



WESTERN CIV. 2A

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EUROPE IN 1500

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY SOMETHING PROFOUND ABOUT EUROPE IN THAT YEAR, BUT AS YEARS GO, IT WASN'T A VERY PROFOUND ONE. THE YEAR ITSELF DID NOT PORTEND ANY GREAT CHANGE, BUT WE START OUR COURSE IN 1500, BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT THE COURSE DESCRIPTION SAYS.

Demographics

In 1500 the population of Europe was on the rise, but it would not stay that way. It was coming off a pretty bad period of population decline, and in many ways the rise was just a natural response to that. It would fall again in the 17th century and then rebound in the 18th. Only in the mid-18th century would Europe begin to experience the sustained population growth that we are familiar with today. In 1700 the population of Europe was estimated at 114,000,000; today it is almost 500,000,000.

To give you an idea of how the population was spread around—but remember that population statistics for this time are largely guesswork—the lands that made up what would become Germany probably held a population of 18,000,000 people. France was probably second with

16,000,000; Italy had about 12,000,000; Spain 8,000,000; and Britain 4,000,000. But size was not quite as important in 1500 as density of population because the areas with the highest density tended to be the richest. In 1500 these were northern Italy, the Rhine River valley, and the Netherlands. The countries with the lowest density—the poorest countries—were in the East, particularly Poland and Russia.

Cities were small by our standards in 1500. The largest city in Europe in 1500 was probably Naples with a population around 200,000. Next were two other Italian cities, Venice and Milan, with 115,000 and 100,000. London at this time had maybe 70,000, Paris 90,000, Amsterdam 15,000, and Berlin was a village.

What this tells us of course is that Europe in 1500 was overwhelmingly rural. 85% of the population in the western part and 95% in the eastern part were scattered in villages and hamlets. There were also vast areas of forest and marshland that were uninhabited. It has been estimated that most of the people never traveled more than 15 miles from the place they were born. Life was pretty hard by our standards.

The bread of life was literally bread. Europeans ate bread, mostly made from wheat, and that was the dietary staple prior to the introduction of the potato from the New World later in the century. In an analysis of a mason's family budget in Berlin as late as 1800, 44% of the family's budget was spent on bread—not food, but bread. 6.1% went for clothing, 6.8% for fuel, 14.4% for lodging, and 28% for all other foods.

Structure of European Society in 1500

Society in Europe in 1500 was still overwhelmingly dependent on farming. As you know, nine of ten persons made their living directly from the land. Most people lived in tiny villages and owed obligations to some lord. And the legal system especially reflected that. In 1500 there were still three classes, often called estates, of society that were recognized by law. And, when I say recognized by law, which means that they had laws that applied to them only.

THE FIRST CLASS WAS THE CLERGY. This was the class that prayed. In the Europe of 1500, virtually everyone was what we call today a Roman Catholic. So, when I talk about the clergy or the Church at this time, I am talking about Roman Catholic clergy and the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy was recognized as a different class because its members had rights and privileges that were different from those of other classes. But, whereas there might not be a whole lot of legal differences within the clergy, there were certainly differences in terms of wealth and power. Some bishops and archbishops had control of vast lands and enjoyed tremendous wealth. Many parish priests were hardly distinguishable in their poverty from the peasants that they served.

THE SECOND CLASS WAS THE NOBILITY. This was the class that fought. The nobility arose from the early Middle Ages as the companions of kings and great lords, the men who stood by these leaders in time of battle and were rewarded for their loyalty and service with lands and titles. They were the knights, the men who wore armor and fought on horseback.

But by 1500 this class was losing its military influence. The knight had become obsolete as a fighting instrument. By 1500 new kinds of armies were emerging, armies armed with bows and arrows, pikes, and at times sledge hammers. These new soldiers were much cheaper than knights, were a lot easier to train than knights, and were more effective than knights. Add to that in the 14th century the invention of gunpowder and the very first firearms, and knights were just out of date.

But the nobility still owned as a class the most land in Europe. And here rested their influence—in landed wealth. Like the clergy, there were some fabulously wealthy and powerful noblemen and there were many more who were desperately poor.

