UNIT 30   RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

Structure

30.1   INTRODUCTION

In Unit 17 of Block 5 we had discussed Christianity in the Roman World. You must have noticed that Christianity spread in most parts of the Roman Empire by the 5th century. By the medieval period the whole of Europe had adopted Christianity as its religion. By the 16th century it had spread to all those regions also where Europeans had settled through conquests or establishing trading centres. By the 16th century the Catholic Church emerged as a powerful institution in the Christian World in general and Europe in particular. No other contemporary religion in the world had such strong religious establishment.

Keeping this in view in this Unit we will focus mainly on the Christian religious establishment in Europe during 16th and 17th centuries. The period witnessed the rise of Protestant movement. The rise of Protestant movement was an event which had far reaching consequences for the Catholic religions establishment. In this Unit we will try to understand these factors which gave rise to Protestantism, its growth and Catholic Counter Reformation. We would also like to relate these religious changes to the process of increasing secularisation, rise of absolutist monarchical states and nationalism. Moreover,

we will also try to evaluate the economic significance of Protestantism especially its role in the rise of capitalism.

The Reformation or the division of European Catholic Church with the emergence of Protestant ideas was a decisive moment in the history of Europe. The religious reform of Church triggered important changes in the social and political atmosphere of the 16th and the 17th century Europe. The need for reform of the individual Christian and of the institution of Church was an important component in the Christian faith. The Church had undergone many changes by adapting itself to social political milieu for survival and expansion. The Christian humanists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century urged reform of the church. The Reformation was also a more open and direct way of challenging the abuses of Catholic Church, the role of clergy or priesthood and the hierarchy within the ecclesiastical order. The consequences of religious division became more significant because it became intertwined with certain political and social factors. The close relation between the Protestant reformers and newly emergent nation states based on absolutist power also led to the growth of national or state Church, partial expropriation of Church property and separation of secular concerns of state from the control of Church. The expansion of literacy through medieval learning centres among the laymen and spread of ideas with modern printing provided the necessary stimulus for such a coincidence of religious and social changes.

30.2   TRADITION OF CHURCH AS AN INSTITUTION

Initially the term Church referred to the entire assembly of Jesus' followers. After the legalisation of Christianity by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century, and the growth of institutional offices and officials, the word Church was sometimes applied to those officials. Subsequently, the institutional basis of Church was strengthened when the bishops of Rome known as 'Popes' (from the Latin word Papa, meaning father) claimed to speak and act as the source of Christian unity. In 380 AD, the emperors were expected to gain the support of ecclesiastical organisation of Church to maintain social harmony and order. The institutional strength of Church also grew as a friend of the empire. The emperor Theodosius allowed the Church to establish its own courts. Church courts began to develop their body of law, called "canon laws". These courts, not the Roman state, had jurisdiction over the clergy and ecclesiastical disputes. The foundation for the power of medieval Church was laid by these acts of monarchs. Even by the times of Theodosius Church had become so powerful that Bishop Ambrose of Milan refused to hand over his Cathedral Church to the emperor. Ambrose insisted that the Church was independent of state's jurisdiction and that in matters of faith or the Church, the bishops were to be judges of emperors, not the other way round. Ambrose's statement was to become the basis of relations between the temporal power of state and the spiritual power of the clergy.

The power and influence of Church kept on growing with the help of missionary activity and growth of monasteries as a main prop of continuous ecclesiastical reform during the Middle Ages. Church frequently became the source of social harmony and order in the times of turmoil and anarchy. The relations between the rulers and Church were not always harmonious. In eleventh century, Pope

Gregory decreed against lay-investiture or selection and appointment of Church officials by secular rulers. Ecclesiastical opposition to such appointments was not new. It was accepted doctrine of Church for centuries. But Gregory's attempt to put this principle into actual practice was a radical departure from tradition. The German emperor Henry IV, the English monarch William and Philip I of France protested against Pope's decree. The conflict over the issue of lay-investiture had profound effect on social and political organisation. It strengthened the great princes and aristocracy in Germany and prevented the development of a strong centralised monarchy. Such tension and controversies between rulers and church reveal that church was not entirely confined to religious or spiritual matters. In fact, the Catholic Church and its priesthood was the cornerstone of medieval social life in Europe. The religious ideology of Church was the predominant ideology. The Church imposed its will through a number of sanctions and maintained itself by a multitude of revenue and religious demands. It was the greatest property owner in Europe and accumulated unlimited wealth.

30.3 DISORDER WITHIN THE CHURCH: SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RISE OF PROTESTANTISM

The medieval Church was neither monolithic nor free from internal strife and tension. The Christianity and Church were used by the ruling classes to cement social-cohesion. The heretical sects threatened the social order. The term heresy (from Greek word *hairesis*) meant "individual choosing". In the Middle Ages, the term came to be applied to the position of a Christian who chose and stubbornly held to doctrinal error in defiance of Church hierarchy. The 'Waldensians' – the followers of heretic Peter Waldo of Lyons in twelfth century believed that only prayers, not sacraments, were needed for salvation. Another group known as the Cathars or Albigensians also rejected the hierarchical organisation and the sacraments of established Church. The Church used the support of equally popular saints Dominic and Francis, and the orders of friars that they established, to combat popular heresies. Unlike the earlier monastic order within Christianity such as the Benedictine and the Cistercians, the friars came from urban classes and were based in the cities and university towns. They based their life on the Gospel's teachings, owned no property and lived on mendicancy. The Papacy used these friars to staff a new ecclesiastical court, the Inquisition (1233). Inquisition means 'Investigation' and friars used unjust methods of psychological and physical torture in such investigations. The aim was to root out unorthodox thoughts.

The defiance of clerical hierarchy was reported from different parts of Europe. John Wycliffe (1329-84) in England and John Huss (1369-1415) in Bohemia demanded a reformed Church. Wycliffe wrote that papal claims of temporal power had no basis in scriptures. He also urged abolition of such practices as the veneration of saints, pilgrimages and pluralism. He urged that the Church be stripped of its property. His followers came to be called the 'Lollards'. Renaissance produced better educated theologians. It also strengthened humanism. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1468-1546) studied the Greek original text of the New Testament. His satire, *The Praise of Folly* (1511) condemned the absurd superstitions of the parish clergy and the excessive rituals of Christian

monks. Although he remained within the Catholic spirit and stressed slow reform of Church to remove abuses and emphasised self-training for salvation. However, thinkers like Erasmus, Thomas More and Johann Reuchlin provided the much needed stimulus for the Protestantism of Luther.

In the early sixteenth century, criticism of established Church hierarchy also included clerical immorality, ignorance, pluralism or simultaneous holding of several *benefices* or offices and problem of absenteeism among higher clergy. Although priesthood demanded absolute celibacy, it was difficult to enforce it. Immorality, of course, included more than sexual transgressions. Many clerics, especially, higher ecclesiastical collected revenues from their *benefices* through local priest, even without visiting them. Many clerics of Italian origin, because of the papal domination, held multiple *benefices* or offices in England, Spain, France and Germany. It provoked nationalistic sentiments also. It was a time when absolutist monarchies were acquiring features of a national state such as a stable inner market and a national self consciousness. The institutional power of Church weakened as a result of these developments. These royal governments were already rewarding state officials with high Church offices in order to pay them, removing the distinction between secular offices and religious duties. The dissatisfaction of different classes and strata of society found expression in a negative attitude towards the Catholic clergy. The archbishops and high clergy were centres of power and wealth. They did not symbolise the Christian teaching of "give away what you have to the poor, and seek salvation". The Church services were conducted in a language incomprehensible to the laymen. These were some of the main ideological and sociological factors responsible for destruction of the spiritual or religious unity of the Western World in the sixteenth century.

