

called "the autocracy of the believing person." That would have been a modern state of mind, and Luther was not a modern man. Luther's conscience, every conscience, was enthralled by the Bible as the Word of God, the only true foundation of the faith of the Church. It is the beginning of wisdom to understand that the Reformation was not, in its own eyes, a novelty. The novelties were those grave distortions of the truth that had passed for truth in more recent centuries, and which we know as medieval Catholicism. Yet Luther was himself some kind of late medieval Catholic. And even to say harsh things about the supreme pontiff was itself part of the late medieval legacy.

"Reform" was a somewhat shop-soiled mantra long before the Reformation. "Reformation" (another way of translating the Latin *reformatio*) was a distinctly different and rather more concrete formulation which, however, not even the sixteenth century invested with all the portmanteau meaning it would later have for historians. In the eleventh century, Pope Gregory had presided over what history knows as the Gregorian reforms, designed to rescue the Church from the corrupting influence of secularization by insisting on clerical celibacy and an end to the buying and selling of church offices ("simony") and lay control of the Church's affairs. In 1215 another reforming pope, Innocent III, convened in Rome the fourth of the Church Councils held in the Lateran Palace, which formulated what was to become the official doctrine of the Eucharist and required all Christians to make an annual confession of their sins, a considerable landmark.

Pope Innocent and the Fourth Lateran Council also thought it a desirable reform to prevent the formation of new religious orders, so that the Franciscan and Dominican friars were the last under the wire, both of them expres-

sions of the vigorous reforming impulses of their founders St. Francis and St. Dominic. The early Franciscans, for whom the unworldly rule of complete poverty was always problematical, having split between a minority of hardliners, the so-called Spirituals, and the more conventional majority, later experienced a further rupture, which divided a new generation of strict Observants from the more lax Conventuals. One of many "reforms" in the early years of the sixteenth century itself was the regularization of a new, reformed Franciscan breakaway order, the Capuchins who went back to wearing the rough cloak of Francis, tied with a simple cord, and sandals. Almost every religious order in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had its own "observant" (we might say "fundamentalist") tendencies, including Luther's own order, the Augustinian canons

The world into which Martin Luther was born in 1483 was full of new religious things. There were new theological and intellectual fashions, which included a reappropriation of St. Thomas Aquinas among the Dominicans, and revived interest in St. Augustine and St. Paul, critical influences on Luther's own mind. There were newly rediscovered saints such as Mary Magdalene, a conflation of Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus and the woman of easy virtue who washed Jesus' feet, who provided a model for the reform that required personal repentance for sin, as well as a way of addressing the "woman question." There was a new, or almost new, devotion to St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, who was popular among miners and metalworkers, and to whom the young Luther prayed when caught out in a violent thunderstorm, "St. Anne help me! I will become a monk," his first conversion. The Virgin herself had never been so popular, the Virgins of this and the place vying for the custom of pilgrims—in England, Ou

Lady of Willesden versus Our Lady of Ipswich. At Regensburg in southeast Germany, where a synagogue was being demolished to make way for a church (anti-Semitism was never far away), there was an industrial accident and a miraculous cure wrought by (who else?) the Virgin. In 1520, twelve thousand souvenir tokens were sold to pilgrims to "our lovely lady" of Regensburg, some of whom are shown in a contemporary woodcut lying around her image in various states of ecstatic collapse (or inebriation?).

Objects and centers of devotion of this kind were rarely planned and constructed by those who claimed to be in charge of the Church. Typically they arose from popular "devotion," often uncontrolled. Everywhere the church authorities were engaged in delicate balancing acts. Should they encourage or discourage such spontaneity? In late fourteenth-century Lincolnshire somebody (or perhaps a small syndicate) put up a wooden cross in a field and began to adore it and to report miracles. "They are preaching and ringing bells and holding processions, for the deception of the people and the increase of gain, and laymen are said to be converting the offerings to their own uses." The bishop decided that this was a holy racket and ordered the suppression of the instant cult. Six years later, however, the pope, presumably in response to lobbying, licensed the building of a chapel close to the miracle-working cross, which was now claimed to be a hundred years old. That the late medieval Church condoned so many practices that were over the fine line separating "religion" from "superstition" suggests that it was already familiar with the popular adage that if you can't beat them you might as well join them.

What might seem to us to have been higher and more debased forms of devotion could be coexistent within the

same individual. The elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise Luther's prince, was at one and the same time the patron of a modern university with a progressive faculty of theology and the proud owner of one of the largest collections in the world of sacred relics, which were held to have the power to reduce the time spent in purgatory by many thousands of years. The new technology of printing with movable type was employed to publish a catalog of his collection.

Modern Christians may find it easier to identify with reform in the shape of the intense Christocentrism of the early sixteenth century, and to recognize this as something that nourished the religion of the reformer Martin Luther. In England, the cult of the Holy Name of Jesus was popular, and many of the churches built or reconstructed in this period are studded with the monogrammatic emblem of the Holy Name, IHS. Both before and after the Reformation it was thought to be the business of preachers to "preach Christ." In Alsace, Matthias Grünewald painted a triptych for a convent south of Colmar, now in the museum of Unterdenlinden, which has at its center a crucified Christ so tortured that it is hard to look upon it without emotion. Albrecht Dürer not only depicted a poignantly suffering Christ in his two woodcut series of the Passion but in more than one self-portrait iconographically identified himself with the Man of Sorrows. Just as Christ on the cross uttered the words of one of the most somber of the Psalms ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") so Luther, lecturing on the Psalms, invited participation in the experience of the suffering Christ: "As in Christ, so let it be in me."

Mysticism was a constant source of renewal, especially in the fourteenth century, its more notable English practitioners including the woman called Julian of Norwich, he

was his call to be an Apostle, and Paul (for he, too, changed his name) went on, in the opinion of many, to invent and construct Christianity itself.

