

Chapter 14: Reformation

1. The condition of the church (ca. 1400-1517)
 - a. The declining prestige of the church
 - i. The Babylonian Captivity and the Great Schism damaged the church's prestige.
 - ii. Secular humanists satirized and denounced moral corruption within the church.
 1. **Erasmus's** *The Praise of Folly* condemned the superstitions of the parish clergy and the excessive rituals of the monks
 2. **Machiavelli**, "We Italians are irreligious and corrupt above others, because the Church and her representatives set us the worst example."
 3. **Chaucer's** *Canterbury Tales* and **Boccaccio's** *Decameron*
 - b. Signs of disorder in the early sixteenth century
 - i. The parish clergy brought spiritual help to the people, by injecting religious symbols and practices into everyday living, leading some historians to feel that they were vulgarizing religion by bringing something so high and mighty down
 - ii. Critics of the church wanted moral and administrative reform in three areas.
 1. drunk, gambled, not celibate, low standards of ordination (the process by which priests are set apart from the rest of the clergy), absenteeism, simony, pluralism, wealth of the greater clergy bore little resemblance to the Christian gospel
 - iii. The prelates and popes of the period, often members of the nobility, lived in splendor and moral corruption, contradicting Christianity's humble origins.
 - c. Signs of vitality in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries
 - i. Sixteenth century Europe remained deeply religious, and calls for reform testify to the spiritual vitality of the church.
 - ii. New organizations were formed to educate and minister to the poor.
 1. The **Brethren of the Common Life** in Holland lived simply and sought to make religion a personal, inner experience based on following the scriptures.
 2. The *Imitation of Christ* by **Thomas à Kempis** (lay investiture) urged Christians to seek perfection in a simple way of life.
 - iii. Pope Julius II summoned an ecumenical council on reform in the church called the **Lateran Council** (1512-1527).
2. Martin Luther and the birth of Protestantism
 - a. Luther's early years
 - i. His father sent him to school, wanting him to become a lawyer, but Luther became a friar instead.
 - ii. Luther was a German monk and professor of religion whose search for salvation led him to the letters of St. Paul.
 - iii. He concluded that scripture was necessary for faith and that faith was central to Christianity and the only means of salvation.
 - b. Luther's **Ninety-five Theses** (October 1517)
 - i. Luther's opposition to the sale of indulgences (remissions of penalties for sin) prompted his fight with Rome.
 1. Specific Incident: **Archbishop Albert** owed money to the great banking family of the time, The Fuggers. In order to pay his debts, Archbishop Albert hired Dominican friar **John Tetzel** to sell indulgences to people. Tetzel used the popular slogan, "As soon as coin in coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." This selling of indulgences to people was allowed by **Pope Leo X**,

because the Pope wanted to finish building St. Peter's Basilica

- ii. Luther's Ninety-five Theses, or propositions on indulgences, raised many theological issues and initiated a long period of debate in Europe.
 1. Luther rejected the idea that salvation could be achieved by good works, such as indulgences. (Believed that salvation could only be achieved through faith.)
 2. An *indulgence* was a release from the penalties to be paid for sin.
 3. **John Eck** debated with Luther about his Ninety-five Theses.
 4. He also criticized papal wealth.
- iii. Papacy vs. Luther
 1. The papacy retaliated by sending him a papal bull asking Luther to either recant his ideas or be excommunicated.
 2. Luther burned the letter, rejecting the papacy's authority.
 3. Luther is excommunicated and declared an outlaw by Charles V at his **Diet of Worms** (a gathering of German nobles) in 1521.
- iv. Meanwhile, **Ulrich Zwingli** introduced the Reformation in Switzerland.
 1. He believed in the supremacy of Scripture, and was opposed to indulgences, the Mass, monasticism, and clerical celibacy.
 2. Unlike Luther, he believed that the Eucharist was a memorial only and there was no transformation at all of the bread and wine.

