



THE SPREAD OF THE PROTESTANT



REFORMATION



Henry VIII: King of England

Unit Overview

The Protestant Reformation, which had caught fire in Germany, spread across Europe. Reformers, such as John Calvin and John Knox, combined the ideas of Martin Luther

with their own interpretation of Christianity. Henry VIII refused to accept the pope's authority and set the stage for religious change in England. This resulted in new churches and different forms of worship. It also led to major disagreements among European Christians. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church launched the Catholic Reformation in an attempt to slow the advancement of Protestantism. Let's see how it all happened.

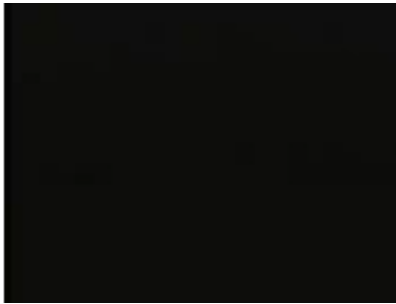
John Calvin and the New Generation of Reformers

By 1520, the concept of religious change had swept over Europe, and a new generation of reformers built on the ideas of Martin Luther. **John Calvin**, a native of France, was one of the most influential. Trained as a Catholic priest and as a lawyer, Calvin published his book *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. It explained his beliefs and offered advice on how to set up a Protestant church. This book became very popular and was widely read by Protestants all over Europe. The citizens of **Geneva**, Switzerland were so impressed by his writings that they asked John Calvin to lead their community. Calvin agreed and established a **theocracy**, a form of government run by church leaders. The Calvinists stressed the importance of hard work, self-discipline, saving money and honesty. People came from all over Europe to visit Geneva and to see first-hand the effects of Calvinism.

John Calvin: Geneva, Switzerland



The ideas of John Calvin spread as Protestants returned home and shared their observations. New Christian sects, such as the Anabaptists, took root in communities throughout Europe. The concepts that inspired reformers, however, threatened Roman Catholics, and armed conflict over religious issues became increasingly common. In Scotland, a Calvinist supporter named **John Knox** led a religious rebellion. Scottish Protestants overthrew their Catholic queen and set up the Scottish Presbyterian Church. At the same time, Calvinists called **Huguenots** battled with Catholics in France. Wars continued in the German states between Catholics and Protestants and between Calvinists and Lutherans. England, too, would experience a break with the Roman Catholic Church. In this case, however, it happened more for political and personal reasons rather than religious ones.



Henry VIII and the Church of England

When **Henry VIII**, king of England, first heard of the ideas expressed by Martin Luther, he wrote a pamphlet that emphasized just how wrong Luther was. **Pope Leo X** was so impressed with the king's efforts that he awarded him the title **Defender of the Faith**. In 1527, Henry's personal life and the issue of a male heir transformed his relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. As a young prince, Henry had entered into an arranged marriage with **Catherine** from Aragon, a province in Spain. Once he became king, Henry VIII was convinced that a stable government depended on a male heir or a son to inherit the throne. Although he and Catherine had been married for eighteen years, the queen's only surviving child was a girl called **Mary Tudor**.