This at least superficially repetitive factor recurs throughout the history of Christianity. The conversion of St. Augustine, thanks to his *Confessions*, became a paradigm consciously or unconsciously imitated and replicated. Francis of Assisi renounced all worldly goods and the very clothes he stood up in in order to reinvent the *vita apostolica*. Ignatius Loyola, a soldier recovering from his wounds, was converted by reading religious books (there being nothing else to read) and this was followed by a series of intense religious experiences out of which the Society of Jesus was born. What if he had been killed in that battle, or had found some novels to read? John Wesley's "heart was strangely warmed" on May 24, 1738 (moments of conversion are supposed to be that precise), when he heard Martin Luther's *Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* read in a chapel in Aldersgate Street in London. The consequence of that event was the thick strand of Protestant Christianity known as Methodism. Élie Halévy thought that without Methodism there might have been an English Revolution along the lines of 1789. England had a religious revolution instead, which bred self-help, trade unionism, and a non-revolutionary but sturdy popular politics.

It is, of course, that same Luther with whom everyone who attempts to write a history of the Reformation must engage. For without Luther, we can be reasonably certain that there would have been no Reformation, or not the same Reformation. Thomas Carlyle went further. His history was the story of heroic individuals, and he thought that if Luther had not stuck to his guns at the Diet of Worms, where he stood before the Holy Roman emperor

and refused to recant ("Here I stand"), there would have been no French Revolution and no America: the principle that inspired those cataclysmic events would have been killed in the womb. No one would now make such a claim. But we can still ask the question: was the Reformation, or was it not, a kind of midwife to the modern world?

Luther on more than one occasion told the story of his own conversion. The different accounts are not entirely consistent with one another or with what we otherwise know about his life and career around the time it is supposed to have happened, when he was in his early thirties and a professor of theology in one of the new German universities. We know that the experience arose from a strenuous engagement with the theology of Paul to the Romans, the sufficiently technical, but for Luther thoroughly existential, problem of how *justitia Dei*, the punitive righteousness of God, was to be satisfied. Luther knew that Christians had already made satisfaction, as Christians had always affirmed, "for the sins of the whole world." But how was that satisfaction to be applied to the individual Christian believer? Only, Luther discovered, by faith in Christ's sacrifice. Human moral striving was actually counterproductive, turning the soul ever more in upon itself. That was as much as to say that God, who is merciful, makes us righteous by a faith that God himself works in us. This has been called a kind of Copernican revolution in thinking about God. God, not man, is the center and prime mover of all things, including human salvation. Theologically, that had never been in doubt. In practice, however, the system of medieval Christianity emphasized moral effort, in effect a journey toward a God who, Luther insisted, is actually reaching out to us. According to other references to the moment that Luther made from time to time around the

dinner table, it happened in a tower where he had his professorial study in the monastic house of the Augustinian canons, Luther's religious order: the so-called *Turmerlebnis*, or "tower experience."

According to Luther, this was indeed an experience, not simply an intellectual process: "I felt myself straightway born afresh and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself." But that was only the beginning, and he went on to explain that he told the story, "as Augustine said of himself," so that it should not be thought that he "had suddenly from nothing become supreme," or "with one glance at scripture exhausted the total spirit of its contents." Indeed, Luther did not come from nothing but out of the rich resources of late medieval theology.

We may be still more cautious about Luther's sudden *Durchbruch* (breakthrough) if we consider what happened at about the same time to an Englishman, the Cambridge scholar Thomas Bilney, who had probably never heard of Luther. Reading, in the elegant Latin of a new translation of the New Testament by Erasmus, the words that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," Bilney tells us, "immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, in-somuch that my bruised bones leaped for joy." That was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Cambridge, which led the way in all of England and, after that, North America.

There is a tension here between event and process that, projected onto a larger screen, is the tension between the Reformation as part of the continuum of history and the Reformation as an extraordinary historical moment—as it were, a meteor strike at history. For Max Weber such interruptions in history represented the operations of what he called charisma, something that, as a so-

cial scientist, he did not presume to explain. Such figures as Moses, or Isaiah, or Luther, were "charismatic."

What happened to these deeply religious Catholics and children of the later Middle Ages was no doubt compressed in their imaginative recollections into an almost conventional scenario, biblical and Augustinian, of blinding revelation and a total overturning of what they had always believed and taken for granted. In Jesus' words, they had indeed been born again. The historian who wants to measure the watershed separating the medieval world from what overtook and overturned it must take seriously the perception that those living through these events had of an almost total transformation. Another Englishman expressed the wish that God would bless an elderly uncle, "and make him now to know which in his tender years he could not see, for the world was then dark, and we were blind in it." For him, the Catholic Church was not merely defective but actually antichristian, its pope Antichrist himself, the great deceiver. So the landscapes of both time and space were subject to a radical and seismic reconstruction, and a series of aftershocks would be experienced for a century and more to come.

Whole communities, churches, and states shared in both the initial upheaval and the aftershocks. As Luther's theology was systematized as Lutheranism, large areas of Germany, which is to say the governments of princes and cities on behalf of their subjects, formally adopted what became known as the Evangelical confession. Other governments promoted a variant form of Protestantism, more thorough in its departure from traditional Catholicism and developed in the cities and cantons of southwest Germany and Switzerland, above all in Geneva where John Calvin was intellectually and spiritually dominant. These were the Re-

formed churches, the title indicating their claim to be the "best reformed." Faithful to the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the principle that the ruler determines the religion of his state, the Rhenish Palatinate in southwest Germany was successively Evangelical, Reformed, briefly Evangelical again, Reformed, and ultimately, somewhat brutally re-Catholicized. The principle was defied in France, where a sizable Protestant (and Reformed) minority enjoyed strong political and military support, which plunged the country into decades of (partly) religious war. In the Netherlands it was turned on its head, religion sustaining a revolt against the legitimate government of Spain and helping to give birth to a new kind of politics, that of the independent republic. England, which at the beginning of the sixteenth century seems to have been one of the most Catholic countries in Europe, became, by the seventeenth century, the most virulently anti-Catholic, and the almost dominant ideology of anti-Catholicism fueled the civil wars that engulfed all parts of the British Isles in mid-century and later provoked the Bloodless Revolution, from which what passes for a British constitution derives.

