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THE REFORMATION: THE 1500s

Inspired by the writings of Christian humanists, troubled by the abuses that existed within the Roman Catholic Church, and increasingly concerned with church teachings concerning salvation, Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses in 1517, igniting a movement that split the Catholic Church and resulted in a century and a half of religious warfare. This movement, the Protestant Reformation, changed the face of Christianity and led to a series of political, economic, and social reforms that affected every sphere of life in Europe. From the breakdown of political authority in the Holy Roman Empire to the extension of education to more men and women in some areas in Europe and, finally, to the development of divergent styles of art, the Reformation sparked changes that significantly altered the political, economic, and social organization of Europe.

KEY TERMS

Act of Succession	Edict of Nantes
Act of Supremacy	Elizabethan Settlement
Anabaptists	indulgences
Anglican Church	Lutheranism
Calvinism	Ninety-five Theses
Catholic Counter-Reformation	Peace of Augsburg
Council of Trent	predestination
Diet of Worms	Puritans

Reformation

simony

Schmalkaldic League

KEY CONCEPTS

- ❖ The Reformation contributed to the outbreak of many civil wars that were sparked not only by religious differences but also by political and economic rivalries in regions such as the Holy Roman Empire.
- ❖ Although the Reformation was primarily a religious movement, it was a catalyst for social and economic changes that encouraged education so that men and women could read the Bible, and it secured limited rights for women within the family.
- ❖ Actions taken by Martin Luther splintered the Catholic Church and sparked the Reformation. Although Luther's message and actions inspired reformers such as John Calvin to split from the Catholic Church, most of these other religious revolutionaries did not entirely agree with Luther's theological ideas.

For a full discussion of the Reformation, see *Western Civilization*, 7th and 8th editions, Chapter 13.

EUROPE ON THE EVE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation officially began on October 31, 1517, the date Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses at the Castle Church in Wittenberg, but it had taken root long before, when political, economic, intellectual, and religious factors led to the questioning of papal authority and Church practices.

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

The growth of Christian humanism, which quickly spread from Italy to northern Europe through both trade and the new writings made available by the printing press, laid the groundwork for the Reformation. Like the Italian humanists, northern humanists focused on the classical works of Greece and Rome and on cultural and educational reform, but they also studied early Christian writings and the Bible. These "Christian humanists," yearning for the simple piety of the early Church, criticized some of the medieval traditions of the Catholic Church and called for its internal reform.

AP Tip

It is important to remember that the Christian humanists were critical of the corruption and abuses of the Catholic Church, but they did *not* advocate a split from it. Instead, they urged reform within the Church and looked for ways to combine classical and Christian values. Wyclif and Hus sometimes show up on AP exams. They predated the reformers, but their ideas about justification by faith alone resembled Luther's.

Often called the father of Christian humanism, Erasmus translated the New Testament from the early Greek manuscripts and advocated an educated approach to Christianity. Erasmus stressed a return to the simplicity of early Christianity and criticized many of the external trappings of the Catholic Church, such as the veneration of saints. He especially disapproved of the abuses by many churchmen of his time and satirized them in a book, *In Praise of Folly*. Another prominent Christian humanist, Sir Thomas More, was a government official, English scholar, and author of the book *Utopia*, in which he outlined an ideal society much like a modern socialist model. More is remembered for both his devotion to the Roman Catholic religion and his execution for refusing to accept King Henry VIII's break with the Church.

CORRUPTION WITHIN THE CHURCH

Corruption within the Catholic Church also fueled the Protestant Reformation. The status and credibility of the Roman Catholic Church had been damaged by the Great Schism and by common clerical abuses such as the fathering of illegitimate children, as well as by unethical business and financial dealings. Trying to increase its revenues, the Church sold leadership positions to wealthy nobles and businessmen. Known as simony, the practice sometimes led to pluralism, the holding of several Church positions by a wealthy Church leader, and often created absenteeism because it was impossible to work in more than one place at once. But the central issue that incited Martin Luther's criticism of the Roman Catholic Church was the selling of indulgences.

AP Tip

Indulgences were partial remissions of temporal punishment for sin. One could purchase an indulgence for oneself or for one's relatives, alive or dead. It is important to remember that although indulgences exist within the Catholic Church today, their sale is no longer allowed.

