

## Protestant Heretics and Henchmen

During the 16th century, the unity of Christendom was shattered, not by a single heresy but by a heretical spirit combined with an orchestrated effort to nationalize Church government and transfer Church property to private hands. The Protestant Revolt involved challenges to the teachings of the Catholic Church by heretical preachers, but it was also a gigantic transfer of wealth and power from the Catholic Church to secular rulers, financiers, and nation states. For that reason, the men most responsible for the Protestant Revolt include behind-the-scenes conspirators, conniving ministers, grasping nobles, and malicious henchmen, as well as theologians and preachers.

The Catholic Church had been attacked by heretics and conniving rulers and weakened by internal corruption for centuries and had survived intact, so none of the problems it faced in the 16th century were new. Even many of the specific heresies of the Protestant 'reformers' had been dealt with before. How then, were the heresies of Luther and Calvin were able to spread so quickly, and do so much more damage than previous heresies? One reason was the recent invention of Gutenberg's printing press. The printing press made the wide distribution of political and heretical religious pamphlets possible, and they were powerful tools in the hands of enemies of the Church. Both Luther and Calvin had powerful financial backers and became well-known as Protestant leaders throughout Europe mainly because their writings were published and widely distributed by forces hostile to the Church.

The spread of explicitly heretical ideas was only one way the printing press revolutionized Christian civilization during the Reformation era. For hundreds of years, Catholic Churches and monasteries had been the printers and librarians of Europe and the religious orders had an enormous influence on education, science, music, art, and culture. All this changed during the 16th century, as the control of these institutions and fields of endeavor passed from the Catholic Church to wealthy patrons and secular officials.



The Map shows the spread of Protestantism by region. Each of these strains of Protestantism has spawned various sects.

The following list of Protestant leaders and heretics is divided in to four main branches of Protestant theology. **Lutheranism** spread in northern Germany and Scandinavia.

**Anglicanism** was confined mostly to England and her colonies. **Calvinism** (Reformed Tradition) started in Switzerland but spread throughout much of Northern Europe. The Huguenots in France, Puritans in England, Presbyterians in Scotland, and the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands were all variants of Calvinism. **Anabaptism** (Radical Reformed) started in Switzerland and Germany, and influenced later reformed sects. Mennonites, Hutterites, Quakers, and some 'Bible Churches' trace their heritage to the Anabaptists.

**PRE-REFORMATION** — The lives of Pre-reformation preachers who lived **Before Luther: Wycliffe and Hus** is covered in this video.

- **John Wycliffe** (1320-84) — English priest who translated the Bible to the English and promoted the supremacy of the scriptures over Church tradition, and vernacular Bible readings. He gave rise to the Lollard movement in England and influenced later Protestant thinkers.
- **Jan Hus** (1369-1415) — Bohemian priest who promoted the ideas of Wycliffe to his followers in Prague. Preached against the sale of indulgences and Bohemian nationalism. His trial and execution (he was burned at the stake) during the Council of Constance caused a scandal and inspired the Hussite War in Germany.
- **Jan Zizka** (1360-1424) — Brilliant Bohemian Hussite General whose ingenious innovations in the use of gunpowder and fortified wagons make him as one of the greatest military strategists of the Middle Ages, gave him a series of unexpected victories over imperial troops..

**LUTHERAN** — theology advocates a doctrine of justification "by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Scripture alone" and states that scripture, rather than the Roman magisterium, is the final authority on all matters of faith. Luther recognized the teachings of the first seven ecumenical councils of the Church, but rejected many practices such as indulgences, and the elevation of marriage, penance, holy order, etc. as sacraments.