This, however, is not where the inquiry should end. Nobody doubts that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time of change, confusion, and conflict for countless individuals, local communities, and whole states and nations. It is not wrong to call this an era of religious wars, comparable in scale to the revolutionary, nationalistic, and ideological wars of the subsequent centuries. The only question is whether these circumstances were so different from the experience of earlier and later centuries as to make this a major turning point in European civilization, at least as important as the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, or the Age of Revolu-

tions that began in 1776 and 1789. Making some of those comparisons, a distinguished historian of the last generation, Sir Herbert Butterfield, called both the Reformation and the Renaissance, which was its necessary precondition, merely internal displacements in European history. Others have doubted whether the Reformation represented any kind of radical departure from the mentalities, politics, or social structures of medieval Europe, or had anything to do with the shaping of the modern world. We may now find it helpful to speak of the medieval Church and *its* Reformation. Martin Luther, a medieval rather than a modern man, offered new answers to old questions. He asked no new ones.

A receding view alters in perspective; mountains no longer tower, and sharp and bold outlines are softened and blurred. It has become fashionable to demote the Reformation to lowercase and to pluralize it: many reformations, both before and since what was once regarded as *the* Reformation, and in other places and other cultures. A recent textbook puts the Reformation into global perspective, placing this European event alongside the revival of the Confucian philosophy in China after a thousand years by the brothers Ch'eng-i and Ch'eng-hao (in the late eleventh century), or with the reconstruction of Islam by Muhammad ibn 'Abd-al-Wahhab (1703–1791), which, as Wahhabite Islam, became the state religion of Saudi Arabia. Another author, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, sticking to Christian parallels, makes "reformation" a principle of world religion from 1500 to 2000, not a decisive, divisive event but "a continuing story, embracing the common religious experiences of Christians of different traditions worldwide." He takes us to the shores of a lake in Guatemala, the scene of a rich mixture of religions, Catholic,

From *Tetzel's Sermon*

You may obtain letters of safe conduct from the vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, by means of which you are able to liberate your soul from the hands of the enemy, and convey it by means of contrition and confession, safe and secure from all pains of Purgatory, into the happy kingdom. For know that in these letters are stamped and engraven all the merits of Christ's passion there laid bare. Consider, that for each and every mortal sin it is necessary to undergo seven years of penitence after confession and contrition, either in this life or in Purgatory.

How many mortal sins are committed in a day, how many in a week, how many in a month, how many in a year, how many in the whole course of life! They are well-nigh numberless, and those that commit them must needs suffer endless punishment in the burning pains of Purgatory.

But with these confessional letters you will be able at any time in life to obtain full indulgence for all penalties imposed upon you, in all cases except the four reserved to the Apostolic See. Therefore throughout your whole life, whenever you wish to make confession, you may receive the same remission, except in cases reserved to the Pope, and afterwards, at the hour of death, a full indulgence as to all penalties and sins, and your share of all spiritual blessings that exist in the church militant and all its members.

Do you not know that when it is necessary for anyone to go to Rome or undertake any other dangerous journey, he takes his money to a broker and gives a certain per cent—five or six or ten—in order that at Rome or elsewhere he may receive again his funds intact, by means of the letter of this same broker? Are you not willing, then, for the fourth part of a florin, to obtain these letters, by virtue of which you may bring, not your money, but your divine and immortal soul safe and sound into the land of Paradise?

*Luther's first attack on indulgences came in these theses, presented as topics that Luther would defend in a public debate.*

From *The Ninety-Five Theses* (1517)

Out of love and zeal for truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following theses will be publicly discussed at Wittenberg under the chairmanship of the reverend father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology and regularly appointed Lecturer on these subjects at that place. He requests that those who cannot be present to debate orally with us will do so by letter.

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

From J. H. Robinson and M. Whitcomb, eds., *University of Pennsylvania Translations and Reprints* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1902), Vol. 2, No. 6, pp. 9-10.

From *Luther's Works*, J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), Vol. 31, pp. 25-33. Copyright © 1957 by Fortress Press. Reprinted by permission of Fortress Press.

2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.

5. The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.

20. Therefore the pope, when he uses the words "plenary remission of all penalties," does not actually mean "all penalties," but only those imposed by himself.

21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.

81. This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander or from the shrewd questions of the laity.

82. Such as: "Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church? The former reasons would be most just; the latter is most trivial."

94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell;

95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace.

*At first Luther hoped that the papacy would support his reform efforts. By 1520 he was moving toward an open break with Rome.*

From *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*

The Romanists have very cleverly built three walls around themselves. Hitherto they have protected themselves by these walls in such a way that no one has been able to reform them. As a result, the whole of Christendom has fallen abominably.

In the first place, when pressed by the temporal power they have made decrees and declared that the temporal power had no jurisdiction over them, but that, on the contrary, the spiritual power is above the temporal. In the second

From *Luther's Works*, J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), Vol. 44, pp. 126-127, 129-130, 133-134, 136. Copyright © 1966 by Fortress Press. Reprinted by permission of Fortress Press.



ants' uprising, Martin Luther criticized the Twelve Articles, opposing what he feared was an egalitarian social revolution that threatened the hierarchical order of society and the legitimate property rights of the lords and clergy. He urged peaceful resolution of the crisis, pointing out the just grievances of the peasants.

