

Topic 2.5: The Catholic Reformation



OVERVIEW

Also known as the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Reformation describes the Catholic Church's response to Protestantism and its own reforms to reduce corruption and to revive spirituality among the Catholic faithful. The establishment of the Jesuit Order, the Council of Trent, and the spiritual writings of Teresa of Avila contributed to a revival of Catholicism in Europe.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

It took some decades after Martin Luther's 95 Theses for the Catholic Church to make a focused effort to respond to the Reformation. The Counter-Reformation peaked between 1540 and 1580. During this period, the Council of Trent met, the Jesuit Order was established, and Teresa of Avila initiated monastic reforms.

KEY TERMS

Jesuit Order

Officially known as the Society of Jesus, this Catholic religious order was established by Ignatius of Loyola in order to oppose Protestantism through education and spiritual warfare.

Council of Trent

This council of Catholic bishops met between 1545 and 1563 to determine the Catholic Church's response to Protestantism.

Anathema

These Edicts from the Council of Trent cursed heretics and denounced Protestant doctrines.

Index of Prohibited Books

Books that were placed on this list were deemed heretical by the Catholic Church and were forbidden to be read by Catholics.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Council of Trent resulted in **continuity** because...

The Council represented an **affirmation** of Catholic doctrine, reaffirming the primacy of the pope and traditional Catholic beliefs about the role of faith and good works in attaining salvation.

The Council of Trent resulted in **change** because...

The Council represented a **reformation** of Church practices, creating new religious orders, establishing seminaries to train and educate priests, and banning the sale of indulgences.

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IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Ignatius of Loyola was born in Spain in 1491 and came of age during the Reformation. Having grown up reading stories about knights, he decided on a military career, which was successful until his right leg was shattered by a cannonball. While he was recovering, Ignatius read religious texts in the hospital and experienced a conversion. He went on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he left his sword and dagger on an altar to the Virgin Mary, pledging himself to serve Christ and the Church.

In 1539, Ignatius of Loyola founded the Jesuit Order with his friend, Francis Xavier. The Jesuit Order was dedicated to serving the Pope, combatting Protestantism through education and spiritual warfare, and the observation of strict spiritual practices. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, a book of his personal meditations and prayers, has become a classic of Catholic spirituality.

While Ignatius of Loyola was founding a new religious order, **Teresa of Avila** was reforming the existing Carmelite Order. During the Late Middle Ages, monastic discipline had become lax. Teresa of Avila restored monastic discipline and became revered as a mystic and spiritualist.

BAROQUE ART AND THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION

Baroque art, with its grandiose style and emphasis on capturing dramatic moments, was used by the Catholic Church to promote the goals of the Counter-Reformation. The Ecstasy of St. Teresa, a famous sculpture by **Bernini**, captures a moment in which St. Teresa is emotionally overwhelmed by her spiritual union with Jesus Christ. This sculpture promoted the spiritual benefits of the monastic life and religious orders, which had been abolished by Protestants. Many of **Caravaggio's** paintings dramatically depicted biblical scenes, such as Jesus being crowned with thorns.



St Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits



Bernini's Ecstasy of St. Teresa, from the collection of Alvesgaspar.