30.4 MARTIN LUTHER AND THE BIRTH OF PROTESTANTISM

The Protestant revolt took place in Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Scotland, England and Bohemia and some parts of Hungary in the sixteenth century. A German Augustine monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546) was responsible for one form of Protestant Christianity, Lutheranism. Luther articulated the widespread desire for the reform of Church and a deep yearning for salvation. The concern for salvation was a chief motivation or force for religious reformers. In this sense, the sixteenth century Reformation was partially a continuation of the medieval religious search. In 1477, Pope permitted sale of indulgences for money, i.e., documents which absolved the sinner for his sins from punishment by torments in purgatory (not in hell.). This became the immediate cause of Protestant indignation. (In Sub section 30.4.2. you will read more on indulgences)

30.4.1 Intellectual and Formative Influences on Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a product of the intellectual lives of the German Universities, which provided the milieu from which the Protestant Reformation emerged. He earned a master's degree from the University of Erfurt. His father intended his son to study law and enter a legal career – a stepping stone to public office and material success. However, Luther entered the monastery of Augustinian monks at Erfurt in 1505, became a priest in 1505 and obtained a doctorate

degree in theology. From 1512 until his death in 1546, he served as a professor of scripture at the newly established university of Wittenberg. A well-known study of Luther's psychology by Eric Erikson suggests that Luther underwent a severe crisis and worried continually about salvation in the years 1505 to 1515. He had disobeyed his father, thus violating one of the Ten Commandments of the Christian faith. He was grappling with the problem of salvation and meaning of life. It was during this phase of identity crisis, that study of ancient saint Paul's letter, led Luther to a new understanding of Christian faith. He came to believe that salvation comes not through external observances and penances (the so called "good works" of the faithful) but through a simple faith in Christ.

Many aspects of Luther's theology did not mark a break with the early medieval and Augustine's ideas. But he was also influenced by the general humanistic milieu of German universities. Particularly, Luther was influenced by William of Occam's philosophy of nominalism. This philosophy believed that there is no corresponding reality either in or out of mind which our general terms and concepts could capture. Occam differentiated between the demonstrable truth which could be verified by experience and proved by reason, and the revealed truth which could be known only by faith. Martin Luther came to the conclusion that the gulf between reason and revelation could be bridged by faith alone. For him faith became a free gift from God's grace which would bring salvation and for this a correct understanding of scripture – the book of faith – was necessary.

30.4.2   Ninety-five Theses and Protestant Ideas

Pope Leo X wanted to continue the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica but was hard pressed for funds. A German archbishop Albert arranged money from the Fuggers, the wealthy banking house of Augsburg. In return for this money, Albert was given several *benefices* or offices in Church by papal dispensation. Archbishop Albert was also authorised to sell indulgences in Germany to repay the Fuggers. Wittenberg, where Martin Luther was a professor of theology, was in the political jurisdiction of Frederick of Saxony. Frederick was one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Empire but forbade the sale of indulgences within his duchy. Many people from Saxony went to other states to buy indulgences. This led to attachment of a list of ninety-five theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg Castle on the eve of All Saint's day (October31, 1517) by Martin Luther. What was an indulgence and why Luther opposed it? According to Catholic theology, Christians who sin alienate themselves from God's grace. In order to regain God's grace, the sinner must confess his or her sins to a priest and do the penance assigned. The doctrine of indulgence was indispensable part of this system of earthly (temporal) penance. It was believed that Jesus and the saints had accumulated an inexhaustible "treasury of merits". This could be dispensed by the Pope and the clergy for the lay Christians of insufficient merit and virtue. Initially an indulgence was a remission of temporal or priest-imposed penalties for sin. By the late Middle Ages it was widely believed that an indulgence secured total remission of penalties for sin on earth or in purgatory. It became a kind of spiritual insurance policy which could save from the fire of hell with an assured swift entry into the Kingdom of God.

Luther in his ninety-five theses denied the efficacy of 'good works' such as indulgences. He also challenged the Pope's power to grant indulgences. He advocated that the Gospel was the only divinely inspired basis of Christianity

and faith is the only means of salvation. He, thus, rejected the role of clergy as the ordained administrators of sacraments. The theses were translated into German, printed and circulated throughout the empire. Luther insisted that there was no validity of indulgences and other so called good works in the scriptures. He thus raised the question of final authority within Church. The Papacy and the Catholic clergy tried to hit back and ex-communicate Luther in 1519. Luther responded by publicly burning the Bull (Papal edict) ex-communicating him. In the meanwhile, Luther had translated the old and New Testaments into German from the Hebrew and Greek original. These were also printed and circulated. On the basis of his studies, Luther denied the cult of Madonna and the saints and rejected monasticism.