*Peace to the Christian reader and the grace of God through Christ:*

There are many evil writings put forth of late which take occasion, on account of the assembling of the peasants, to cast scorn upon the Gospel, saying: "Is this the fruit of the new teaching, that no one should obey but all should everywhere rise in revolt, and rush together to reform, or perhaps destroy entirely, the authorities, both ecclesiastical and lay?" The articles below shall answer these godless and criminal fault-finders, and serve, in the first place, to remove the reproach from the word of God and, in the second place, to give a Christian excuse for the disobedience or even the revolt of the entire Peasantry. . . .

*The Second Article* According as the just tithe [a tax paid in grain] is established by the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, we are ready and willing to pay the fair tithe of grain. The word of God plainly provides that in giving . . . to God and distributing to his people the services of a pastor are required. We will that for the future our church provost [manager of a feudal estate], whomsoever the community may appoint, shall gather and receive this tithe. From this he shall give to the pastor, elected by the whole community, a decent and sufficient maintenance for him and his, as shall seem right to the whole community. . . . The small tithes,\* whether ecclesiastical or lay, we will not pay at all, for the Lord God created cattle for the free use of man. We will not, therefore, pay farther an unseemly tithe which is of man's invention.

*The Third Article* It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property, which is pitiable enough, considering that Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, without exception, by the shedding of his precious blood, the lowly as well as the great. Accordingly it is consistent with Scripture that we should be free and should wish to be so. Not that we would wish to be absolutely free and under no authority. God does not teach us that we should lead a disorderly life in the lusts of the flesh, but that we should love the Lord our God and our neighbor. We would gladly observe all this as God has commanded us in the celebration of the communion. He has not commanded us not to obey the authorities, but rather that we should be humble, not only towards those in authority, but towards every one. We are thus ready to yield obedience according to God's law to our elected and regular authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian. We therefore take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the gospel that we are serfs. . . .

*The Tenth Article* In the tenth place, we are aggrieved by the appropriation by individuals of meadows and fields which at one time belonged to a community. These we will take again into our own hands. It may, however, happen that the land was rightfully purchased, but when the land has unfortunately been purchased in this way, some brotherly arrangement should be made according to circumstances.

*The Eleventh Article* In the eleventh place, we will entirely abolish the due called heriot, [a death tax], and will no longer endure it, nor allow widows and orphans to be thus shamefully robbed against God's will. . . .

## Martin Luther AGAINST THE PEASANTS

When in the spring of 1525 the peasants finally took up arms against their manorial lords, they were joined by the lower-class artisans and workers in many towns. In a pamphlet entitled *Against the Thievish, Murderous Hordes of Peasants*, Luther reacted sternly, urging the princes to repress the rebels with every power at their command.

. . . They are starting a rebellion, and are violently robbing and plundering monasteries and castles which are not theirs; by this they have doubly deserved death in body and soul as highwaymen and murderers. Furthermore, anyone who can be proved to be a seditious person is an outlaw before God and the emperor; and whoever is the first to put him to death does right and well. For if a man is in open rebellion, everyone is both his judge and his executioner; just as when a fire starts, the first man who can put it out is the best man to do the job. For rebellion is not just simple murder; it is like a great fire, which attacks and devastates a whole land. Thus rebellion brings with it a land filled with murder and bloodshed; it makes widows and orphans, and turns everything upside down, like the worst disaster. Therefore let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog; if you do not strike him, he will strike you, and a whole land with you.

It does not help the peasants when they pretend that according to Genesis 1 and 2 all things were created free and common, and that all of us alike have been baptized. For under the New Testament, Moses does not count; for there stands our Master, Christ, and subjects us, along with our bodies and our property, to the emperor and the law of this world, when he says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Luke 20:25). Paul, too, speaking in Romans 12 (13:1) to all baptized Christians,

says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." And Peter says, "Be subject to every ordinance of man" (1 Pet. 2:13). We are bound to live according to this teaching of Christ, as the Father commands from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him" (Matt. 17:5).

For baptism does not make men free in body and property, but in soul; and the gospel does not make goods common, except in the case of those who, of their own free will, do what the apostles and disciples did in Acts 4 (:32-37). They did not demand, as do our insane peasants in their raging, that the goods of others—of Pilate and Herod—should be common, but only their own goods. Our peasants, however, want to make the goods of other men common, and keep their own for themselves. Fine Christians they are! I think there is not a devil left in hell; they have all gone into the peasants. Their raving has gone beyond all measure. . . .

. . . I will not oppose a ruler who, even though he does not tolerate the gospel, will smite and punish these peasants without first offering to submit the case to judgment. He is within his rights, since the peasants are not contending any longer for the gospel, but have become faithless, perjured, disobedient, rebellious murderers, robbers, and blasphemers, whom even a heathen ruler has the right and authority to punish. Indeed, it is his duty to punish such scoundrels, for this is why he bears the sword and is "the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer," Romans 13 (:4).

\*That is, tithes of other products than the staple crops—for example, tithes of pigs or lambs.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the revolutionary potential of the Scriptures as they were interpreted by the poor and oppressed German peasants.
2. How did Martin Luther use the Scriptures to respond to the peasants' claims?

## 4 Luther and the Jews

Initially, Luther hoped to attract Jews to his vision of reformed Christianity. In *That Jesus Was Born a Jew* (1523), the young Luther expressed sympathy for Jewish sufferings and denounced persecution as a barrier to conversion. He declared, "I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from the Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians. . . . We [Christians] are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord." When the Jews did not abandon their faith, however, Luther launched a diatribe against them.