THE THIRD LEGAL CLASS WAS SUPPOSED TO INCLUDE EVERYONE ELSE, BUT IT WAS PREDOMINANTLY THE PEASANTRY. This was the class that worked. These were the folks digging in the soil

and supporting by their labor themselves and the other two classes. There were differences among the rural peasantry as well, but not in terms of wealth. No rural peasants were wealthy. Among the peasants the differences involved what obligations they owed to their lords. Some were essentially free; they might only pay a small rent to their lord for the land that they worked. Some were what historians call semi-free, that is, their obligations would be greater than the free peasants but they had certain rights. And then there were the unfree peasants, called serfs, whose only difference from slaves was that they could not be bought or sold.

The Bourgeoisie

But, within the third estate, there was emerging what one might call an important sub-class. That class is called the bourgeoisie, or the middle class, the class that lived in the towns. Legally, they were lumped in with the peasants since they were neither nobility nor clergymen, but in reality they were developing their own laws and their own sense of place. This bourgeois class would become increasingly more important both economically and historically.



In 1500, European society was basically the same as it had been in the Middle Ages. It consisted of three classes confirmed by law and custom—the clergy, the nobility and the peasantry.

What distinguished the towns by 1500 was that the economy was beginning to change. There were some flourishing industries like spinning and weaving and some ironwork, but new ones were appearing, notably printing, silk manufacturing, and arms production. Likewise, commerce was exploding, and good evidence of this is overseas exploration. In 1492 Columbus discovered America and in 1498 Vasco de Gama, a Portuguese sailor, found the water route around the southern tip of Africa to India and the glorious spice trade. In fact, the markets that had grown up in Europe and the East in the late Middle Ages really took off with the introduction of new products and new wealth in the Age of Exploration that began in 1492, and the bourgeoisie were the folks who were already in a position to cash in on the expansion of trade. After all, they were merchants, bankers, manufacturers, innkeepers, and so forth. Trade took place in towns and cities, and the bourgeoisie were “townies.”

In fact, one scholar has argued that many of the elements of the economy that we are familiar with had made their appearance by 1500. These are: capitalism; industry, like printing and gunsmithing, using standardized parts; modern banking—even an international money market—business cycles of inflation and depression, and even a strike now and then by working classes pushing for better working conditions and pay.



Merchants and traders who lived in cities had begun to see themselves as a class apart.

The State System in 1500

The next topic I want to discuss is the European state system. In 1500 the European state system was in the early stages of development, but the development it was taking would last for about 350 years. We can group these states from west to east.

To the west of Europe were several emerging nation states. These were England, France, Spain, and Portugal. These were becoming the powerful states of Europe. They all had strong monarchies, all were expanding, all were enjoying a growing national unity, and all were beginning to compete with one another for power and influence in Europe and in the widening world outside.

To the east of them were Italy and Germany. The distinctive feature of these two places was that both underwent the nation-building process but not the state-building process. Italy and Germany remained divided into a bunch of small states and would remain so for 350 years, until 1871. You need to note down that the Holy Roman Empire, which included Germany and Northern Italy, still existed, and would continue to exist until the early 19th century, but the Holy Roman Emperor did not exercise a great deal of power outside of the lands he ruled personally. The Holy Roman Empire was a lot like today's United Nations: it had organizations and bodies where people met and discussed things—worked out disagreements—but it had little influence over its members in really important matters. The Princes who ruled the various principalities of the Empire, followed the Emperor if they wanted to, and often ignored him if they didn't.

To the east of Germany was an interesting state that was just emerging as a power in Europe in 1500. It can go by a variety of names, but, for simplicity's sake, let's call it Austria, even though it was then a lot bigger than Austria is now. The distinctive character of Austria was that it was emerging as a modern state, like England, France, Spain, and Portugal, with a “New Monarch” and attending army and government, but the country was made up of many different nations, many different language groups. We could say about it the opposite of what we said about Germany and Italy — Austria underwent a state-building process without undergoing nation building. Primarily because the various regions that made up Austria were the feudal family holdings of one particular family—the Habsburg family. The Habsburg Empire (another name for it) would become one of the great European states after 1500 until it fell to pieces in the First World War.

To the east of Austria were a variety of states that are interesting but are really on the borders of western

civilization. The most important of these by far was the Ottoman Empire. In 1500 the Ottoman Empire was probably the most powerful state in Europe. The problem was that it was not western, or really even European. It was Turkish and it was Moslem. Moreover, the Turks had created a powerful, centralized state whose chief task was making war, especially against Christians. They would scare Europe for the next 200 years.

To the north of the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg possessions was Poland. