

THE REFORMATION (PART 2)

Objective

The children learn about the further spread of the Reformation.

Contents

- The Reformation in Switzerland with Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin.
- Consequences of the Reformation.
- Characteristics of the reforming churches.



Introductory Remarks

1 The Wittenberg and Geneva Reformations in Europe

Martin Luther's teachings foremostly spread into large parts of Germany and Scandinavia.

In addition to Martin Luther, the Swiss reformers Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) and John Calvin (1509–1564) were significant in carrying out and spreading the Reformation.

From Geneva, Switzerland, where Calvin was active, the Reformation gained momentum and reached France, after Luther's writings had already become known there in Calvin's student days. At the time of Calvin's death, there were 2,000 evangelical congregations in France, although the majority of the French population remained Catholic.

From 1562 to 1598, numerous bloody civil wars between Calvinists and Catholics broke out in France and other countries. Many Calvinists had to flee France. They sought a new place to stay in countries which were already Protestant. Nevertheless, the reformers' conceptions spread especially from France to the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and Poland. In Scotland it was John Knox (1505–1572), one of Calvin's disciples, who drove the Reformation forward as Calvin had intended. It was there that Calvinism had its greatest influence.

In later centuries emigrants also spread the reforming teachings into North America and South Africa.

The Catholic Church reacted to the spread of Reformation by bitterly defending its traditional positions on the one hand, while on the other also resolving to make certain changes. While the Council of Trent (1545–1563) rejected the practise of selling indulgences, which was carried on at that time, it held to its previous conception of the relationship between faith and works (key word: doctrine of justification). There was no convergence between the Catholic and Protestant positions on this point.

- According to the Old Testament, man is righteous before God if he fulfils God's laws.
- Martin Luther, above all, referred to the letter to the Romans in which Apostle Paul says that the justification of the sinner is the result of grace alone, for the sake of his faith.

- According to the Catholic conception, grace is also in the foreground; however, in addition, the significance of works is emphasized.

During the centuries that followed, conflicting doctrinal statements by the Catholics and Protestants again and again were cause for hostilities. Even the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which affected all of Europe, began as a denominational argument. This terrible war ended with the Peace of Westphalia. Among other things, the right to freely choose one's religious denomination was reaffirmed to the German estates of the Empire¹, which they had already become entitled to in 1555 with the religious Peace of Augsburg. Individuals had not yet gained the right to freedom of religion, but an important step had been taken toward it.

2 The emergence of additional Christian churches

A period of peace and contemplation followed. The intention to lead a godly life in accordance with the gospel was widespread. Christian communities, which strove to live according to the early Christian example, emerged in Protestant areas. These groups set different priorities, which sometimes led to hostile dealings with one another. Consequently, Christianity became increasingly fragmented.

A few characteristically Protestant churches are mentioned here.

The Anglican Church in England

The English King Henry VIII reigned from 1509 to 1547. He was at loggerheads with the Pope. Among other things, the Pope denied the King permission to divorce his wife. These disputes led to the separation of the English (Catholic) church from Rome. By means of the so-called supremacy acts, the Anglican Church came into being in 1534, in which bishops are active, with the Archbishop of Canterbury being the foremost authority. Its "earthly head" is the respective English sovereign.

The Anglican Church abolished the monasteries and convents which existed in England, and rejected the papacy². Incidentally, it retained many of the rites, rituals, and structures of the Catholic Church. Only around 1550 were there Calvinistic types of reforms.

¹ The estates of the Empire consisted of the Empire's princes, counts, and free cities. They were entitled to vote at imperial diets.

² The term "papacy" refers to the office and institution of the head of the Roman Catholic Church, or the Pope. The Pope, who at the same time is the Bishop of Rome, considers himself to be Apostle Peter's successor, since, according to the Roman Catholic view, he too was supposed to have been Bishop of Rome. With reference to Matthew 16: 16 et seq. he deduces for himself pre-eminence in matters of doctrine and discipline.