Windsor Castle: Rumored to Be Haunted by the Ghost of Henry VIII

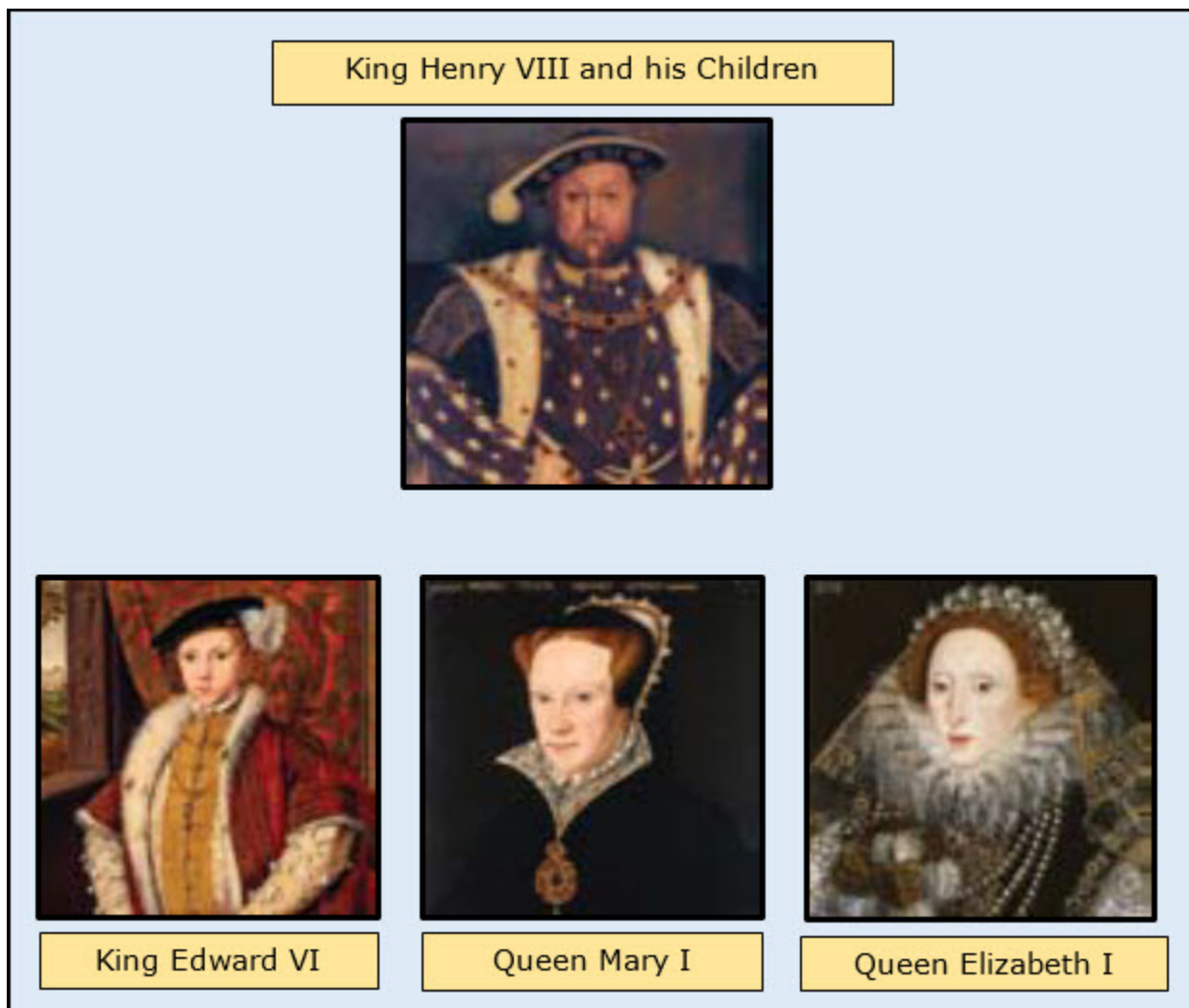
Since it seemed unlikely that he would have a son if he remained married to Catherine, Henry wanted to divorce her and to marry **Anne Boleyn**. Since the laws of the Catholic Church did not permit divorce, the king asked Pope **Clement VII** for an annulment. This would cancel his marriage to Catherine and would give Henry the freedom to marry Anne. Popes had granted these types of requests for royal families in the past so Henry assumed it would not be a problem. In this instance and at this time, it was. Catherine's nephew was none other than Holy Roman Emperor **Charles V**, who had agreed with Rome's condemnation of Martin Luther. Not wanting to offend his ally, the pope refused to okay the annulment.



Henry VIII was determined to divorce Catherine in spite of the pope's ruling. He called a meeting of Parliament and asked the assembly to pass several new laws concerning the Church. The **Act of Supremacy**, which went into effect in 1534, officially made Henry, not the pope, the head of the Church of England. Anyone who refused to accept this law was executed for treason. The king appointed his friend

Thomas Cranmer as the Archbishop of Canterbury. The new archbishop gave Henry his annulment and permission to marry Anne Boleyn. Much to Henry's disappointment, she did not produce a son but one daughter named Elizabeth. Eventually, Henry VIII married four more times. **Jane Seymour**, his third wife, gave birth to Henry's only son, Edward.

To gain support for his break with Rome, Henry closed all of England's monasteries and seized their lands. Since monasteries owned almost one-third of all English property, this undertaking increased his royal power and the royal treasury. Henry sold large amounts of this land to the nobles and members of the middle class. As a result, the new landowners stood to lose their property if England returned to the Catholic Church. This gave Henry some solid support for England's Protestant Reformation. In most ways, however, Henry continued to be more of a Catholic than a Protestant. Although he permitted the scripture to be read in English, he insisted that services and celebrations remain the same.



After Henry VIII died in 1547, all three of his children eventually ruled England, and each one had a strong religious viewpoint. First, his son, who was only ten at the time, was crowned **Edward VI**. His advisors encouraged Parliament to pass laws that made the Church of England more Protestant. Although the changes were minor, they resulted in several Catholic uprisings that were harshly put down. Since Edward died as a teenager, his sister Mary Tudor became queen. **Queen Mary I** wanted to bring England back to the Catholic Church. Under her rule, thousands of Protestants were burned at the stake, including Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Mary's reign was brief, and her sister **Elizabeth** inherited the throne. After ten years of religious turmoil, the new queen worked to achieve compromises between Catholics and Protestants with the goal of ending the violence. During her forty-five years as queen or the **Elizabethan Era**, Elizabeth I kept most Catholic traditions but affirmed that England was a Protestant nation under the control of the English crown.

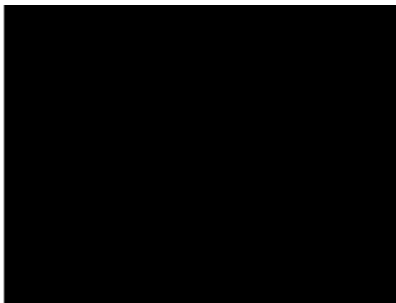
The Counter Reformation

As the Protestant Reformation continued to spread, the Roman Catholic Church recognized that it had to make certain changes if it was going to survive. The driving force behind this movement, known as the **Counter or Catholic Reformation**, was **Pope Paul III**. From 1530 through 1550, he tried to stop the Protestant momentum by working to end corruption and by listening to reformers. To establish guidelines for what needed to be done, the pope called a meeting of European Catholic bishops and archbishops. Called the **Council of Trent**, it met on and off for the next twenty years.



An Artist's Rendition of the Council of Trent

Through the efforts of this assembly, traditional Catholic values were reaffirmed and explained. The council recognized the need for a clergy that was better educated and prepared to answer questions from Protestants. With this in mind, it passed measures that provided better training for priests. The assembly also took steps to correct abuses and to end corruption. At the same time, Pope Paul III strengthened the power of the **Inquisition** or Church courts. To obtain evidence, however, it often relied on secret testimony and torture. The Inquisition handed down harsh punishments that often resulted in the execution of the accused. The Church courts were responsible for compiling and updating the **Index of Forbidden Books**. These works, including those of Martin Luther and John Calvin, were considered inappropriate for Catholics to read.



To counteract the criticism by Protestants concerning monasteries and convents, Pope Paul III approved a new religious order known as the **Society of Jesus** or the **Jesuits**. The group was founded by **Ignatius of Loyola**, a Spanish knight. After his leg was severely injured in battle, Ignatius could do little but read as he recuperated. He chose stories about men and women who had endured mental and physical torture to defend their faith. This inspired Ignatius to organize the Jesuits, a group of men dedicated to religious training and strict obedience to the Church. Its members made it their mission to uphold and spread the Roman Catholic faith throughout the world. They provided a positive image of the Roman Catholic Church by serving as teachers, advisers to rulers and missionaries.



An Artist's Rendition of the Inquisition

In some respects, the Counter Reformation was a success. The Council of Trent prohibited the sale of indulgences and other controversial practices. Church leaders began to focus more on spiritual issues and less on worldly concerns. Groups like the Jesuits stressed the importance of understanding one's faith and the significance of charity through service. While these measures improved the Church's image, other factors, such as the Inquisition and the Index of Forbidden Books, did not. Nonetheless, the advance of Protestantism slowed, and some who had left the Roman Catholic Church returned. However, Europe remained divided on issues concerning the Christian faith as the world entered the Modern Age.

What Happened Next?

While Europeans dealt with the events that took place during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, other regions of the globe developed their own economies, governments and cultures. Improvements in technology, transportation and communication connected Europe with Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and this resulted in a new era of human history known as the First Global Age. Before moving on to the next unit, review the names and terms found in Unit 23; then, answer Questions 21 through 30.