- **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) — Augustinian Monk credited with starting the Protestant Reformation. His criticisms of the Church began with the sale of Indulgences, but he adopted many of Wycliffe's positions, including emphasis on Scripture (alone) and Justification by Faith.
- **Philip Melancthon** (1497-1560) — Protestant theologian who collaborated with Martin Luther. Served with Luther on the faculty at the University of Wittenberg, on the recommendation of his Uncle, an eminent Hebrew scholar. Primary theologian of Lutheranism.
- **Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony** (1486-1525) — Powerful Prince who founded the University of Wittenberg, and supported Luther during his trial for heresy. He did not declare himself a Protestant during his life but provided financial support and protection for Luther using intermediaries rather than direct contact. Frederick died before Lutheranism became firmly established in the Germany, but he laid the foundation of the movement and most of the leading Protestant princes of the Early Reformation were close relations.
- **Albert, Duke of Prussia** (1490-1568) — Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights who converted to Lutheranism, secularized the Teutonic Order, and became the Duke of Prussia in 1525. He was the first Protestant Prince to make Lutheranism the State religion. Albert was a nephew of Frederick the Wise.

**ANABAPTIST** — believe that Baptism is not valid unless person is over the age of reason. Denies the validity of Infant baptisms and opposes all forms of Church hierarchy.

- **Thomas Muntzer** (German, 1489) — German preacher who took Luther's ideas to an unintended extreme, and led Peasant uprisings against Christian nobles and local monasteries in Germany shortly after Luther's revolution. Over 100,000 peasants were slaughtered.

## ANGLICAN

- **Thomas Cranmer** (English, 1489) — Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII and Edward VI. Broke with Rome and help found the Anglican Church. Influential in making liturgical changes, appointing Protestant bishops, and writing the 'Common Book of Prayer'.
- **Thomas Cromwell** (English, 1489) — Minister under Henry VIII who helped arrange his divorce and masterminded the dissolution of the Monasteries.
- **Somerset and Northumberland** (English, 1500, 1504) — Uncles of Edward VI who were regents during his reign. Forced Protestant changes in liturgy and practice that Henry VIII had forbid. Tried to bypass Mary Tudor and put Lady Jane Grey on the throne.
- **William Cecil** (English, 1520) — Chief minister of Elizabeth during her entire 40 year reign, whose goal was to create a United Protestant British Isles. He passed laws that made Catholic worship illegal in England, put down rebellions in Ireland harshly and conquered Ulster, and tried to forge an alliance with Protestant Scotland.
- **John Foxe and John Day** (English, 1516) — Author and publisher of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, a work that greatly exaggerated the suffering of English Protestants under Catholic monarchs. The most ambitious works of Protestant propaganda of its time, the book featured elaborate wood cut illustrations on almost every page and thousands of copies were published and distributed throughout England. The project was financed and supported by the regents and ministers of Edward VI and Elizabeth, specifically Northumberland and Cecil.

## REFORMED

- **Huldrych Zwingli** (Swiss, 1484) — Priest who was a critic of the abuses of the Church and an early leader of the Reformation in Zurich, Switzerland. Began by criticizing corruption in Church, then attacked the veneration of saints, relics, fasting, and then began to oppose statues and images, and eventually opposed the mass, sacraments and traditional liturgy. Zwingli's supporters become progressively more radical and politicized, causing greater and great disturbances, and
- **John Calvin** (French, 1509) — French preacher who was one of the most influential theologians of the Reformation era. Wrote Institutes of the Christian Religion and established a theocracy in Geneva. Presbyterians, Puritans, Dutch Reformed, and Huguenots sects were strongly influenced by Calvin.
- **John Knox** (Scotch, 1513) — Follower of Calvin who studied in Geneva before returning to Scotland, where he became the theological leader of the Presbyterian "reformed" Church. His followers wrestled control of the government from the Catholic party, forced the Queen Mary to resign, and formed a parliament that ruled Scotland in the name of her infant son James.
- **Jacob Arminius** (Dutch, 1560) — Dutch Reformed theologian who opposed strict Calvinist doctrines and began and early split within the Dutch Reformed Church.

- **William the Silent** (Dutch, 1533) — Political leader of the Dutch Revolt. Responsible for breaking the ties of the Netherlands from the Catholic Kingdom of Spain. Established the Dutch Republic but also founded the monarchy of the Netherlands.
- **Gaspard Coligny** (Dutch, 1519) — Leader of the Huguenots during the French Wars of Religion. Murdered during the St. Bartholomew's day massacre.