Between 1520 and 1530, Luther worked out the basic theological tenets of his reformed Churches. The word Protestant derives from the protest drawn up by a small group of German princes at the Diet of Speyer in 1529 against the decision of the Catholic majority. At first Protestant was applied to Lutheran Churches but gradually it became a general term for many reformed non-Catholic sects of Christians in Europe. As Luther rejected ecclesiastical hierarchy, Church became the entire community of Christian believers. It was no longer to be identified with the clergy. Luther also argued that all vocations have equal merit, whether ecclesiastical or secular, and that every person should serve God in his or her individual calling. The seven sacraments of Catholic Church were reduced to three- baptism, marriage and communion. Luther articulated all his protestant ideas in three pamphlets. In "*An Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,*" Luther appealed to the incipient nationalism of Emperor Charles V and other princes of Germany to resist Papal claims to spiritual supremacy and their sole monopoly of interpreting the scriptures. In his second pamphlet, "*A Prelude Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*", written in Latin, he addressed the clergy to reform the Churches. The third pamphlet, "*of the Liberty of a Christian Man*", emphasised the notion of faith and conscience and maintained that final authority rested in the word of God as revealed in the Bible. Protestantism, in sum, represented a reformulation of the Christian traditions of medieval times.

30.4.3   The Social Impact of Luther's Ideas

Luther's interests and motives were primarily religious, but many people responded to his ideas for diverse reasons. The city governments of German towns resented clerical privileges and immunities since the fifteenth century. The clergy was exempted from taxes and from civic responsibilities such as defense of the city. Yet Churches held large amount of urban property. City governments were determined to integrate the clergy into civic life by reducing their privileges. The prosperous burghers in many towns established preacherships. Luther's ideas attracted many better educated preachers in towns such as Stuttgart, Eisenach, Jena and Wittenberg. Educated middle class and professionals were also attracted by Luther's ideas. The printing presses rapidly reproduced and made known his ideas. Luther's incredible skill with language and his range of verbal expression proved a potent weapon too. Luther advocated a simpler, personal religion based on faith, the centrality of the scriptures in the liturgy and in Christian faith, abolition of elaborate ceremonials and sacraments, and end of ecclesiastical hierarchy. The humanists in northern Europe were also calling for precisely such reforms.

Protestantism also became a tool in the on-going political struggle in Germany and other parts of Europe. Rivalry and opposition to each other between emperors and the papal power already existed. The semi-sovereign feudal lords, who stood below the King, at times supported one faction and sometimes the other party. They strived for more and more independence. Many embraced Protestantism to gain independence. The anti-clericalism and incipient German nationalism coincided with the interest of German nobility. It demanded supremacy of secular government and state. Protestant ideas favored such political arrangement. The imperial knights who had limited means also craved for vast material wealth and landed estates of Churches. However, the practice of religion in sixteenth century remained in public domain and not a private matter. In German states, the religion of ruling prince determined public religious tendencies and beliefs of his subjects. Princes did not believe in religious liberty. However many princes had a great deal to gain by embracing Protestantism. It could mean the legal confiscation of estates of clergy, monasteries, and wealthy shrines. Charles V, the Habsburg Emperor, was a vigorous defender of Catholic faith. Since a number of princes used religious issue to extend their financial and political independence, the resultant political struggle eroded imperial authority. In 1521, at the Diet of Worms, Charles V rejected Luther's doctrine and banned him from the empire. Luther and his ideas survived due to support of other sympathetic princes. It led to political fragmentation of the German empire. Charles's efforts to crush Lutheran states were unsuccessful. Finally, the peace of Augsburg (1555) allowed each prince to decide the religion of his territory. Most of the Northern and central Germany became Lutheran, while the south remained Roman Catholic.

The rise of Protestantism in Germany also led to many defections of monks from monasteries. As Luther attacked celibacy, many returned to married secular life. As the monasteries looked after schooling and maintenance of orphanages, etc, there was partial disruption of such services. It was felt that community should be responsible for such services. Gradually such a system did emerge. Although Lutheranism allowed priests and nuns to enjoy matrimony, it centred women's concern exclusively on the children, the Kitchen, and the Church. Luther believed that marriage and child-bearing was a woman's career. The Luther's ideas also indirectly stirred the German countryside that culminated in the peasant uprisings. We will discuss this in the next section.