## Martin Luther

### ON THE JEWS AND THEIR LIES

In *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), Martin Luther accepted at face value hateful medieval myths about the Jews: that they engaged in sorcery and magic, poisoned the wells of Christians, desecrated the Eucharistic host, and ritually murdered Christian children. In the concluding section, excerpted here, Luther advises civil and clerical authorities to treat the Jews harshly. The authorities did not heed Luther's proposals to raze synagogues and homes—although some anti-Jewish measures were introduced—and for several centuries Lutheran theologians paid little mind to Luther's anti-Judaism. In the late nineteenth century, German nationalists revived Luther's treatise and the Nazis gleefully circulated his words as an authoritative endorsement of their anti-Semitic ideology.<sup>1</sup>

. . . [D]ear Christian, be on your guard against the Jews, who, as you discover here, are consigned by the wrath of God to the devil, who has not only robbed them of a proper understanding of Scripture, but also of ordinary human reason,

shame, and sense, and only works mischief with Holy Scriptures through them. Therefore they cannot be trusted and believed in any other matter either, even though a truthful word may drop from their lips occasionally. For anyone who dares to juggle the awesome word of God so frivolously and shamefully . . . cannot have a good spirit dwelling in him. Therefore, wherever you see a genuine Jew, you may with a good conscience cross yourself and bluntly say: "There goes a devil incarnate." . . .

. . . [D]ear Christian, be advised and do not doubt that next to the devil, you have no more bitter, venomous, and vehement foe than a real

Jew who earnestly seeks to be a Jew. . . . Therefore the history books often accuse them of contaminating wells, of kidnaping and piercing children, as for example at Trent, Weissensee, etc. They; of course, deny this. Whether it is true or not, I do know that they do not lack the complete, full, and ready will to do such things either secretly or openly where possible. This you can assuredly expect from them, and you must govern yourself accordingly. . . .

. . . [T]heir own vile external life . . . abounds with witchcraft, conjuring signs, figures, . . . idolatry, envy, and conceit. Moreover, they are nothing but thieves and robbers who daily eat no morsel and wear no thread of clothing which they have not stolen and pilfered from us by means of their accursed usury. Thus they live from day to day, together with wife and child, by theft and robbery, as archthieves and robbers, in the most impenitent security. . . .

But for us Christians they stand as a terrifying example of God's wrath. . . . The example of the Jews demonstrates clearly how easily the devil can mislead people, after they once have digressed from the proper understanding of Scripture, into such blindness and darkness that it can be readily grasped and perceived simply by natural reason, yes, even by irrational beasts. And yet they who daily teach and hear God's word do not recognize this darkness but regard it as the true light. O Lord God, have mercy on us! . . .

. . . It serves them right that, rejecting the truth of God, they have to believe instead such abominable, stupid, inane lies, and that instead of the beautiful face of the divine word, they have to look into the devil's black, dark, lying behind, and worship his stench. . . .

. . . [The Jews wish to] lay their hands on the land, the goods, and the government of the whole world. . . . And now a storm breaks over us with curses, defamation, and derision that cannot be expressed with words. They wish that sword and war, distress and every misfortune may overtake us accursed Goyim. They vent their curses on us openly every Saturday in their synagogues and daily in their homes. They teach, urge, and train their children from in-

fancy to remain the bitter, virulent, and wrathful enemies of the Christians. . . .

. . . They have been bloodthirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom for more than fourteen hundred years in their intentions, and would undoubtedly prefer to be such with their deeds. Thus they have been accused\* of poisoning water and wells, of kidnaping children, of piercing them through with an awl, of hacking them in pieces, and in that way secretly cooling their wrath with the blood of Christians, for all of which they have often been condemned to death by fire. . . .

. . . Furthermore, we do not know to the present day which devil brought them into our country. We surely did not bring them from Jerusalem. . . . For they are a heavy burden,\* a plague, a pestilence, a sheer misfortune for our country. Proof for this is found in the fact that they have often been expelled forcibly from a country. . . .

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing, and blasphemy. . . . I shall give you my sincere advice:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. . . .

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead

<sup>1</sup>In 1994 the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America acknowledged "with pain . . . Luther's anti-Judaic diatribes and violent recommendations . . . against Jews. . . . [W]e reject this violent invective, and yet more do we express our deep and abiding sorrow over its tragic effects on subsequent generations. In concert with the Lutheran World Federation, we particularly deplore the appropriation of Luther's words by modern antisemites for the teaching of hatred toward Judaism or toward Jewish people in our day."

\*The element of caution in Luther's phraseology here perhaps indicates some awareness on his part of the unsupported character of such accusations. In 1510, for example, thirty-eight Jews had been executed in Berlin on a charge of desecration of the host. In 1539, however, in the context of a debate on policy toward the Jews at the assembly of Protestant estates at Frankfurt, Philip Melancthon presented convincing evidence that they had been innocent.



they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies. This will bring home to them the fact that they are not masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are living in exile and in captivity, as they incessantly wail and lament about us before God.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb. . . .

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home. . . .

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. The reason for such a measure is that, as said above, they have no other means of earning a livelihood than usury, and by it they have stolen and robbed from us all they possess.

In brief, dear princes and lords, those of you who have Jews under your rule—if my counsel does not please you, find better advice, so that you and we all can be rid of the unbearable devilish burden of the Jews, lest we become guilty sharers before God in the lies, the blasphemy, the defamation, and the curses which the mad Jews indulge in so freely and wantonly against the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, his dear mother, all Christians, all authority, and ourselves.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What factors seemed to motivate Martin Luther's attack against the Jews?
2. What steps did Luther advocate to reduce the role of the Jews in German society?

