wonderful," or the Decree on the Media of Social Communications). This was approved by a vote of 1,960 to 164. This decree documented guidelines for pastoral behavior, including insistence that priests were to guide members of the congregation to help spread the truth of Christianity. However, recognizing that communications had advanced in the modern age, the decree cautioned:

> It is however, especially necessary that all parties concerned should adopt for themselves a proper moral outlook on the use of these media, especially with respect to certain questions that have been vigorously aired in our day.... This means that in both the search for news and in reporting it, there must be a full respect for the laws of morality and for the legitimate rights and dignity of the individual.[4]

Also during this second session, the council addressed criticism that had been made of the Church by Josef Frings (1887–1978), a German cardinal and archbishop of Cologne (1942–69). As one of the *peritus* invited to participate in the council, Frings criticized the Holy Office (the renamed office of the Inquisition, or Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF]) as being overly conservative and authoritarian. Due to Frings' criticisms, one action that came out of Vatican II was the complete reorganization of the CDF.

The third session of Vatican II began on September 14, 1964. Several new proposals were on the agenda. Among these was *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Restoration of Unity), on the topic of Ecuminism, or the unity of the entire Christian world in a single faith. The word itself is derived from the Greek *oiloumene*, meaning "the entire inhabited world." Before Vatican II had even convened, John XXIII had encouraged this proposal as one of the primary purposes to the council. He issued an encyclical, *Ad Petri cathedram*, in 1959. However, just as past popes had insisted on unity within the Roman Church, the pope's words invited a return to Catholicism but provided no indication of any willingness to compromise on doctrine. He wrote in part:

> All the evils which poison men and nations and trouble so many hearts have a single cause and a single source: ignorance of the truth — and at times even more than ignorance, a contempt for truth and a reckless rejection of it. Thus arise all manner of errors, which enter the recesses of men's hearts and the bloodstream of human society as would a plague. These errors turn everything upside down: they menace individuals and society itself....
>
> And yet, God gave each of us an intellect capable of attaining natural truth. If we adhere to this truth, we adhere to God Himself, the author of truth, the lawgiver and ruler of our lives. But if we reject this truth, whether out of foolishness, neglect, or malice, we turn our backs on the highest good itself and on the very norm for right living....
>
> [T]he Catholic Church is set apart and distinguished by these three characteristics: unity of doctrine, unity of organization, unity of worship. This unity is so conspicuous that by it all men can find and recognize the Catholic Church....
>
> It is the will of God, the Church's founder, that all the sheep should eventually gather into this one fold, under the guidance of one shepherd. All God's children are summoned to their father's only home, and its cornerstone is Peter. All men should work together like brothers to become part of this single kingdom of God; for the citizens of that kingdom are united in peace and harmony on earth that they might enjoy eternal happiness some day in heaven....
>
> May We, in fond anticipation, address you as sons and brethren? May We hope with a father's love for your return?[5]

The decree on Ecumenism passed by a vote of 2,137 to 11. The dictate applied to Eastern Orthodox Christians and Protestants equally. Before Vatican II, the Church had always called non–Catholic Christians heretics without any hope of salvation. After Vatican II, "that habit of unthinkingly hurling accusations of heresy at Protestants pretty much died out." Today, most references are made not to heretics, but to "other Christians."[6]

However, the tone of thought concerning non–Catholic Christians had been set by John XXIII's referring to the Roman Church as the one and only

Church in God's plan; the decree on Ecumenism softened the language and led to a removal of references to "heretics," replacing it with the concept of "separated brethren."

A second decree approved during the third session was *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, a document concerning the Eastern Catholic Churches. It passed 2,110 to 39 on November 21, 1964. It recognized the right of Eastern Churches to maintain their distinct and traditional liturgical practices, no longer demanding that mass always be conducted in Latin. The decree also acknowledged the right of the Eastern Church's patriarch to nominate its own bishops and to keep to its separate methods for practicing the sacraments. This was a major advancement for the Church, which previously had held that all procedural determination could be made only by the Roman Church. It ushered in a new era in which disagreement involving rites of the mass did not make a different Christian Church automatically heretical.