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, agonized over the question of salvation. He concluded that one could be saved not by good works or by indulgences, but only by faith in God, a belief that became central to his theology.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses, an attack on the sale of indulgences. Copies were quickly printed up and distributed throughout the German states. Although initially the pope ignored them, Luther's ideas soon gained a popular audience. In 1519, the Church challenged Luther to a series of debates with Johann Eck, a Catholic churchman, in an effort to discredit him. Instead, the debates gave Luther a forum for his ideas.

Luther's theology diverged from the Roman Catholic Church's in several areas. Luther counted not seven sacraments, but two: baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they were the only ones described in the Bible. He rejected the idea of transubstantiation, the transformation of bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Christ during communion. Instead, he believed in consubstantiation, in which the bread and wine are not transformed but are filled with the spirit of Christ. Luther also rejected the hierarchical organization of the Catholic Church. He saw Christians as belonging to a "priesthood of all believers" who could interpret the Bible for themselves. And because scripture was the only source of religious truth, he said that Catholic traditions should not be the basis of religious belief. Luther also disagreed with the Church's demand for clerical celibacy and its insistence on Latin rather than the vernacular for services.

Luther then began to question the authority of the pope, which provoked the Church to condemn him. Moving toward a more permanent split with the Church, Luther wrote several more pamphlets laying out his beliefs, including "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," "The Babylonian Captivity," and "The Freedom of the Christian Man."

AP Tip

Martin Luther was not the first to criticize the pope and Church practices, and he did not intend to start a new church. Since he was the first to actually split from the Roman Catholic Church, he is often referred to as the Father of the Reformation.

Luther was excommunicated and called before the Diet of Worms, a council convened by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1521. When Luther refused to recant, he was declared an outlaw and exiled. Frederick of Saxony intervened and kept Luther in hiding at Wartburg Castle, where he stayed for a year and wrote hymns and a translation of the New Testament. Pamphlets, woodcuts, and sermons by his followers also spread his ideas. Although many humanists had supported Luther's right to publish his ideas, many, such as Erasmus,

believed that he had gone too far by breaking away from the Church, and criticized him for being too radical.

Luther had the support of many members of the nobility, who saw a chance to gain political independence from the Holy Roman Emperor. In addition, by supporting the German Reformed Church, or Lutheran Church, these princes freed themselves from papal dues owed to the Catholic Church. Eventually they reaped more economic benefit when they forcibly acquired Church lands, convents, and monasteries. Needing the support and protection of the nobility, Luther supported the Knights' War, but he did not support the social discontent that emerged during the peasants' revolts, which he stingingly condemned in a pamphlet, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants."

Charles V was unhappy with the rebellion by Luther and the princes, but he was busy with military campaigns against the encroaching Ottoman Empire and the French until 1545. By then, the Lutheran princes posed a threat to the emperor's power. Both Charles and the Protestant Schmalkaldic League attracted international help, but after nearly a decade of war, they were stalemated. The ensuing Peace of Augsburg of 1555 established the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*—whose region, his religion. The princes could choose the religion—Catholicism or Lutheranism, but not Calvinism—of their respective states. A year later, Charles abdicated and became a monk, splitting his empire between his son Philip II, who gained the Spanish Empire, and his brother Ferdinand I, who gained the Holy Roman Empire.

AP Tip

The Peace of Augsburg legalized Lutheranism but left the question of Calvinism unsettled. Keep in mind that although the princes could choose the religions of their individual states, this did not constitute freedom of religion for the general population, because residents were expected to follow the religion chosen by the prince.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION OUTSIDE GERMANY

By the mid-1500s, the Scandinavian countries, following the leads of their monarchs, had become strong Lutheran nations.

Switzerland's 13 cantons were split. Ulrich Zwingli, a humanist and Protestant reformer, preached a more radical Protestantism. Under Zwingli's leadership, the Zurich city council decreed Protestant reforms and created a state-run church. Artwork and music were banned from churches, and recognition of papal authority and the veneration of saints were rejected. An alliance with the Lutherans foundered on the issue of consubstantiation; Zwingli believed that the bread and wine were only symbols and did not contain the real spirit of Christ. By late 1531, civil war broke out between the Protestant and Catholic Swiss cantons, a war in which Zwingli died.

The even more radical Anabaptists, who often faced persecution by both Protestants and Catholics, usually lived apart, in their own communities. All members of the community were considered equals. Believing that membership in the Christian community should be an adult choice, they baptized only adults, and they read the Bible literally. Anabaptists adhered to a strict separation of church and state, and refused to hold public office, pay taxes that could be used for military purposes, or serve in the army. Most Anabaptist communities were pacifist. A shocking exception was the Anabaptist takeover of Munster in the 1534, followed by its fall in a siege by an army of Catholics and Lutherans.

Menno Simons, an important leader of the Dutch Anabaptists, refreshed and spread the religion. His followers, called Mennonites, carried it throughout Europe and eventually to North America.

CALVINISM

While Lutheranism dominated the first half of the sixteenth century, Calvinism dominated the latter half. Born and educated in France, John Calvin, a humanist scholar and lawyer, read smuggled works of Martin Luther and became convinced that the Catholic Church needed reformation. By the 1530s, French Protestants, known as Huguenots, faced persecution by the Crown, and Calvin fled to Geneva, a city that became the center of his brand of Protestantism. It was there that Calvin wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a summary of his beliefs, in 1536.

Calvin's theology resembled Luther's but differed in several respects. First, Calvin believed in predestination—that God determines before birth who will be saved and who will be damned. According to Calvin, a person could never know whether he or she was among the elect or the damned. Many of his followers in Geneva believed that they were among the elect and so should legislate morality. They removed artwork and singing from churches, banned dancing, prohibited drinking and gambling, and punished what they considered heretical religious beliefs. They also promoted hard work and dignified labor—this is the origin of the “Puritan work ethic.” Second, although Luther relied on the German princes to establish state-run churches and promote his beliefs, he believed in a degree of separation between church and state. Calvin, however, believed in theocracy; to that end, the Geneva city council established religious laws to govern the city.

Calvinism became the theological basis of the Puritan movements in Scotland, England, the Netherlands, and France and had an enormous impact worldwide. Under the leadership of John Knox in Scotland, Calvinism emerged as the theological basis of the Presbyterian Church, which became the national church of Scotland, despite the fact that the monarchy under James V and Mary Queen of Scots was Roman Catholic.

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Unlike Martin Luther, who split from the Roman Catholic Church because of theological differences, King Henry VIII initiated the

English Reformation because he wanted to divorce his wife. Henry and Catherine of Aragon had one child, Mary. In 1527, wanting a male heir and in the midst of an affair with Catherine's lady in waiting, Henry sent Cardinal Wolsey to request an annulment from the pope. Denied his request, Henry demanded an annulment from the English ecclesiastical court. Parliament took legal action to cut off papal authority, and in 1533, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, granted the king his annulment. He married a pregnant Anne Boleyn, who then gave birth to Elizabeth. In 1534, Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, which made Henry the head of the English Church. Coupled with the Treason Act, which made it a capital crime to deny that the king was the head of the Church, this act completed the break with the Catholic Church. Henry had a total of six wives and fathered only one more heir, Edward, the son of Jane Seymour.

AP Tip

Under Henry VIII, the theology of the Church of England changed very little, other than rejecting papal authority and closing monasteries. The Book of Common Prayer and the other theological changes that shaped the Church of England were introduced largely during the reign of his son, King Edward VI. This is an important point to remember when comparing and contrasting Reformation beliefs.

After Henry's death, in 1547, his son, Edward VI, became king. Under the guidance of Archbishop Cranmer and other Protestant leaders, Parliament enacted new laws that established a more Protestant theology and provided for clerical marriage and the elimination of artwork from Anglican churches. Following sickly Edward's death in 1553, his oldest sister, Mary Tudor, ascended to the throne and tried to re-Catholicize England. Nicknamed "Bloody Mary," she married Philip II of Spain, convinced Parliament to enact Catholic legislation, and instituted an English Inquisition, burning Protestant heretics at the stake. In 1558, after Mary's death, Elizabeth became queen, taking over a nation in religious chaos. During her rule, England experienced the Elizabethan Renaissance, became involved in overseas exploration, and grew into a world power.

Elizabeth I worked with Parliament to repeal the pro-Catholic legislation and to pass a new Act of Supremacy making her the head of both the government and the Church of England. This act, combined with the Act of Uniformity and the Thirty-nine Articles, comprised the Elizabethan Settlement, which revised the theology of the Church of England so that it was not as radical as the theology under Edward VI. For example, artwork was reinstated in the churches and some prayers that were more acceptable to former Catholics were reintroduced. Elizabeth was a *politique*, a political ruler who subordinated religious differences in favor of political unity. The settlement worked well except for a minority of radical Catholics and Puritans, who felt that the compromise betrayed true religion. Elizabeth cracked down on the radicals and, for the most part, religion was not a divisive issue during her reign.