30.4.4 Peasant Wars in Germany

The peasants were attracted to Lutheran ideas because it seemed to give religious support in their fight against economic grievances. The crop failures in 1523 and 1524 aggravated their deteriorating conditions. In 1525, the representatives of Swabian peasants drew up the twelve articles. They contained two basic themes:

a)   Substitution of customary law by the laws of the God (or religion) and

b)   Emphasis on the autonomy of village community.

These contained anti-clergy, anti-feudal connotations. Peasants demanded abolition of serfdom and other feudal restraints, resented seizure of common lands by nobles. They formulated their protest against the powerful and privileged nobility and clergy in religious terms. They believed that their justified demands conformed to the scripture and Lutheran ideas stimulated their unrest. God's

righteousness and 'Word of God' were invoked by rebellious peasants of Swabia, Rhineland and Saxony. The peasant rebellions were poorly coordinated, with peasants plundering castles and monasteries in 1524-25 under the leadership of Thomas Munzer. Luther warned the peasants against uprisings and said that nothing justified the use of armed struggle against legally established authorities. Freedom of Christian men meant for Luther independence from the authority of the Roman Church, it did not mean opposition to 'divinely' ordered social order of nobles and their secular power. The peasant uprising was part of an endemic agrarian unrest and steadily disintegrating feudal order. The religious ideology was used as a means for legitimizing their revolt by the peasants. Luther completely distanced himself from the peasant revolt in his famous tract– "*Against the Murderous Thieving Hordes of the Peasants*." The Protestant nobility crushed the revolt ferociously killing thousands of peasants.

30.5   GROWTH OF PROTESTANTISM

The printing press gave publicity to Luther's ideas. Various social groups responded to them in their own ways. The Protestant spirit engulfed most of the northern Europe as it became associated with interests and aspirations that were not entirely theological. It led to profound changes in European life and society. We will trace the growth of some variants of Protestantism in the coming sections.

30.5.1   "Magisterial" Reformation

The anti-clergy feeling in Europe got crystallised broadly into two streams. One was of the radical reformers while the other was of influential moderate theologians like Huldreych Zwingli in Switzerland, Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and John Calvin of France. These moderate theologians used the services of secular state authorities in spreading their beliefs. They came to be known as 'magisterial' reformers because of reliance they placed on magistrates in furthering the independent divine mission of moral discipline through Church. In other words, they stressed the role of reformed church as an independent power standing side by side the secular state. The main instrument of reform used by these reformers was preaching. In Switzerland, especially Zurich, Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) played an active role in Reformation efforts. Monasteries were abolished and their wealth was used for humanitarian charity purposes by the city council. Zwingli, thus, favored a kind of fusion of secular and spiritual community.

The Reformation, though primarily due to religious schism, also grew due to symbiosis of moderate protestant reformers with the secular needs of the state. The exigencies of strong absolutist monarchies, relying on incipient nationalism, made it necessary for them to restrict the interference of Pope in their affairs. Such rulers tried to reduce papal control over ecclesiastical appointments, abolish church's monopoly over education and check the drain of resources in the form of *annates*, titles and sale of indulgences etc. to Rome.

30.5.2   Calvinism

John Calvin (1509-1564), born in north western France, embraced Protestantism in 1533 and was invited to assist in the reformation of city of Geneva in 1541. Calvin worked to establish a reformed Church and Christian community through

city magistrates and reformed ministers. Calvin's ideas are embodied in *The Institutes of Christian Religion*. The basic element in his theology was his belief in the absolute sovereignty and omnipotence of God and total weakness of humanity. Calvin did not ascribe free will to human beings. He believed in the law of predestination – the eternal decree of God. It means that human beings cannot actively work through 'good works' for their salvation because God decided at the beginning of time who would achieve salvation and who would be damned. However, a person must lead a righteous life in the hope that he was pre-destined to achieve salvation. Calvin, with his complete mastery of scriptures and using preaching as an effective mode of communication, made Geneva as a model for many reformed Churches to emulate. Calvinist Church, however, did not provide religious freedom to all dissenters. It also dealt harshly with religious dissenters who defied strict religious dogmas of Calvinists. For instance, the Spanish humanist, Michael Servetus denied the Christian dogma of Trinity (Threefold divinity of god- the Father- Christ –the son and the holy spirit.) and rejected child baptism. He even declared that a person under twenty cannot commit a mortal sin. He escaped arrest by the Spanish Inquisition and came to Geneva. Calvin and the city council of Geneva got him rearrested and he was burnt at stake for his religious views.