Lesson Plan

Lead-In

Workbook, Exercise 1

Discussion

Question Prompt

Implementation

Workbook, Text

Evangelical Lutheran Churches

The present-day Lutheran (state) Churches orient themselves largely to Luther's teachings. They acknowledge two sacraments: baptism and communion. Church decisions are made by synods.

Evangelical Reformed Churches

The present-day Evangelical Reformed Churches can be traced back to German and Swiss reformers such as Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin. The beliefs of the Reformed Churches are above all characterized by Calvinism. Despite many a dissimilarity, the Reformed Churches have common basic characteristics with respect to their doctrine and constitution. The services are conducted in a very simple manner. The sermon is the focal point. Evangelical Reformed Churches also acknowledge two sacraments: baptism and communion. Church decisions are likewise made by synods.

Together, the children read the text "The most famous sausage in church history".

Stress the following:

- According to Catholic doctrine, the faithful must fast during Lent (40 days before Easter). Within this period they are not permitted to eat meat, for example.
- Zwingli rejected the church's fasting rules because he could not substantiate them biblically.
- The fact that Zurich's city council took the side of Zwingli aided his reform efforts in the time that followed.

Who was Ulrich Zwingli?

The children read the text about reformer Ulrich Zwingli.

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| Discussion | <p>The children convey the content of the text in their own words. Stress that Ulrich Zwingli had always considered himself under obligation to the Holy Bible and the Church Fathers only.</p> |
| Question Prompt | <p>Why did Zwingli ban pictures and music?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He wanted to banish from the church everything which, according to his view, was not biblical. According to Colossians 3: 16, however, congregational singing was already common in the early Christian church. ■ The faithful were to concentrate on God's word. |
| Workbook, Text | <p>The children read the text about reformer John Calvin.</p> |
| Discussion | <p>The children convey the content of the text in their own words.</p> |
| Teacher's Presentation | <p>John Calvin established a church order that applied to the entire city of Geneva. It governed citizens' public and private lives to the smallest detail. Even "unbelievers" were to be made subject to this "godly law". A moral court supervised all citizens to ensure they lived in a Christian manner. Dancing, playing cards, and going to theatres or pubs were forbidden. Whoever contravened these bans was punished with fines, exclusion from Communion, imprisonment, expulsion, or even execution.</p> <p>Women's dresses were not permitted to be too long, and their hairstyles were not to be striking. At lunchtime, both rich and poor households had the prescribed stew. Whoever sang a light-hearted song was punished with three days of imprisonment. A blind fiddler was once expelled from the city because he struck up a dance tune.</p> <p>A university was founded which educated Calvinist preachers especially for the missionary work in many countries of Europe.</p> <p>The reformed church spread into several regions of southern Germany, as well as to France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England. In France, its followers were given the name "Huguenots". Whereas the Lutherans were under the ruler's protection, the Calvinists almost always stood in opposition to the ruling authorities.</p> |
| Workbook, Exercise 2 | <p>The children look at the map. They determine into which countries outside of Europe the churches that go back to the Geneva Reformation primarily spread. They record the names of the countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Canada, |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the USA ■ South Africa, and ■ Australia. |
| Discussion | <p>All of these states were connected by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a common language (English), and ■ many business relations. <p>This facilitated the dissemination of information and thereby the spreading of the reformed faith.</p> |
| Teacher's Presentation | <p>Varied conceptions of biblical statements arose among the Protestant groups. This led to the founding of an increasing number of religious denominations. It was not uncommon for these devout people to become hostile towards each other on account of their diverging points of view.</p> |
| Workbook, Exercise 3 | <p>The children read the summarized information concerning the reformed religious denominations. If necessary, supplement this information with further comments based on the "Introductory Remarks". The children compare the information about the reformed churches with that of the Catholic Church.</p> <p>Then the children complete the section about the New Apostolic Church with the relevant information. They may consult with a partner or the group.</p> |
| Conclusion | |
| Discussion | <p>The children compare or explain their entries. They highlight common aspects among and differences between the other religious denominations.</p> |
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