c. Protestant thought

- i. The basic theological tenets of Protestantism were set forth in the **Confession of Augsburg**, in which Luther provided new answers to four basic theological issues.
 1. Salvation is derived through faith alone, not faith and good works.
 2. Religious authority rests with the Bible, not the pope.
 3. The church consists of the entire community of Christian believers, not just the clergy.
 4. All work is sacred and everyone should serve God in his or her individual vocation.
 5. Every believer is his/her own priest, interpreting Scripture for him/herself.
 6. Luther believed in only three of the Catholic sacraments: baptism, penance and the **Eucharist**, or Lord's Supper (bread and wine.)
 7. Catholics believed in *transubstantiation*, Luther in *consubstantiation*, and Zwingli in the Sacrament as a *memorial* only.
 - a. **transubstantiation**- the consecrating words of the priest during Mass, the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ, who is then fully present in the bread and wine
 - b. **consubstantiation**- after consecration, the bread and wine undergo a spiritual change but not a physical change
 - c. **memorial**- the bread and wine do not change at all
 - d. Catholics and Protestants agree that the sacrament must be received worthily and that it is a source of grace.
- ii. Protestantism, therefore, was a reformulation of Christian beliefs and practices.

3. The social impact of Luther's beliefs

- a. By 1521 Luther's religious ideas had a vast following among all social classes.
 - i. Luther's ideas were popular because of widespread resentment of clerical privileges and wealth.
 1. Priests, monks and nuns paid no taxes and were exempt from civic

- responsibilities, yet owned large amounts of urban property
 - 2. Sermons were irregular and of poor quality. (refer back to **low standards of ordination**) As a result, preacherships were established, asking men of superior education to deliver sermons. Luther's ideas attracted many preachers, and they became Protestant leaders.
 - 3. Luther appealed to the intelligence, literacy and thoughtfulness of the middle class.
 - 4. The business classes envied the church's wealth.
 - ii. Peasants cited Luther's theology as part of their demands for social and economic reforms.
 - 1. They cited, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none."
 - 2. Peasant complaints about landlord seizure of village land and over crop failure led to revolts that they believed Scripture and Luther supported.
 - 3. Luther initially supported the peasants, but warned that nothing justified the use of force. He also noted that Scripture had nothing to do with earthly justice or material gain.
 - 4. In the end, Luther did not support the peasants' revolts; he believed in obedience to civil authority. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are established by God. Whosoever resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." *Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of the Peasants*
 - 5. Widespread peasant revolts in 1525 were brutally crushed, but some land was returned to common use.
 - iii. Luther's greatest weapon was his mastery of the language, and his words were spread by the advent of the printing press.
 - 1. Zwingli and Calvin were greatly influenced by his writings.
 - 2. The publication of Luther's German translation of the New Testament in 1523 democratized religion and increased German nationalism
 - 3. Catechisms and hymns enabled people, especially the young, to remember central points of doctrine.
 - b. Luther's impact on women
 - i. Luther gave dignity to domestic work, stressed the idea of marriage and the Christian home, ended confession, and encouraged education for girls.
 - ii. Luther held enlightened views on sex and marriage, feeling that sexual desire was no worse than desire for food or water, but ought to end in marriage rather than promiscuity.
 - iii. Despite his progressive views, he claimed that women should be no more than efficient wives.
4. Germany and the Protestant Reformation
- a. The Holy Roman Empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries
 - i. **The Golden Bull of 1356** gave each of the seven electors virtual sovereignty.
 - ii. Localism and chronic disorder allowed the nobility to strengthen their territories and reduced the authority of the emperor.
 - b. The rise of the Habsburg dynasty
 - i. The Habsburgs gave unity to much of Europe, especially with the marriage of **Maximilian I of Austria** and **Mary of Burgundy** in 1477.
 - ii. At the same time, their marriage angered the French, starting a series of conflicts

between the Habsburgs and the French over Burgundy

- iii. **Charles V**, their grandson, inherited much of Europe and was committed to the idea of its religious and political unity. He was the Holy Roman Emperor, controlled Habsburgs and Spain. (Refer to txbk pg 467 for family tree)
- c. The political impact of Luther's beliefs
 - i. The Protestant Reformation stirred nationalistic feelings in Germany against the wealthy Italian papacy.
 1. Luther's translation of the New Testament into vernacular German
 2. Luther called the church out on indulgences, dispensations and clerical celibacy
 - ii. Luther's appeal to patriotism earned him the support of the princes, who used religion as a means of gaining more political independence and preventing the flow of German money to Rome.
 1. They also confiscated the Church's abundant lands
 - iii. The Protestant movement proved to be a political disaster for Germany.
 1. The dynastic Habsburg-Valois wars advanced the cause of Protestantism and promoted the political fragmentation of Germany, because the French, although Catholic, supported the Lutheran princes
 2. By the **Peace of Augsburg of 1555**, Charles recognized Lutheranism (only) as a legal religion and each prince was permitted to determine the religion of his territory. (*Cuius regio, eius religio*)
5. The growth of the Protestant Reformation
 - a. By 1555 much of northern Europe had broken with the Roman Catholic Church, but Protestantism was fragmented.
 - b. Calvinism
 - i. Although Luther started the Reformation, Calvin would have more impact on future European thought.
 - ii. Calvin believed that God selects certain people to do his work and that he was selected to reform the church.
 - iii. Under John Calvin, Geneva became "a city that was a church" (a theocracy), in which the state was subordinate to the church.
 - iv. Calvin's central ideas, expressed in *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, were his belief in the omnipotence of God, the insignificance of humanity, and predestination.
 - v. Calvinism was not pessimistic because all the followers believed that God had already saved them.
 - vi. Austere living and intolerance of dissenters characterized Calvin's Geneva.
 1. The **Genevan Consistory**, made up of twelve laymen plus the Company of Pastors, monitored the private morals of citizens.
 2. Geneva made no distinction between crimes against society and simple unChristian conduct.
 3. **Michael Servetus** was burned at the stake for denying the Christian dogma of the Trinity and rejecting child baptism. He also believed that people under twenty could not commit a mortal sin.
 4. Calvinists did not view women much differently than Catholics: women were to be obedient to their husbands--and unmarried women were upsetting the natural order.
 - vii. The city of Geneva was the model for international Protestantism, and Calvinism, with its emphasis on the work ethic, became the most dynamic and influential form of

Protestantism.

c. The Anabaptists

- i. This Protestant sect believed in adult baptism, revelation, religious tolerance, pacifism, and the separation of church and state.
- ii. Their beliefs and practices were too radical for the times, and they were bitterly persecuted.
 1. Later, the Quakers, the Baptists, and the Congregationalists would trace their origins to the Anabaptists.

d. The English Reformation

- i. Occurred due to Henry VIII's love life, not due to a weak church.
- ii. The **Lollards**, although driven underground in the fifteenth century, survived and stressed the idea of a direct relationship between the individual and God and supported many of Luther's ideas.
- iii. The English humanist **William Tyndale** began printing an English translation of the New Testament in 1525, which was distributed by the Lollards.
- iv. **Henry VIII** desired a divorce from his queen, **Catherine**, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, so he could marry **Anne Boleyn**.
- v. **Pope Clement VII** (who did not wish to admit papal error) refused to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine because if he were to admit that a previous pope (Pope Julius II) had screwed up, then it would have given the Lutheran's more reason to break from the Church.
 1. To put further pressure on him not to grant the annulment, Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) **sacked Rome**, not wishing his Aunt Catherine to become an adulteress.
- vi. **Archbishop Cranmer**, however, engineered the divorce.
- vii. The result was the nationalization of the English church and a break with Rome as Henry used Parliament to legalize the Reformation.
 1. Parliament passed the **Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533)**, **Act for the Submission of the Clergy (1534)**, and the **Supremacy Act (1534)** all basically submitted the Church under royal power.
 - a. **John Fisher** and **Thomas More** opposed the king and were beheaded.
 2. Henry needed money, so he dissolved the monasteries and confiscated their lands, but this did not lead to more equal land distribution.
 3. Some traditional Catholic practices, such as confession, transubstantiation, auricular confession, and clerical celibacy, were maintained.
 4. Nationalization of the church led to changes in governmental administration, resulting in greater efficiency and economy.
- viii. Most laypeople accepted the Reformation. However, those who did oppose joined the **Pilgrimage of Grace (1536)**, a massive multiclass rebellion that ended with the execution of their leaders.
- ix. Under Edward VI, Henry's heir, England shifted closer to Protestantism.
 1. **Thomas Cranmer** prepared the first **Book of Common Prayer** which further set England's new church apart.
- x. **Mary Tudor** attempted to bring Catholicism back to England, causing many Protestants to flee to mainland Europe.
- xi. Under **Elizabeth I**, a religious settlement called the **Elizabethan Settlement** requiring outward conformity to the Church of England was made. In other words,

people were officially supposed to appear Anglican, but were allowed to practice Catholicism as well.