However, Calvinism became a prominent force in Protestantism. The Calvinist ethic of the 'calling' dignified all work. It also provided Protestantism with a systematic theology and well-organised administrative machinery. Calvin's theology and reformed Church influenced the French Protestants called Huguenots and Scottish Presbyterians. In France, spread of Calvinism, as the city bourgeoisie and power knights joined the ranks of Huguenots, led to the war of Religions (1562-1593). Many Huguenots were massacred at St. Bartholomew night on August 29, 1572. The Edict of Nantes (1598) provided limited liberty for the Huguenots. Abolition of Edict of Nantes by Catholic monarch Louis XV in 1685, led to huge exodus of Huguenots from France to England, Holland, Sweden and the New World or America. The Protestant doctrine of secular wealth as a divine gift which one should treasure and multiply also travelled with them. This subsequently resulted in the creation of entrenched European and North American capitalism.

John Knox, a passionate Calvinist preacher, tried to restructure the Scottish Church after the model of Calvin's Geneva. In 1560 Knox persuaded the Scottish parliament to enact legislation ending papal authority. The mass was abolished and attendance at mass forbidden under penalty of death. The Church of Scotland came to be known as Presbyterian Church because presbyters or ministers- not bishops-governed it.

Calvin while upholding the sanctity of legitimate secular authority as a direct instrument of divine-will also gave a qualified support to rebellion against tyrannical absolute rule. The political implications of this meant that Calvinists tried to break the power of the Catholic and aristocratic minorities. It became the source of inspiration for the British and the North American Puritanism, and later influenced the growth of modern constitutional states. At another social level, Calvinism stressed high moral standards. It led to rigidity and intolerance in sexual relations.

30.5.3 Anglicanism or the English Reformation

The origin of Reformation in England can be traced to a number of social, economic and political causes. Demand for reform of the Church was voiced in the fourteenth century by the Lollards. Although suppressed, they survived in London, East Anglia, Kent and Southern England especially among the workers. Their anti-clergy ideals led to a personal, scriptural, non sacramental and lay-centred religion. The English humanists also stimulated such cries for reforms. The Reformation in England, however, was a state-initiated reform programme and got entangled in the growth of absolutist monarchy. Henry VIII took the initiative because of his matrimonial problems. Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife Catharine of Aragon so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. After the refusal of Pope to grant permission for divorce, Henry VIII declared himself the Head of English Church (1533-34). Properties of monasteries were appropriated and the ecclesiastical courts were abolished between 1535 to1540. In 1538, instructions were issued that Church services were to be compulsorily conducted in English instead of Latin. The English Reformation, however, was a gradual and piecemeal process as the majority of believers in England still clung to their Catholic faith. The Tudor state lacked the necessary bureaucratic and policing institutions to enforce religious changes. However, the religious reforms brought about profound changes in the English society. The assertion of supremacy of common law and abolition of ecclesiastical courts was welcomed by the lawyers. It also helped in the development of idea of national sovereignty above papal authority, and of parliamentarian jurisdiction above the ecclesiastical independence. The position of the Crown in the newly emerging nation-state improved. The status of parliament was enhanced as it played a key role in enforcement of Reformation through statutes enacted by it. The sale of Church property also consolidated the position of the upper landed aristocracy in English society. The position of power within state was earlier monopolised by clerics who were suitably rewarded out of Church *benefices*. Now the monarchy recruited its professional administrators from the University-educated sons of gentry.