A third decree was *Lumen Gentium* ("Light of Nations," or the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church). This was among the most significant outcomes of Vatican II. It was approved 2,151 to 5 and went into effect on November 21, 1964. Among its more controversial provisions was a redefinition of papal infallibility and supreme power, strengthening the definition offered almost exactly a century earlier during Vatican I. In spite of the hope that the Church would soften its position on this issue, the decree specified that

> The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. The order of bishops, which succeeds to the college of apostles and gives this apostolic body continued existence, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head. This power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff....
>
> And this infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed His Church to be endowed in defining doctrine of faith and morals, extends as far as the deposit of Revelation extends, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded. And this is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith, by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals. And therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, since they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to him in blessed Peter, and therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment.[7]

Many Catholics who had hoped that Vatican I would liberalize some Church dogma were disappointed by the end of the third session. The topic of contraception was so controversial that it was put off for future discussion. Also put off were proposed changes to rules governing priests and nuns.

The Fourth Session of the Council, Autumn 1965

Of the proposals (called schemata) up for review, 11 major ones remained at the start of the fourth session. Delay in their consideration was due to the slow-moving work of commissions set up to draft proposed positions for debate and vote; some were so controversial that the assembled bishops, experts and theologians were not able to deal with the complexities of those issues until the fourth session convened on September 14, 1965.

The first act of the fourth session was the establishment of a Synod of Bishops. This was a permanent body intended to ensure cooperation among bishops worldwide and support the pope. The body was announced in a document called *Christus Dominus* ("Christ the Lord," or the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops). This decree passed by a vote of 2,319 to 2 and was published on October 28. Announced as an advisory body, the synod and its members could express their opinions or ideas but the pope, serving as the synod's head, had complete final authority to issue decrees in the synod's name.

The first major decree concerned "religious freedom," as defined by the Church. Considering the history of Church policies toward heretics (including anyone who simply voiced a dissenting opinion), this decree, entitled *Dignitatis Humanæ* (Human Dignity), was controversial because it declared the individual right to religious freedom without coercion. The decree passed 1,997 to 224, a high number of negative votes compared to most decrees of the council.

Among provisions of the decree was one defining individual freedom of religion. However, it defines freedom as freedom from outside influence, from political pressure and other "human power," for example, but not freedom to dissent from Roman Church positions. While declaring religious freedom, the Church continued to define papal infallibility as *beyond* human power. The decree has to be read with that position in mind:

> This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.[8]

The decree also assumes that mankind, once free to choose religious beliefs, *must* be true to the obvious truth and, in fact, is bound by a moral obligation. This section can be read to mean that individuals may choose because people have free will, but making the right choice is mandatory. History, even recent history, demonstrates that the "wrong choice" can be made freely, but may also result in the person being called a heretic. The decree explained that

> It is in accordance with their dignity as persons — that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility — that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.[9]

The decree drew an obvious conclusion concerning freedom of religion: the search for truth must be undertaken freely, but the individual has to adhere to the singular truth (as defined by the Roman Church) once it has been discovered:

> Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.
>
> Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.[10]

The remainder of the fourth session focused on three important decrees. First among these was *Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and Hope," officially the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). Among its provisions, one of the most controversial was article 17, dealing with free will. One attendee, Father Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) criticized parts of the document as "downright Pelagian," referring to the 5th century heresy of Pelagianism, the belief that free will was adequate to lead a life free of sin. Article 17 read that

> Only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness. Our contemporaries make much of this freedom and pursue it eagerly; and rightly to be

> sure. Often however they foster it perversely as a license for doing whatever pleases them, even if it is evil. For its part, authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man remain "under the control of his own decisions," so that he can seek his Creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him. Hence man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure. Man achieves such dignity when, emancipating himself from all captivity to passion, he pursues his goal in a spontaneous choice of what is good, and procures for himself through effective and skilful action, apt helps to that end. Since man's freedom has been damaged by sin, only by the aid of God's grace can he bring such a relationship with God into full flower. Before the judgment seat of God each man must render an account of his own life, whether he has done good or evil.[11]

The second of three important decrees was *Ad Gentes* ("To the Nations," or the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church), passed by 2,394 to 5 and promulgated on November 18, 1965. The decree encouraged continuation of missionary work among Catholic clergy as well as coordination among Catholic organizations involved in missionary activities.

The third and probably most controversial of all the decrees was *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (The Order of Priests), which was involved with the ministry and lives of priests and nuns. It passed by a vote of 2,390 to 4 on December 7, 1965. The decree stated that members of the clergy had to be completely devoted to their mission, and must remain unmarried and celibate.

Consequences of Vatican II

The continuation of the strict rules governing the clergy disillusioned many insiders more than any other decree of Vatican II. In fact it led to an exodus of priests over coming years. Debate continued over the cause of so many priests leaving the Church or at least the priesthood itself, with some blaming the desire to secularize the priesthood rather than assigning blame directly to the rigid rules set down in *Ad Gentes*.[12]

According to the magazine *La Civilta Cattolica* (The Catholic Civilization), the number of priests that left the Church after Vatican II has to be estimated since the Vatican does not release the exact figures. Among those who left, many later married:

> There are no exact figures on the numbers of priests who, having left the ministry, are now married. On the basis of indications sent to the Vatican

> from the dioceses, from 1964 to 2004, 69,063 priests left the ministry. From 1970 to 2004, 11,213 priests have returned to the ministry. This means that there cannot be more than 57,000 married priests.[13]

In November 1961, a first draft was approved for one more document, the controversial *Nostra Ætate* ("In Our Age," or Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions), which eventually received a vote of 2,221 to 88 and was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. The document was originally entitled *Decretum de Judæis* ("Decree on the Jews").

This decree announced the belief by the Roman Church that, in spite of a long history to the contrary, Jews were not responsible for the death of Christ. However, the decree was not so much a reversal of past beliefs but a rationale. It did not disclaim responsibility on the part of Jews at the time of Christ's death; rather, it explained that *all* Jews should not be blamed for actions of the Jewish authorities 2,000 years earlier:

> True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.[14]

A final significant action that came out of Vatican II was the change in title of the Holy Office (Inquisition) to the softer-named Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). In the past, this office under different names had led the investigations and trials of accused heretics. In the 20th century, the Church no longer held the temporal power to imprison or execute those found guilty, so the CDF evolved into an internal investigations office. Its primary role within the Curia was to track the actions or statements of clergy and, when they deemed it appropriate, to take steps to silence dissent or to remove the rights of dissenting priests to administer the sacraments. Under this new approach to heresy, excommunication has become a rare step.

The CDF (officially *Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei*) was the new name given to the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, renamed in 1908 by Pope Pius X (1903–14). That name was also a change from the original Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition, originally established by Pope Paul III (1534–49) on July 21, 1542. Its stated purpose was to defend the faith and to examine errors and false doctrine — in other words, to investigate and hold trials for accused heretics. A final change took place in 1988 when the word "Sacred" was removed and the office was named the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Under its new name, according to the Apostolic Constitution, the CDF continued to hold as much authority and power as the Inquisition had held under previous names:

> the duty proper to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on the faith and morals throughout the Catholic world: for this reason everything which in any way touches such matter falls within its competence.[15]

Among the CDF's powers is the power to investigate *delicta graviora* (serious crimes) against the Church. These include crimes against the Eucharist or the sacrament of penance and violations by clergy of the Sixth Commandment ("Thou shalt not commit adultery")—specifically, the CDF was to look into accusations against members of the clergy committing adultery against anyone under the age of 18. This encompasses one of the most significant issues in the late 20th and early 21st centuries for the Church, accusations of pedophilia among priests.

The CDF is equally interested in silencing members of the clergy who write or speak in opposition to settled doctrine of the Church. The CDF has many functions today, and is no longer involved directly only in matters of doctrinal heresy. It has been broken into four distinct sections: doctrinal, disciplinary, matrimonial and clerical. This does not mean that heretical investigations and excommunication do not occur; however, these are extreme measures and occur less frequently.

The Debate Over Birth Control

The centuries-old definition of heresy has evolved to modern times, when the role of the Church has been revised to set dogmatic standards for behavior among Catholics. A "heretical" act or belief has a broader meaning today than ever before, including defying stated doctrine of the Church even in matters such as birth control.

In 1968, Pope Paul VI attempted to define Church policies regarding the use of birth control in the encyclical *Humanæ Vitæ* ("Of Human Life"), subtitled "On the Regulation of Birth." The level of negative reaction to this published opinion was greater than any other in the 20th century. The debate centered on the requirement stated by Pope Paul that every instance of sexual intercourse must include the possibility that a new life would result; and the specific ban on any steps intended to prevent that new life. The decree explained that

> The fact is, as experience shows, that new life is not the result of each and every act of sexual intercourse. God has wisely ordered laws of nature

> and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws. The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life....
>
> [E]xcluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation — whether as an end or as a means...[16]

Far from settling the question once and for all, *Humanæ Vitæ* ignited a disagreement within the Church that continues to this day. The issue is not restricted to the question of whether a couple using birth control is in violation of Church doctrine; it also includes the clergy. If a priest advises a married couple in his congregation to use birth control or to make the decision on their own, then that priest has violated his role, as defined by the CDF. Whether such advice is treated as a rule violation or as an act of heresy depends on the investigator from the CDF and the decisions by the CDF on how to respond in each case.

One of the *peritus* (experts) who attended Vatican II also became one of the more vocal critics of Church views on birth control. Charles E. Curran (born 1934) was ordained in 1958, and became known as a "moral" theologian. In 1967, he was fired from a faculty position at the Catholic University of America for his views on birth control, but was reinstated after a five-day strike by other faculty members. In 1968, he and other theologians published a critical response to *Humanæ Vitæ* and declared his approval of contraception. He held equally controversial views on premarital sex, masturbation, abortion, homosexuality, divorce and euthanasia.

In 1986, Curran was again removed from his faculty position at Catholic University of America, citing clashes between him and Church authorities and claiming the final decision had been entered by the CDF then under the administration of Cardinal Ratzinger (currently Pope Benedict XVI). The statement claimed that Curran was neither suitable nor eligible to continue as a professor of Catholic theology. This occurred after Curran refused to recant or apologize for his past statements. He insisted that dissenting Catholics who continue to accept the pope's authority are not breaking the rules set by the Church. Curran published this belief a year after being fired from the faculty position.[17]

A critical response published by the American Association of University Professors, which analyzed the case, concluded that "Had it not been for the intervention of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Professor Curran would undoubtedly still be active in the [Catholic University's]

Department of Theology, a popular teacher, honored theologian, and respected colleague."[18]

Curran held many controversial beliefs that were contrary to Church dogma. However, his statements and beliefs concerning birth control were what brought him to the attention of the CDF more than any other issues. Even though his termination cited articles Curran had published on other topics, "artificial contraception" was near the top of Church concerns.

Curran landed a professorship at Southern Methodist University, where he continues to teach and publish. He has been vocal in criticisms of the Roman Church and its policies; and although he has been labeled unfit by the Church, he has not been excommunicated or otherwise punished by the CDF.

Modern Church Dissidents

Dissent within the Roman Church has not disappeared in modern times. The most significant change from the past is that the Church no longer has the power to arrest, try and execute or imprison heretics.

One of the most vocal and best-known critics of the Church is Hans Küng (1928–), a priest, theologian and author. He was a colleague of Joseph Ratzinger when both were appointed by Pope John XXIII to serve in the role of *peritus* during Vatican II. In the late 1960s he publicly rejected the doctrine of papal infallibility, becoming the first major Catholic theologian in nearly 100 years to take that position.[19]

On December 18, 1979, his license to teach as a theologian (the *missio canonica*) was taken from him by the Church. However, he continued teaching as a tenured professor at the University of Tübingen until he retired in 1996. In spite of his defiance of Church doctrine, he was not excommunicated. He professed his loyalty to the Church in the introduction to a book published in 2002, explaining that

> In 1979 I then had personal experience of the Inquisition under another pope. My permission to teach was withdrawn by the church, but nevertheless I retained my chair and my institute (which was separated from the Catholic faculty). For two further decades I remained unswervingly faithful to my church in critical loyalty, and to the present day I have remained professor of ecumenical theology and a Catholic priest in good standing. I affirm the papacy for the Catholic Church, but at the same time indefatigably call for a radical reform of it in accordance with the criterion of the gospel.[20]

Another influential but controversial theologian was John Courtney Murray (1904–67), an American Jesuit priest known for his interest in reconcili-

ation between the Roman Church and other Christian sects. During Vatican II, he played an important role in encouraging bishops to vote for the decree concerning religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanæ*.

His dispute with the Church had begun in 1944 when he promoted the idea of cooperation between Catholics and other sects. Critics of his position argued that he was a threat to the unity of Catholicism in the United States. He also was a believer in natural law, what he termed the "intention of nature." In 1954, the Vatican demanded that Murray no longer publish his views on religious freedom. Murray continued writing privately in spite of the order from the Vatican and was invited to attend Vatican II in 1963. He drafted versions of *Dignitatis Humanæ* that later became the final versions of the controversial decree.

He later published his opinion that in order to discover the truth about the nature of God, Catholics would need to hold conversations "on a footing of equality" with others, including not only non–Catholics but atheists as well. He further stated that the Roman Church had exaggerated its own authority and, consequently, Christian ideals had suffered. Even though he was in conflict with many Church doctrines, he was never punished or threatened beyond being told to cease publishing.

One final modern dissenter worth mention is Leonardo Boff. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1959 and was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1964. A theologian, philosopher and writer, Boff is an activist who is best known for his association with "liberation theology," a form of belief based on human rights and the theory that no one church has the right to claim it is the sole Church. Boff was criticized as well for his support of Communist regimes. He considers himself an advocate of poor Christians in Latin America.

Boff referred to the administrations of George W. Bush and Israel's Ariel Sharon as fundamentalist terrorist states, and also has criticized governments of Middle Eastern countries for keeping their citizens in a state of poverty. His views are seen as extreme not only by Church standards but in politics as well. Two months after the terrorist attacks in New York and at the Pentagon, he said that

> the terrorist attack of September 11 represents the shift towards a new humanitarian and world model. The targeted buildings sent a message: a new world civilization cannot be built with the kind of dominating economy [of the World Trade Center], with the kind of death machine [the Pentagon] set up and with the kind of arrogant politics and producer of many exclusions.[21]

The Roman Church reacted to Boff's criticism of Church leadership and accused him of being a Marxist and of expressing politicized views inappropriate for a priest. In 1985, the CDF announced that Boff was officially

"silenced" for one year for his highly critical book on the topic of the Church and temporal power. In that book, he accused Cardinal Ratzinger of "religious terrorism."[22]

When the Church threatened to silence Boff once again in 1992 to stop him from taking part in the Eco-92 Earth Summit, he left the Franciscan order and resigned his priesthood. He, like so many modern-day critics, was never threatened with excommunication, a punishment that was handed out liberally in centuries past.

The Church has undergone many transformations over its 2,000-year history. As to its policies for the treatment of heretics, the modern Church has lost the temporal power required to enforce an Inquisition; but even beyond the loss of power, the Church is slowly and reluctantly being forced into the modern era. The historical changes in culture within the Christian world, including the Humanist movement, the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, were the cultural changes that forced the Roman Church to finally abandon the mysticism and superstitions of the past. Literacy became widespread after the printing of books — including the Bible — moved beyond Church control. The trend toward nationalism and abandonment of the feudal system of the Dark Ages made the Church dispensable to many, even among faithful Christians. Advances in science demonstrated with proof that the Church's older beliefs were outdated and simply untrue. The abuses of the Inquisition aggravated the revolt against the Church and helped the Reformation gain speed as it became clear that the Church could not stop these changes from continuing. The more Church leaders tried to quell these trends, the more rapidly they continued to spread.

Just as many individuals and movements defy Church doctrine, equal blame belongs to the Church and its determination to hold on to a few basic tenets: papal infallibility, supreme power of the papacy, the sole claim to being the one true Church, and resistance to modern times seen in its policies concerning birth control, marriage and divorce, homosexuality, and more. The Church's failure and unwillingness to change with the times and with advances in science may make it obsolete in the minds of increasing numbers of Christians.

From the point of view of the Church and its most fundamental believers, change is not always good or right. Vatican II was a great disappointment to many, including members of the clergy who left the Church in great numbers. It may be that many good Christians have left the Church because they have fundamental differences of opinion with its leadership. It may also be the case that the Church will continue to see heresy everywhere it looks.

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