Largely based on the power of the English navy, Elizabeth's foreign policy promoted the wealth and power of England. Elizabeth supported sea-dogs, such as Sir Francis Drake, and provided aid to Protestants who faced persecution in France and the Spanish Netherlands. As tensions between England and Spain mounted and personal animosity between Philip II and Elizabeth intensified, Elizabeth agreed to the execution of Mary Stuart, known as Mary Queen of Scots, in 1587. This action became the final catalyst for the launching of the Spanish Armada; its defeat in 1588 started the decline of Spanish power and secured the power of Protestant England.

AP Tip

Be sure that you do not confuse Mary Tudor with Mary Stuart. Mary Tudor was Queen Mary I of England. Mary Stuart was Mary Queen of Scots, a cousin of Elizabeth and Mary Tudor. Mary I was married to Philip II of Spain and ruled England from 1553 to 1558. Mary Stuart was finally executed after evidence revealed that she was involved in a plot with the Spanish to assassinate Queen Elizabeth and take over the English throne. Both Mary I and Mary Queen of Scots were Catholic.

REFORMATION POLITICS

Despite persecution, 40 to 50 percent of the nobility—as well as a number of subjects from other social classes—became Huguenots in an attempt to assert their power in France. A series of young, weak Valois kings and queen mother Catherine de' Medici saw France torn apart by rivalries among the three main families: the ultra-Catholic Guises, who were backed by Spain, and the Bourbons and Chatillons, both of whom were Huguenots. After the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572, the War of the Three Henrys erupted, ending with the death of King Henry III and the institution of the Bourbon monarchy. Henry of Navarre, who became King Henry IV, another *politique*, converted to Catholicism but issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598, giving Huguenots limited freedoms.

In Spain, the radically Catholic leadership of King Philip II led to an international crusade to promote Catholicism and eliminate Protestantism. Within his empire, he also sought to consolidate his own power and that of the Catholic Church by use of the inquisition. In the Netherlands, which was a mix of Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists, Philip raised taxes to aid the ailing Spanish economy; the Dutch revolted. To punish them, Philip established the Council of Blood under the leadership of the Duke of Alba. The Catholic and Protestant Dutch united temporarily to oppose Philip, but after the sacking of Antwerp, the seven Dutch provinces in the north split from the Catholic provinces in the south. This created the modern division between the Netherlands and Belgium.

THE CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION

In response to the spread of Protestantism and growing demands for a purification of Church practices, the Catholic Church took action to defend itself. The Counter-Reformation consisted of several important actions that together led to the reinvigoration of the Catholic Church. First, in 1535, the new pope, Paul III, called for an investigation of the problems of the Church; in response to the report, in 1545 he called the Council of Trent. Although Pope Paul III died before the Council concluded its work, he had put the Catholic Church on the road to recovery. Second, Pope Paul III officially recognized the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. This new religious order, founded by Ignatius of Loyola, promoted obedience to the Catholic Church and the Pope, advocated humanistic education in the vernacular, and supported missionary work, thus becoming an important tool in the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Finally, the Council of Trent, which met from 1545 to 1563, reaffirmed all of the theological beliefs of the Catholic Church and refused to make any compromises with the Protestants. The Council did, however, institute some practical reforms, such as prohibiting the sale of indulgences and improving the moral character of the clergy.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation created social changes, too. The family was highly valued by Protestants—who even rejected clerical celibacy—and women were expected to bear children and instill in them Christian values. With the closing of nunneries, women had few alternatives to family life. Although limited basic education for women was encouraged so that they could read the Bible, higher education was not, and Protestant churches did not welcome women into church leadership. Protestant reformers did encourage education for a wider audience and in some parts of the Holy Roman Empire, established publicly funded schools focusing on humanist ideas and Christian teachings.

AP Tip

Protestant reformers such as Luther believed that education was necessary to allow followers—including women—to read the Bible. But these reformers continued to advocate the traditional role of wife and mother for women—reading the Bible was meant to make women better mothers. Be sure that you don't confuse religious reform with changes in traditional gender roles.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which of the following is true about the Peace of Augsburg (1555)?
 - (A) It ended the French wars of religion.
 - (B) It declared that Calvinism but not Lutheranism was a legal religion.
 - (C) It granted full freedom of religion in the Holy Roman Empire.
 - (D) It established the right of German princes to decide between Lutheranism and Catholicism in their individual states.
 - (E) It granted French Huguenots limited religious rights.
2. Which of the following statements about Erasmus is true?
 - (A) He was the most famous of the Italian humanists.
 - (B) He was fully supportive of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation's split with the Roman Catholic Church.
 - (C) He emphasized inner piety rather than the system of dogmatic beliefs and practices that the medieval Church stressed.
 - (D) He believed that the Latin Vulgate was the Bible that should be used by true believers.
 - (E) He was executed when he refused to support England's split with the Roman Catholic Church.
3. Both the Italian humanists and the Christian humanists called for
 - (A) church reform
 - (B) a focus on the classics
 - (C) the rejection of papal authority
 - (D) the application of the classics to government reform
 - (E) patronage of the arts
4. Of the following, who believed in transubstantiation?
 - (A) Ignatius of Loyola
 - (B) Martin Luther
 - (C) John Calvin
 - (D) Ulrich Zwingli
 - (E) John Knox
5. Of the following, who believed in predestination?
 - (A) Martin Luther
 - (B) Sir Thomas More
 - (C) Ignatius of Loyola
 - (D) Pope Leo X
 - (E) John Calvin
6. "Justification by faith alone" was the central tenet of the theology of which of the following reformers?
 - (A) John Calvin
 - (B) Martin Luther
 - (C) John Knox
 - (D) Ignatius Loyola
 - (E) King Henry VIII

7. All of the following were true of the Anabaptists EXCEPT
- (A) most Anabaptists believed in complete separation of church and state
 - (B) Anabaptists were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants
 - (C) Anabaptists refused to serve in the military because they did not believe in killing others
 - (D) Anabaptists often held local political positions in order to create more peaceful communities
 - (E) Anabaptists believed that only adults should be baptized
8. The primary cause of the English Reformation was
- (A) corruption in the Catholic Church
 - (B) King Henry VIII's desire for an annulment
 - (C) King Henry VII's belief in justification by faith alone
 - (D) the sale of indulgences
 - (E) the influence of Martin Luther's writings
9. Which of the following was a major factor preventing the union of the Protestants led by Zwingli and Luther?
- (A) allowance of clerical marriages
 - (B) closing of monasteries
 - (C) interpretation of the Lord's Supper
 - (D) rejection of the sale of indulgences
 - (E) the age of baptism
10. All of the following are true about the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) EXCEPT
- (A) it was the most important of the reform orders during the Catholic Counter-Reformation
 - (B) it was founded by Ignatius of Loyola
 - (C) it was a loosely organized order that was based on obedience to local religious leaders
 - (D) it was based on a strict hierarchy that demanded obedience to the pope
 - (E) it was responsible for the spread of education and missionary work
11. All of the following are reasons for the revolt against the Spanish in the Netherlands EXCEPT
- (A) the closing of Catholic churches in the Netherlands by Spain
 - (B) attempts by Philip II to strengthen his control over the Netherlands
 - (C) Philip II raised the taxes paid by the Netherlands to Spain
 - (D) residents of the Netherlands realized that their taxes were being used for Spanish gain
 - (E) Philip II attempted to crack down on Calvinism in the Netherlands

12. Which of the following did NOT contribute to the growth in support for the Protestant Reformation?
- (A) corruption within the Catholic Church
 - (B) potential economic gain for nobles in Protestant regions
 - (C) the printing press and its impact on the dissemination of new ideas
 - (D) support for the new ideas by Charles V
 - (E) the Great Schism
13. All of the following are true about the Council of Trent EXCEPT
- (A) the council prohibited the sale of indulgences
 - (B) the council prohibited simony
 - (C) the council attempted to improve the moral character of the clergy
 - (D) the council reaffirmed the belief that faith and good works both contribute to one's salvation
 - (E) the council made several minor concessions to Protestant reformers concerning the veneration of saints
14. The Huguenots were
- (A) Scottish Presbyterians
 - (B) French Calvinists
 - (C) Spanish Jesuits
 - (D) French Catholics
 - (E) German Lutherans
15. Which of the following statements best describes the organization of the Holy Roman Empire at the time of the Protestant reformation?
- (A) It was a strongly united empire under the leadership of Charles V.
 - (B) It consisted of a loose confederation of thirteen cantons.
 - (C) It consisted of several hundred relatively independent states only nominally under the control of the empire.
 - (D) It consisted of several hundred duchies that carefully followed the dictates of Charles V.
 - (E) It was a united empire that had a strong alliance with the Valois family in France.

Free-Response Questions

1. Analyze the factors that prevented Charles V from crushing the Protestant reformation.
2. Analyze the reasons for the deterioration of relations between England and Spain during the rule of Elizabeth I.