- xii. **Thirty-Nine Articles**
- e. The establishment of the Church of Scotland
 - i. Scotland was an extreme case of clerical abuse and corruption.
 - ii. **John Knox** brought Calvinism to Scotland from Geneva, using his **Book of Common Order** (1564)
 - iii. The **Presbyterian** church became the national church of Scotland.
- f. Protestantism in Ireland
 - i. The English regarded the Irish as barbarians, refraining from genocide only because of the monetary cost.
 - ii. The English ruling class in Ireland adopted the new faith.
 - iii. Most of the Irish people defiantly remained Catholic.
- g. Lutheranism in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark
 - i. In Sweden, Norway, and Denmark the monarchy led the religious reformation.
 - ii. The result was Lutheran state churches.
 - iii. People: **Gustavus Vasa and Olaus Petri** of Sweden and **Christian III**, king of Denmark and Norway.
- 6. The Catholic and the Counter Reformations
 - a. There were two types of reform within the Catholic church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
 - i. The Catholic Reformation sought to stimulate a new religious fervor.
 - ii. The Counter Reformation started in the 1540s as a reaction to Protestantism and progressed simultaneously with the Catholic Reformation.
 - b. The slowness of institutional reform
 - i. Too often the popes were preoccupied with politics or sensual pleasures.
 - ii. Popes resisted calls for the formation of a general council because it would limit their authority.
 - c. The Council of Trent
 - i. **Pope Paul III** called the Council of Trent (1545-1563).
 - 1. An attempt to reconcile with the Protestants failed, because the Protestants insisted that Scripture be the sole basis for discussion
 - 2. International politics hindered the theological debates.
 - a. Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) opposed discussions on any subjects that might alienate his Lutheran subjects, fearing the loss of additional imperial territory to Lutheran princes.
 - b. The French Kings worked against reconciliation between the Catholics and the Protestants, because they wanted to keep the Holy Roman Empire divided.
 - ii. Nonetheless, the principle of papal authority was maintained, considerable reform was undertaken, and the spiritual renewal of the church was begun.
 - 1. Tridentine decrees forbade the sale of indulgences and outlawed pluralism and simony.
 - 2. Attempts were made to curb clerical immorality and to encourage education.
 - a. The Council of Trent required every diocese to establish a seminary for the education and training of the clergy. Dioceses were also required to determine if candidates for ordination had **vocations**, genuine callings to God, and detachment from secular culture

3. Great emphasis was placed on preaching.
 4. Council of Trent decreed that for a marriage to be valid, public consent in the presence of a parish priest was necessary.
- d. New religious orders
- i. Founded by **Angela Merici**, the **Ursuline** order of nuns gained enormous prestige for the education of women.
 1. The Ursulines sought to re-Christianize society by training future wives and mothers.
 2. They had difficulty gaining approval because Catholicism placed great emphasis on the **claustration** (strict enclosure) of women.
 3. The Ursulines spread to France and North America.
 - ii. Founded by **Ignatius Loyola**, The Society of Jesus (**Jesuits**) played a strong international role in resisting Protestantism.
 1. Loyola wrote a book called **Spiritual Exercises**
 2. Obedience, mobility and flexibility were the foundations of the Jesuit tradition.
 3. Jesuits' goal was "to help souls."
 4. With their schools, political influence, and missionary work, they brought many people (India, Japan, Brazil, Congo etc.) into the Catholic fold.
- e. The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office
- i. This group, established by **Pope Paul III** in 1542, carried out the Roman Inquisition as a way to combat heresy.
 - ii. The Roman Inquisition operated under Roman Law, making it very powerful and influential.
 - iii. The Holy Office published the **Index of Prohibited Books**
 - iv. It had the power to arrest, imprison, and execute, but its influence was confined to papal territories.
7. The reformations: revolution or continuity?
- a. Recent scholarship argues that the reformations constituted both continuity and radical discontinuity.
 - i. Protestantism rejected the status quo in that it rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic papacy. Now there were many Christian churches--*Protestantism meant fragmentation* and, to some, "modernity."
 - ii. Others, mainly students of the Catholic church, interpret the reformations in terms of continuity, as the church itself was engaged in reform prior to and after Luther's actions.