

WORLD HISTORY RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION REFORMATION READING NOTES

WHAT WAS THE REFORMATION?

The Reformation was a religious crisis within the Catholic Church where many people began to demand reforms or changes. People were unhappy with many aspects of the Church so they either demanded change or broke off and created their own branches of the Christian faith.

MEMBER COMPLAINTS WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Many priests and popes were too concerned with worldly things to focus on their spiritual duties. Instead of focusing on being spiritual influences on Christians, they focused on studying the arts and ancient manuscripts – this left little time for them to do their jobs.
2. Lower clergy were very poorly educated (many couldn't even read) so they couldn't teach scripture because they couldn't read the *Bible*.
3. Many clergy members did not follow the teachings of scripture – they lived with women without being married, had children with many different women, etc.
4. The Church began selling indulgences. Indulgences were pardons from sin. If you committed a sin, you paid the Church money and you were sold forgiveness.
5. Church ceremonies were very focused on “pomp and circumstance” rather than spirituality.

THE FIRST LEADERS OF THE REFORMATION

1. Erasmus: from Holland – he criticized the lack of education among the clergy.
2. Thomas More: wrote *Utopia* where he criticized the Church's leadership and outlined his perfect society. He said that a perfect society should be based on mercy and reason – not on greed and corruption.
3. Martin Luther: a monk in Wittenberg. He was deeply offended by the actions of the clergy and the selling of indulgences. He wrote the *95 Theses* that outlined his complaints. He nailed his *95 Theses* to the church doors in Wittenberg so that all church members could read them.

THE PRINTING PRESS

The printing press helped the Reformation to grow very quickly – how? Up until the invention of the printing press, books were copied by hand. Therefore, most people did not have access to books and writings because there simply weren't many copies. When the printing press was invented, it meant that books and writings could be copied quickly and distributed to many people. So, the writings of Erasmus, More and Luther began to be copied and distributed to people throughout Europe. This spread their ideas. *The Bible* was also

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copied – this allowed people to read scripture for themselves and to see that the Church was not teaching or following scripture from *the Bible*. All of these changes caused people to demand reform!

MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther began having his teachings printed and this infuriated the pope and the leaders of the Catholic Church. Luther taught the following three ideas:

1. Faith in God was the only way to earn salvation (this contradicted the Church's teaching that you could buy indulgences for sins and still be saved).
2. The Bible is the sole authority for Christians to follow (this threatened the power of the pope).
3. All Christians were equal (this diminished the power of Church officials).

Luther's ideas began to spread and the Catholic Church asked Charles V for help. Charles V was the Holy Roman Emperor and he had much power throughout Europe. He called Luther a heretic and an outlaw at the Diet of Worms and called for his execution. Christians throughout Europe began to leave the Catholic Church and to follow Luther – they became known as Protestants. Luther died in 1546.

HENRY VIII

Henry VIII became king of England in 1509. He needed a son to succeed him when he died. He and his wife never had a son who lived past infancy so Henry asked the pope to declare his marriage illegal – this way he could marry a new woman and hopefully have a son. The pope refused Henry's request. Parliament allowed Henry a divorce and legalized his marriage to Anne Boleyn. Then they passed the Act of Supremacy which stated that the king was the head of the Christian Church in England. Henry created the Church of England which kept the same teachings as the Catholic Church EXCEPT that it allowed divorce.

JOHN CALVIN

Calvin spread the teachings of Martin Luther to Switzerland. However, Calvin did change a few of Luther's ideas. Calvin taught that men and women were naturally evil and that there were only a select few who would be saved from sin – these people were called the "elect." God, Calvin believed, was all knowing and knew before people were born who would be saved and who would not – this idea is called predestination. Calvin also taught that the "elect" should rule society and try to keep men and women from being sinful. Therefore, Calvin set up a theocracy in Switzerland, or a government run by the Church.

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JOHN KNOX

Knox spread Calvin's ideas to Scotland and his religion became known as Presbyterianism.

HUGUENOTS

The followers of Calvin and Luther in France were called Huguenots.

HOW DID THE CATHOLIC CHURCH RESPOND TO THE REFORMATION?

1. In Spain, a group of devout Catholics joined together to defend Catholicism and the pope. They were called Jesuits and they were often referred to as a spiritual "army." The Jesuits had three goals: to set up schools to teach Catholicism, to spread Catholicism to other parts of the world and to stop the Protestant faiths from spreading.
2. The Council of Trent met in 1545: bishops, cardinals and the pope met in the town of Trent and decided that: the pope's interpretation of the Bible was final, Christians were saved by faith AND good works, the Bible AND Church tradition should equally guide a Christian's life, and that the selling of indulgences would be banned.
3. Index of Forbidden Books was created: this was a list of books critical of the Catholic Church that were burned and banned in all Catholic cities.

**These three changes were called the Counter-Reformation because they were meant to stop the spread of Protestant faiths.