## 5 The Calvinist Reformation

In the first decade of the Lutheran movement, Protestant reform had not spread significantly outside Germany due to suppression by the royal governments in France, Spain, and England. But in 1534 a French clergyman, John Calvin (1509–1564), resigned his church offices and fled to Basel, a Swiss city that had accepted Protestant reforms. There he composed a summary of the new Protestant theology, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which was to be revised four times before his death. Written in the elegant Latin style favored by humanists, the work was translated into French and soon became the principal theological text for French, Swiss, Dutch, Scottish, and English Protestant reformers. Calvin himself settled in Geneva, Switzerland, where his influence dominated the civil and religious life of the townspeople. From Geneva, Calvin carried on an active mission, spreading his reformed faith throughout his native France and elsewhere.

In 1536, the newly Protestant-controlled government of Geneva asked Calvin to draw up a public confession of the reformed faith, a catechism, and rules for liturgical worship. But the Council of Geneva's demand that all citizens be forced to subscribe to the new confession resulted in a change of government at the elections in 1538. Calvin withdrew to Basel. By 1541, the political situation had changed again; Calvin was recalled, and his recommendations for a new government for the church were put into law. He remained the spiritual leader of

Geneva and of many reformed Protestants elsewhere until his death. Calvinism was especially influential in England and Scotland, giving rise to the Puritan movement in seventeenth-century England and the Presbyterian churches in Scotland and Ireland. Both of these religious traditions exercised great influence on the settlers of the English colonies in North America.

## John Calvin *THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION*

One doctrine that assumed greater and greater importance in the four separate revised editions of Calvin's *Institutes* was predestination: the belief that each person's salvation or damnation was already decided before birth. This doctrine raised a question about whether Christ offered salvation for all human beings or only for the elect—a chosen few who were predestined to be saved by God's sovereign will. Some argued that the latter interpretation, one strongly articulated by Saint Augustine, implied that God was a tyrant who created human beings to be damned and that they were not free to acquire salvation by faith. In effect, salvation and damnation were foreordained. To many Christians, this doctrine diminished the justice and mercy of God, made meaningless the idea of freedom of choice in the process of salvation, and stripped good works of any role in gaining salvation. In the following excerpt (from *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*), Calvin offered his definition of predestination and cited Saint Paul as an authority.

The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and among those to whom it is preached, does not always meet with the same reception. This diversity displays the unsearchable depth of the divine judgment, and is without doubt subordinate to God's purpose of eternal election. But if it is plainly owing to the mere pleasure of God that salvation is spontaneously offered to some, while others have no access to it, great and difficult questions immediately arise, questions which are inexplicable, when just views are not entertained concerning election and predestination. To many this seems a perplexing subject, because they deem it most incongruous that of the great body of mankind some should be predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction. . . .

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal

terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. . . .

... We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election, and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished

that kingdome, and is brought into Portugall, and carried into the Peru, and Nova Espania, and into other parts of the world: which is a sufficient proofoe for that which is said. And the Chinos do agree for this to be true. The finest sort of this is never carried out of the countrie, for that it is spent in the service of the king, and his governours, and is so fine and deere, that it seemeth to be of fine and perfite cristal: that which is made in the province of Saxii is the best and finest. Artificers and mechanicall officers doo dwell in streets appointed, whereas none do dwell amongst them, but such as be of the same occupation or arte: in such sort that if you doo come at the beginning of the street, looke what craft or art they are there, it is to be understood that all that streete are of that occupation. It is ordayned by a law and statute, that the sonne shall inherite his fathers occupation, and shall not use any other without licence of the justice:

if one of them bee verie rich and will not worke, yet he cannot let but have in his shop men that must worke of his occupation. Therefore they that do use it, by reason that they are brought up in it from their youth, they are famous and verie curious in that which they do worke, as it is plainelie seene in that which is brought fro thence to Manilla, and into the Indies, and unto Portugall. Their currant monie of that kingdome is made of golde and silver, without any signe or print, but goeth by waight: so that all men carrieth a balances with them, and little peeces of silver and golde, for to buy such things as they have neede of. And for things of a greater quantitie they have bigger ballances in their houses, and waights, that are sealed, for to give to every man that which is theirs: for therein the justices have great care. In the government of the Chincheo they have copper monie coyned, but it is nothing woorth out of that province.

### QUESTIONS

1. To whom does Mendoza compare the Chinese people? Why?
2. What does the passage tell us about the position of women in Chinese society?
3. What does he think about the custom of foot-binding?
4. Why do you think Mendoza's *History* was so popular in the sixteenth century?

## RELIGIOUS REFORM

63.

MARTIN LUTHER

### THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN

(1520)

### OF MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

(1566)

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was undoubtedly the central figure of the sixteenth century. Trained for the law, he underwent a spiritual crisis that led him to enter an Augustinian monastery. There his extraordinary gifts were recognized, and he quickly distinguished himself as a scholar, teacher, and pastor. In 1517 he protested against the sale of indulgences and found himself at the center of a political and religious controversy. Luther refused to recant his views and was condemned by both the pope and the Holy Roman emperor. He broke from the Roman Catholic church and founded his own religious movement, first called Protestantism and later Lutheranism.

Throughout his political struggles, Luther wrote incessantly. The spread of his message and his movement was aided by the invention of printing and by the increase of literacy. He translated parts of the Bible into German, prepared a new church service, and even wrote hymns. But his most important works were the explanations of his faith. *The Freedom of a Christian* is one of the central statements of Luther's theology.

Among the many church reforms that Luther undertook was permitting clergy to marry. In his later years, he took a wife, a former nun from a dissolved monastery. Luther's views on marriage, however, were not part of his systematic theology. They were collected in *The Table Talk*, a work compiled by his followers after his death.

### THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN

Many people have considered Christian faith an easy thing, and not a few have given it a place among the virtues. They do this because they have not experienced it and have never tasted

the great strength there is in faith. It is impossible to write well about it or to understand what has been written about it unless one has at one time or another experienced the courage which faith gives a man when trials oppress him. But he who has had even a faint taste of it can never write

speak, meditate, or hear enough concerning it. It is a living "spring of water welling up to eternal life," as Christ calls it in John 4[:14].

As for me, although I have no wealth of faith to boast of and know how scant my supply is, I nevertheless hope that I have attained to a little faith, even though I have been assailed by great and various temptations; and I hope that I can discuss it, if not more elegantly, certainly more to the point, than those literalists and subtle disputants have previously done, who have not even understood what they have written.

To make the way smoother for the unlearned—for only them do I serve—I shall set down the following two propositions concerning the freedom and the bondage of the spirit:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. Both are Paul's own statements, who says in I Cor. 9[:19], "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all," and in Rom. 13[:8], "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved. So Christ, although he was Lord of all, was "born of woman, born under the law" [Gal. 4:4], and therefore was at the same time a free man and a servant, "in the form of God" and "of a servant" [Phil. 2:6-7].

Let us start, however, with something more remote from our subject, but more obvious. Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called a carnal, outward, or old man. Because of this diversity of nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things concerning the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, "for the desires of the flesh are against the

Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh," according to Gal. 5[:17].

First, let us consider the inner man to see how a righteous, free, and pious Christian, that is, a spiritual, new, and inner man becomes what he is. It is evident that no external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom, or in producing unrighteousness or servitude. A simple argument will furnish the proof of this statement. What can it profit the soul if the body is well, free, and active, and eats, drinks, and does as it pleases? For in these respects even the most godless slaves of vice may prosper. On the other hand, how will poor health or imprisonment or hunger or thirst or any other external misfortune harm the soul?

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11[:25], "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live"; and John 8[:36], "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"; and Matt. 4[:4], "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory and of every incalculable blessing.

You may ask, "What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?" I answer: The Apostle explains this in Romans 1. The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, according to Rom. 10[:9]: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from

the dead, you will be saved." Furthermore, "Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified" [Rom. 10:4]. Again, in Rom. 1[:17], "He who through faith is righteous shall live." The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.

Should you ask how it happens that faith alone justifies and offers us such a treasure of great benefits without works in view of the fact that so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed in the Scriptures, I answer: First of all, remember what has been said, namely, that faith alone, without works, justifies, frees, and saves; we shall make this clearer later on. Here we must point out that the entire Scripture of God is divided into two parts: commandments and promises. Although the commandments teach things that are good, the things taught are not done as soon as they are taught, for the commandments show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it. They are intended to teach man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability. That is why they are called the Old Testament and constitute the Old Testament. For example, the commandment, "You shall not covet" [Exod. 20:17], is a command which proves us all to be sinners, for no one can avoid coveting no matter how much he may struggle against it. Therefore, in order not to covet and to fulfil the commandment, man is compelled to despair of himself, to seek the help which he does not find in himself elsewhere and from someone else, as stated in Hosea [13:9]: "Destruction is your own, O Israel: your help is only in me." As we fare with respect to one commandment, so we fare with all, for it is equally impossible for us to keep any one of them.

Now when a man has learned through the commandments to recognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law—since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope—then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved. Here the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God which declare the glory of God saying, "If you wish to fulfil the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you. If you believe, you shall have all things; if you do not believe, you shall lack all things."

The following statements are therefore true: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works." Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ also says, "A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" [Matt. 7:18]. It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree and that the tree does not grow the fruits; also that, on the contrary, the trees bear the fruits and the fruits grow on the trees. As it is necessary, therefore, that the trees exist before their fruits and the fruits do not make trees either good or bad, but rather as the trees are, so are the fruits they bear; so a man must first be good or wicked before he does a good or wicked work, and his works do not make him good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked.

Illustrations of the same truth can be seen in all trades. A good or bad house does not make a good or a bad builder; but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like

himself. So it is with the works of man. As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good if it was done in faith, wicked if it was done in unbelief. But the converse is not true, that the work makes the man either a believer or an unbeliever. As works do not make a man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous. But as faith makes a man a believer and righteous, so faith does good works. Since, then, works justify no one, and a man must be righteous before he does a good work, it is very evident that it is faith alone which, because of the pure mercy of God through Christ and in his Word, worthily and sufficiently justifies and saves the person. A Christian has no need of any work or law in order to be saved since through faith he is free from every law and does everything out of pure liberty and freely. He seeks neither benefit nor salvation since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because in his faith he now seeks only to please God.

So a Christian, like Christ his head, is filled and made rich by faith and should be content with this form of God which he has obtained by faith; only, as I have said, he should increase this faith until it is made perfect. For this faith is his life, his righteousness, and his salvation: it saves him and makes him acceptable, and bestows upon him all things that are Christ's, as has been said above, and as Paul asserts in Gal.2[:20] when he says, "And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval.

He ought to think: "Although I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness

and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."

Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations. He does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward. As his Father does, distributing all things to all men richly and freely, making "his sun rise on the evil and on the good" [Matt. 5:45], so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such great benefits.

Therefore, if we recognize the great and precious things which are given us, as Paul says [Rom. 5:5], our hearts will be filled by the Holy Spirit with the love which makes us free, joyful, almighty workers and conquerors over all tribulations, servants of our neighbors, and yet lords of all. For those who do not recognize the gifts bestowed upon them through Christ, however, Christ has been born in vain; they go their way with their works and shall never come to taste or feel those things. Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we

abound, so we were in need before God and lacked his mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.

## OF MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

### DCCXV

A preacher of the gospel, being regularly called, ought, above all things, first, to purify himself before he teaches others. Is he able, with a good conscience, to remain unmarried? let him so remain; but if he cannot abstain living chastely, then let him take a wife; God has made that plaster for that sore.

### DCCXVI

It is written in the first book of Moses, concerning matrimony: God created a man and a woman and blessed them. Now, although this sentence was chiefly spoken of human creatures, yet we may apply it to all the creatures of the world—to the fowls of the air, the fish in the waters, and the beasts of the field, wherein we find a male and a female consorting together, engendering and increasing. In all these, God has placed before our eyes the state of matrimony. We have its image, also, even in the trees and earth.

### DCCXVII

Between husband and wife there should be no question as to *meum* and *tuum*. All things should be in common between them, without any distinction or means of distinguishing.

### DCCXVIII

St. Augustine said, finely: A marriage without children is the world without the sun.

## DCCXIX

Maternity is a glorious thing, since all mankind have been conceived, born, and nourished of women. All human laws should encourage the multiplication of families.

## DCCXX

The world regards not, nor comprehends the works of God. Who can sufficiently admire the state of conjugal union, which God has instituted and founded, and whence all human creatures, yea, all states proceed. Where were we if it existed not? But neither God's ordinance, nor the gracious presence of children, the fruit of matrimony, moves the ungodly world, which beholds only the temporal difficulties and troubles of matrimony, but sees not the great treasure that is hid therein. We were all born of women—emperors, kings, princes, yea, Christ himself, the Son of God, did not disdain to be born of a virgin. Let the contemnners and rejecters of matrimony go hang, ye Anabaptists and Adamites, who recognise not marriage, but live all together like animals, and the papists, who reject married life, and yet have strumpets; if they must needs condemn matrimony, let them be consistent and keep no concubines.

## DCCXXI

The state of matrimony is the chief in the world after religion; but people shun it because of its inconveniences, like one who, running out of the rain, falls into the river. We ought herein to have more regard to God's command and ordinance, for the sake of the generation, and the bringing up of children, than to our untoward humours and cogitations; and further, we should consider that it is a physic against sin and unchastity. None, indeed, should be compelled to marry; the matter should be left to each man's conscience, for bride-love may not be forced. God has said, "It is not good that the

man should be alone;" and St. Paul compares the church to a spouse, or bride and a bridegroom. But let us ever take heed that, in marrying, we esteem neither money nor wealth, great descent, nobility, nor lasciviousness.

## DCCXXII

The Lord has never changed the rules he imposed on marriage, but in the case of the conception of his Son Jesus Christ. The Turks, however, are of opinion that 'tis no uncommon thing for a virgin to bear a child. I would by no means introduce this belief into my family.

## DCCXXV

Men have broad and large chests, and small narrow hips, and more understanding than the women, who have but small and narrow breasts, and broad hips, to the end they should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children.

## QUESTIONS

1. What role does faith play in Luther's thought?
2. How important is the Word of God? What is it, according to Luther?
3. Luther believes that faith offers more hope for salvation than good works. Why is this?
4. *Of Marriage and Celibacy* is composed of words spoken by Luther taken down by his followers. How does this make it different from *The Freedom of a Christian*?
5. Why does Luther think clergy should be allowed to marry?
6. Why is matrimony important?
7. What is Luther's view of women? What does he see as their role in marriage, and how does he think they should be treated?
8. Luther spent most of his early adulthood as a celibate monk. How do you think this might have affected his views of marriage?

## DCCXXVI

Marrying cannot be without women, nor can the world subsist without them. To marry is physic against incontinence. A woman is, or at least should be, a friendly, courteous, and merry companion in life, whence they are named, by the Holy Ghost, house-honours, the honour and ornament of the house, and inclined to tenderness, for thereunto are they chiefly created, to bear children, and be the pleasure, joy, and solace of their husbands.

## DCCXXVII

Dr. Luther said one day to his wife: You make me do what you will; you have full sovereignty here, and I award you, with all my heart, the command in all household matters, reserving my rights in other points. Never any good came out of female domination. God created Adam master and lord of living creatures, but Eve spoilt all, when she persuaded him to set himself above God's will. 'Tis you women, with your tricks and artifices, that lead men into error.

## 64.

JOHN CALVIN

## INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

(1534)

## CATECHISM

(CA. 1540)

John Calvin (1509–1564) was the seminal thinker among the post-Luther generation of religious reformers. French by birth and a lawyer by training, Calvin found himself the leader of the Reformation in the Swiss city of Geneva. There he helped establish a new form of church government that depended not upon a hierarchy of priests and bishops as in the Catholic Church but instead gave power to individual congregations of believers. Calvin's principal theological contribution was to emphasize the doctrine of predestination as the foundation of individual salvation.

*Institutes of the Christian Religion* was first written for the purpose of gaining acceptance for Protestantism in France. Through successive editions, Calvin expanded and refined his theology.

Calvin's *Catechism*, first published in about 1540, was designed as a simple statement of the Church's doctrine. Before formal admission to the congregation, children memorized the answers to the minister's questions and proved that they understood the essentials of Calvinist theology. The question and answer format, a Protestant version of the Socratic method, was thought to be the most effective way to teach children complex ideas. The selections reproduced here focus on the nature of the Church and on salvation.

## INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

## Knowledge of God Involves Trust and Reverence

What is God? Men who pose this question are merely toying with idle speculation. It is far better for us to inquire, "What is his nature?" and to know what is consistent with his nature. What good is it to profess with Epicurus some sort of God who has cast aside the care of the world only to amuse himself in idleness? What help is

it, in short, to know a God with whom we have nothing to do? Rather, our knowledge should serve first to teach us fear and reverence; secondly, with it as our guide and teacher, we should learn to seek every good from him, and having received it, to credit it to his account. For how can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him?—that whatever you undertake, whatever you do, ought to be ascribed to him? If this be so, it follows