30.5.4 Anabaptists

The name Anabaptist is derived from a Greek word meaning "to baptise again". Anabaptists, the radical reformers, believed in adult baptism or entry into the Christian community, thus providing free choice about religious faith. They claimed that there was no scriptural basis for baptising children and infants. They were opposed to ecclesiastical hierarchy and wanted to make the Church a voluntary association of believers who had experienced a spiritual illumination. They also wanted to separate Church and state. They emphasised religious tolerance and freedom. While the Protestantism grew with the help of princes and magistrates, the Anabaptists in sixteenth century sometimes refused to hold state offices, join armies or even take an oath. For them all believers were equal. The very nature of democratic congregational Church and egalitarianism appealed to lower classes of people, the peasants, artisans, miners and rootless mobile elements. The Anabaptists organised an uprising at Munster (1534-35), where they introduced their secular ideals. The princes of Germany along with the Protestant thinkers- Zwingli, Luther, Calvin as well as the Catholics all combined to track down and persecute these radical elements. However, traces of their ideas survived. Later the Quakers with their pacifism, the Baptists with

their stress on inner spiritual awakening and the Congregationalists with their democratic Church organisation represented the continuity with Anabaptist ideals.

30.6 CATHOLIC COUNTER – REFORMATION

The revival of Roman Catholicism, as a counter-reaction to spread of Protestantism has been called Counter-Reformation. The Counter-Reformation involved Catholic efforts to convince or coerce dissidents or heretics to return to the Church. However, it was not simply a negative reaction of Catholics. The feelings of medieval piety strengthened by a new spiritual fervor, Christian humanism, a revived scholasticism and administrative institutional reforms were some of the positive elements of Counter Reformation. Attempts to reform Catholic Church began in Spain and to some extent in the papal states of Italy. The Roman Catholic Church had developed a huge bureaucracy and an institutional reform of such huge machinery was naturally a very slow process. The preoccupation of Catholic Popes in political and financial affairs was also responsible for the tardiness of reform process. The idea of reform was closely linked to the idea of a general council representing the entire Christian community. Initially Popes were reluctant to convene such a council.

30.6.1 Council of Trent

Pope Paul III (1534-1549) established the Inquisition in the papal states and called a council that met at Trent. The Council met intermittently between 1545 and 1563. Lutherans and Calvinists were also invited to participate with a view to reconciliation. However, their insistence that the scriptures be made the sole basis for deliberations made reconciliation impossible. Emperor Charles V and Henry II of France also did not allow their bishops to attend certain sessions. Some bishops also wanted a concrete statement asserting the supremacy of the council over the papacy. Despite these weaknesses, the Council of Trent provided momentum to Counter-Reformation. It gave equal validity to the scriptures and Catholic traditions. It reaffirmed the seven sacraments and Catholic notion of transubstantiation (the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist sacrament). The Council strengthened moral discipline among clergy and suppressed pluralism and sale of indulgences. It further stressed the need for a better-educated clergy, preaching and instructing the laity.

30.6.2 New Religious Orders

The establishment of new religious orders to raise the moral and educational standards of clergy and laity was a feature of Counter-Reformation. The Ursuline order of nuns founded by Angela Merici (1474-1540) attained enormous prestige for the education of women. The Ursulines sought to re-Christianise society by educating future wives and mothers. The Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), a former Spanish soldier, played important role in checking the spread of Protestantism and converting Asians and Latin Americans to Catholicism and spreading Christian education all over Europe. The goal of Jesuits, as the members of order were called, was reform of the Church through education. They also intended to teach the Gospel to pagan people. The Jesuits had a highly centralised, tightly knit organisation. Emphasising obedience, they created a modern, almost quasi-military institution and achieved phenomenal

success. Jesuit schools adopted modern teaching methods. They carried Christianity to Asia and Latin America and brought southern Germany and much of Eastern Europe back to Catholicism.

30.6.3 Inquisition

The Inquisition was another powerful instrument of Counter-Reformation. In 1542, Pope Paul III established the sacred congregation of the Holy Office with jurisdiction over the Roman Inquisition. It was a committee of six cardinals empowered to arrest, imprison, and execute any Catholic who was found guilty of heresy. It operated according to the Roman law. It accepted flimsy evidence against the supposed heretic, was not obliged to inform the accused of charges against them, and some times applied torture. It published the *Index of Prohibited Books* (1559), a list of books forbidden to be read by the Christians. Within papal states, the Inquisition effectively put an end to heresy. Outside the papal territories, it made little difference. Similar medieval Inquisitions were also working in Spain since 1480 and the Netherlands (1523).

