

ABOVE During the Hussite Wars (1419–34), sparked by the execution of Jan Hus, the Bohemian commander Jan Zizka devised the effective tactic of forming a 'laager' of carts as a defensive redoubt. It was known as a Wagenburg ('wagon fortress') in German, and in Czech as a tabor (after the Hussite stronghold).

and the Catholic Church revived; but a price had to be paid for achieving unity. The new pope, Martin V (1417–31), had been elected not by the cardinals alone, but with the consent of the national representatives, signifying the definitive end of any papal pretensions to universal rule.

Although successful in healing the schism, the Council made one serious error: Jan Hus, the much-admired Rector of Charles University in Prague, was condemned as a heretic and burnt to death. Czech-speaking Bohemia rose in fury against the German emperor, defying the Church and its supporters. Although all ranks, from magnates to labourers, were represented among the Hussites, their strength lay among the peasants, who had formed their own vision of an ideal community, which they transformed into a practical reality in the southern Bohemian city of Tábor. Unable to fight on equal terms with armoured cavalry, masters of the battlefield for centuries, the Hussites devised an entirely new form of mobile armoured warfare: the so-called *Wagenburg*, a mobile fortress of farm carts defended by archers, gunners and infantry armed with spiked flails and billhooks. Over a protracted period of unrest lasting 15 years the Hussites destroyed every Catholic army sent against it until the emperor and pope were eventually obliged to compromise, and the Czechs were allowed to retain their own proto-Protestant church.

Bohemian anger, already simmering against German arrogance, had been ignited by the sale of indulgences, seen as ecclesiastical fraud, just as Chaucer had depicted them a generation earlier, but the warning went unheeded in Rome, as a succession of popes demanded ever-increasing quantities of cash. Julius II (1503–13), for example, had to meet the expenses of buying his election and fighting numerous wars, leading his troops in full armour on the field of battle: he had three daughters to marry off, but his principal expense was in commissioning such artists as Michelangelo and Raphael and in beginning the construction of the magnificent new basilica of St Peter's. Many sincere churchmen were shocked by the widespread sale of

indulgences, and discontent began to simmer. Under Julius' successor, Leo X (1513–21) the need for a massive influx of funds intensified, as the bills began to roll in not only for building St Peter's but also for financing one more crusade against the Turks. Having sold all available church posts – a considerably restricted source of income since the right to appoint the most senior clergy had been diverted to lay rulers – and pawned his furniture, Leo arranged a loan from the Fugger bank of Augsburg, repayment to be made from the sale of indulgences in the archbishopric of Mainz. This was too much for the German monk Martin Luther of Wittenberg, who in January 1517 posted his famous 'Ninety-Five Theses'. Pope Leo was preoccupied with other concerns and resorted to the traditional method of excommunicating the heretic: it had not worked with Hus and did not work with Luther.

* Reformation and Counter-Reformation *

After the short pontificate of Hadrian VI (the only Dutch pope), Clement VII (1523–34) found himself faced with the continuing problem of Luther, but once again failed to address the issues fuelling growing dissent against the authority of Rome. In 1521, King Francis I of France had begun a war against Charles V, newly elected Holy Roman Emperor, and also King of Austria, Spain and Naples, ruler of Burgundy and Flanders and Lord of the Americas. The war ended only in August 1529, with complete victory for Charles, after battles that had devastated much of Italy and led to the brutal sack of Rome itself in 1527.

The revulsion against indulgences was shared by many faithful Catholics, but there were many other factors in the complex process known as the Reformation. For many years there had been a deep-seated resentment against claims of popes to a supreme power, in politics as in religion, especially when such pretension was accompanied by corruption on a grand scale. Indignation was expressed emotionally in the devout Catholic Dante's epic *Divina Commedia*, and, more practically, in monarchs simply cutting off funds. Franciscan friars, protesting at the Church's enormous wealth, were judged heretical and burnt.

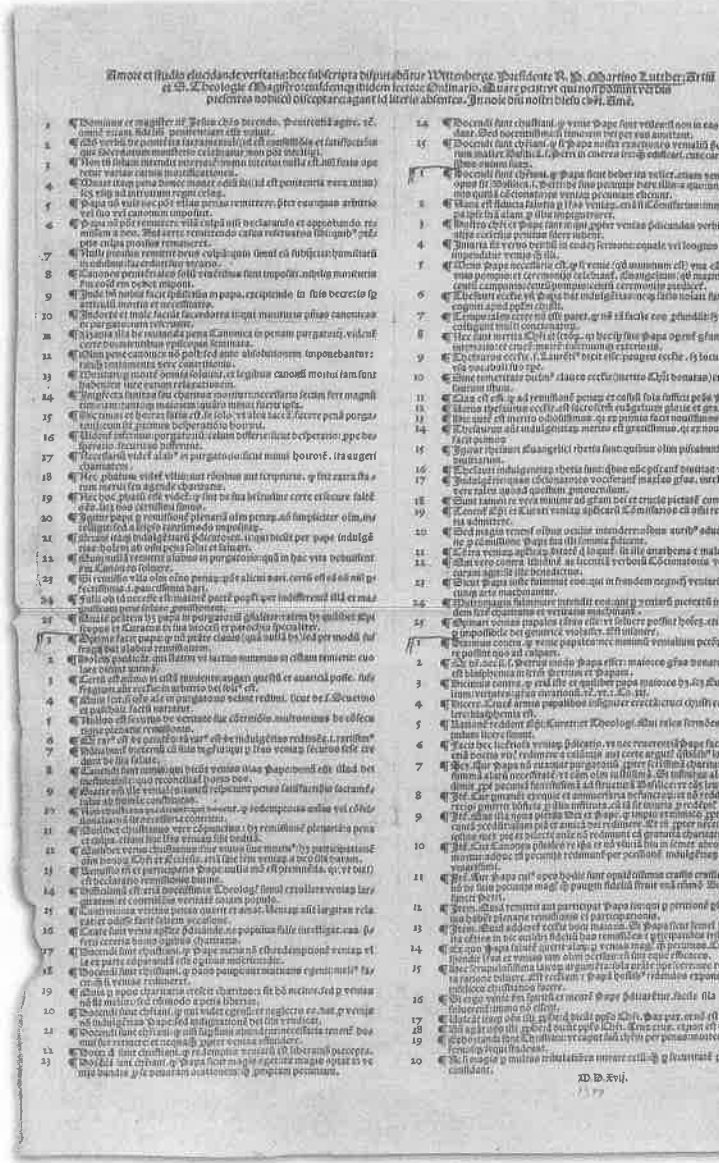
The question was not whether there was to be a thorough reformation, but whether or not it would lead to a schism. The way was now clear for Charles to act as his predecessor Sigismund had done, by presiding over an ecumenical Council, but this could only be convened by a pope, and Clement, perhaps reflecting on the fate of John XXIII, refused to take part. Acting on his own, the best Charles could do was to convene an Imperial Diet, a parliament of ecclesiastical and lay magnates, held at Augsburg in 1530. It might have worked: the Lutherans put forward their doctrinal case, accepted by many Catholics, but without a strong lead from the Pope no agreement was possible. Charles renewed his pleas for a General Council: uselessly, since by the time this was finally convoked at Trent (Trento) in 1545, Protestantism was too firmly established. Clement's papal successors chose persecution, establishing the Roman Inquisition, publishing an Index of Forbidden Books (only abolished in 1966) and confining Jews to ghettos, where they were obliged to wear distinctive clothes. Unlike the Council of Constance, the Council of Trent was unrepresentative; in the later stages, 189 Italian bishops were present, 31 Spanish, 26 French, but only 2 Germans and a single Englishman. Although the door was still held ajar for the reintegration of the Protestants, the main work of the Council, which only adjourned in 1565, was a thorough overhaul of Church practice and doctrines, almost a re-creation of the Catholic Church: but now as a predominantly Italian organization.

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Hindered as he was by conflicting European interests, the Emperor Charles had a free hand in the New World. All Spanish possessions would be unequivocally Catholic, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, with its splendid architecture and ebullient art appealed to native sensibilities, as demonstrated by the miraculous image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appearing on the site of an Aztec temple. Vigorous protests were made by such writers as Bartolomé de las Casas, planter turned priest, against the mistreatment of Indians, reinforced by the spiritual nourishment provided by the Church which healed some of the more drastic consequences of cultural destruction.

The various reformers active throughout Europe had different visions of the new Church. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), monk, scholar and good-humoured satirist, had already exposed abuses in his influential tract *In Praise of Folly* (1509). Luther, with his conservative adaptation of Catholic doctrine inspired by a command of the German language, expressed in such great hymns as 'Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott,' prevailed in northern Germany. The subtle (and easily misunderstood) theologian Jean Calvin, converted many French, while in England King Henry VIII (r. 1509–47) simply took over as Head of the Church, retaining traditional rites, with some later important modifications. Emperor Charles V, finding his German lands divided between Protestants and Catholics, succeeded in forcing a compromise whereby rulers themselves decided what the official religion of their states should be; as a result, northern Germany became Protestant, forming a bloc with Scandinavia, Holland and Britain, while Austria and the South remained Catholic.

Reformation ideas were disseminated by the new invention of printing with moveable metal type (new to the West, but originating in China), which enabled such works as William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English to be distributed cheaply, with revolutionary results. Literacy was common enough to permit prosperous workers to read Bible texts, hitherto decently shrouded in Latin, and to judge for themselves how far their churches had slipped away from the early ideals. Ironically Tyndale was pursued by agents of Thomas More, Erasmus' close friend, condemned for heresy and burnt at the stake. More himself was later executed for treason by Henry VIII and beatified by the Catholic Church, but Tyndale has the more secure memorial in that his translation formed the armature around which the later King James 'Authorized' Version of the Bible was constructed. It was, however, the good Catholic Erasmus who had written:



Martin Luther's 'Ninety-Five Theses' gave voice to widespread discontent in northern Europe over abuses by the Catholic clergy in Rome. Thesis 86 enquired: 'Why does the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?'

'I wish that every woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles of St Paul ... Would that the farmer might sing snatches of Scripture at his plough, that the weaver might hum phrases of Scripture to the tune of his shuttle.'



ABOVE The central figure of Moses, from Michelangelo's tomb of Pope Julius II in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. Major building works during Julius' papacy, notably the construction of St Peter's, precipitated a crisis over the sale of indulgences.

Domestic and international politics intermeshed in Britain. Queen Catherine of Aragon, whose refusal to divorce King Henry VIII led to the Anglican schism, was the sister of the arch heretic-hunter, King Philip II of Spain. When Philip married Catherine's daughter Mary Tudor, Spain became identified with the implacable persecution of supposed heretics during her four-year reign (1554–58) during which Protestant objectors were burnt alive at the rate of one every four days or so. English opinion, previously generally conservative, was sharpened against both Spain and Rome, obliging young Queen Elizabeth I (r.1558–1603) in 1559 to choose between the Reformed Religion and Spain's friendship; correctly divining the mood of her English subjects she chose moderate reform, which brought her into sharp conflict with her subjects in Ireland.

The Normans, like the Romans before them, had balked at the conquest of Ireland, but Viking colonies had been established on the east coast, the largest at Dublin, site of a former late-Roman bishopric. In 1169, King Henry encouraged the Normans who had settled in Wales to obey Pope Adrian IV's command by occupying Ireland, thus establishing what might be called England's first colony. Some control was possible in the coastal towns, particularly in the Dublin 'Pale', where the Irish Parliament was held, but the interior was left to the native Irish, with their own language and traditions, which included a millennium of Celtic Christianity. After Mary Tudor began establishing English settlers in 'plantations', the policy was energetically followed by her sister Elizabeth I, bringing acquisitive Protestant

colonists into violent conflict with the loyally Catholic Irish. Pope Pius V's fierce denunciation of Elizabeth identified Catholicism with treason, and the Spanish raids to support the Church in Ireland identified Irish Catholics with Spain. The stage was set for a persistent and particularly English prejudice against Rome and a long period of violent resentment in Ireland.

Elsewhere, national interests determined alliances. Protestant England remained on good terms with Catholic France, but became a bitter enemy of the Protestant Dutch. The Catholic Emperor Charles fought the French to a humiliating defeat in Italy. In the 17th century, however, religious differences exacerbated political clashes; the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) began as a power struggle between France and the Empire, but the scandalous massacre that accompanied it were facilitated by religious differences; on a much smaller scale, the British campaigns in Ireland, although part of international confrontations, were viciously tainted by doctrinal disputes.

The most lasting effects of the Reformation were less dramatic. Protestants had translated the Latin Bible and Rites into the vernacular, inspiring national literature. The flowering of English drama and poetry sprang in

great part from the majestic prose of the new Bible and Prayer Book, and modern German literature's first major figure is Luther. Fighting back, the Counter-Reformation produced the magnificent architecture of the Baroque: Rome, which had been a wolf-infested collection of ruins in the 15th century, was rebuilt; modern music was born in the Italian church as harmony edged out polyphony. But behind the splendour, the papacy became a minor Italian state, and the popes little more than bit-players in European power politics. The energy of the Church was diverted into new and enterprising religious orders, and in particular the Society of Jesus, founded by a group at the University of Paris, and recognized by Pope Paul III in 1540. Carefully selected, well-educated and disciplined, Jesuit teachers and missionaries performed brilliantly, taking the doctrines and practices of the reformed Catholic Church to Japan, Vietnam, China and India and to the new Spanish and Portuguese American colonies. In all these fields, Jesuits demonstrated a sympathetic understanding of local cultures and provided much-needed protection against colonial oppression: all these admirable qualities did not endear them to the governments.

✕ The Renaissance ✕

The Italian Renaissance might almost be called the Florentine Renaissance, since that city was home to so many of its leading figures. (Moreover, at that time, Italy was, to coin a later phrase, 'little more than a geographical expression.')

As in Ancient Greece, Italians' first loyalty was to their city, and then to an idea of the magnificent Italian heritage, the Empire of Rome and Latin literature: and Florence was then the largest and richest of cities. The first new humanist story-tellers, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the painters Masaccio, Donatello and Ghiberti and the architect Brunelleschi were all Florentines, and their successors were sheltered by the princely magnificence of the Medici family. It was some time before the new arts spread to other large Italian states, but were quickly taken up in smaller towns, such as Ferrara and Mantua: Baldassare Castiglione's book *The Courtier*, which became the handbook of taste and proper conduct of a gentleman throughout Europe, was written for the court of Urbino. He reviles the French as 'rude and uncultivated,' but good at fighting and insists that a grounding in Greek and Latin is essential for gentlemen.

Northern Europeans may have had much to learn about gentility, and agreed with Castiglione that a decent acquaintance with Latin literature was desirable, but one vital part of the Italian Renaissance could not be exported – the clear blue Mediterranean skies. No such painting as, for example, Botticelli's *Primavera* could be conceived in the darker and damper skies of Northern Europe; nor, for reasons that had more to do with climate than with prudery, was nudity in art a northern speciality. The great painters of the period, Vermeer and Rembrandt, the Holbeins and Dürer, were primarily interior painters.

To some extent Renaissance and Reform intermingled. The Latinist Lorenzo Valla identified the so-called 'Donation of Constantine,' claimed as the foundation

of the popes' sovereign rights over Middle Italy, as fraudulent and challenged the accuracy of St Jerome's translation of the Greek Bible, the 'Vulgate,' accepted as it had been for a millennium by the Catholic church – a challenge rapidly accepted by the Protestant reformers.

What might be called a return flow, from North to South, occurred in the new art of printing, pioneered by Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz in 1450, reaching Rome 20 years later, and in science and medicine. The spirit of scientific enquiry that had flourished in Oxford with the work of Roger Bacon and William of Ockham was revived by northern savants, most notably Nikolaj Kopernik of Cracow, better known as Nicolaus Copernicus, who put forward a radical new heliocentric model of the universe. Latin names were generally adopted by serious writers, such as the Swiss doctor Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim – Paracelsus – who stressed the need to learn from 'our own interpretation of nature, by long practice, confirmed by experience' rather than poring over ancient texts. The painstaking dissections of the anatomist Andreas van Wesel of Bruges (Vesalius) resulted in the first authoritative study of human anatomy, published in the same year (1543) as Copernicus' great work *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*. All three had studied at Italian medical schools, but in Catholic countries research was not encouraged: Vesalius was condemned and sentenced to perpetual exile by the Inquisition. The Breton Ambroise Paré, universally acknowledged as the father of modern surgery, was a Protestant, but his skill kept him safe during the religious persecution: constant wars afforded him plenty of practice in improving his techniques.

The Reformation c.1600