30.7 PROTESTANTISM AND THE CAPITALIST ETHIC

Protestantism is often credited with creation of a new ethic that encouraged capitalist development. It is claimed that the inherited medieval theology had hampered its growth. St. Jerome, the Compiler of Bible in Latin had declared in fourth century that "a rich man is either a thief or the son of a thief". This declaration in no way stood in the way of Church to amass wealth and landed estates. The Reformation censured the riches of Pope, the bishops and the monasteries, but at the same time, sanctioned the right of every man to the fruits of his labours and his moderate ways of life. Usury was discouraged and legally forbidden to Catholic Christians in the medieval societies. The new Protestant spirit allowed amassing of wealth from production and credit. The economic role of Calvinism and Protestantism in the rise of capitalist entrepreneurs has been the subject of a prolonged controversy among social scientists.

The German sociologist, Max Weber in his famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), initiated this controversy. He believed a particular cast of mind and ethic encouraged by Protestantism especially of Calvinist variety, strongly influenced the genesis of capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The concept of 'calling' in Protestant usage, treated worldly avocations as God created, and was to be fulfilled in the spirit of worship. This notion led to flourishing of entrepreneurship among the Dutch Calvinists, French Huguenots, Scottish businessmen and British capitalists. Weber traced the emergence of a pervasive capitalist profit-making ethos based on rational calculation and highly systematised pursuit of profit to changes in religious attitudes during Reformation. Others especially Marxist scholars point out the development of certain new business techniques such as cost-accounting by the economic elite and merchants during Renaissance- in the Catholic milieu. They also link the genesis of capitalism in Europe to far more wider economic and social changes such as demographic change in the form of population-increase, family structures, the continual rise in prices (The Price Revolution of 16th century with the increasing import of bullion from South America), the

expansion of overseas commerce leading to diversification of production for export markets, etc. One thing is certain that centres of economic growth moved from Spain, Italy, Flanders and South Germany to Protestant England, Holland, Switzerland and to Baltic cities by the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was because many of merchants, bankers and finances whose life-style and attitudes were earlier tolerated were suddenly declared heretics by the Catholic Counter- Reformation and these entrepreneurs migrated to the centres in Northern Europe.

30.8   SUMMARY

The Protestant Reformation, as we have seen, was a culmination of a long process of religious change and attempts to purify Church from within. Martin Luther preached that all men and women were saved from their sins only by personal faith in Jesus Christ. The individual could reach God directly without the help of intermediary clergy. He thus broke the monopoly of clergy over medieval Europe's most precious treasure- eternal salvation. As Reformation gathered momentum, with peasant uprisings and social unrest, fuelled by radical Anabaptists, the reformed Protestant Churches resulted in a bureaucratisation of Church as visible in Calvinist Churches. The Reformation, even if we don't agree with the Weberian proposition that it led to genesis of capitalist ethos, had a profound influence on the fate of newly emerging absolutist-monarchies and nation-states in Europe. It continued to influence relations of Church and state and diplomatic relations of various rulers. By questioning the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Roman papal curia, the Reformation did not immediately usher in secularisation of social life, as it itself developed its own religious dogmas and allowed no real religious freedom, but in the long run it propelled society in that direction. Even the Catholic Church was compelled to transform itself under the pressure of Reformation. However, the parish Church as the focal point of religious devotion and social-life- remained woven into the fabric of village community. The Reformation initiated religious change affected bigger Churches and monasteries only.

30.9   EXERCISES

1) Describe the main ills afflicting Church in late 15th and early 16th century that gave birth to Protestantism.

2) Describe the social-intellectual milieu of Luther's times. What was the basic content of Ninety- five Theses of Luther?

3) What were the causes of Peasant Wars in Germany and what was Luther's attitude towards them?

4) What do you understand by the Magisterial Reformation?

5) Compare Calvinism with Anabaptists.

6) Critically examine Weberian thesis that links Protestantism with the rise of Capitalism.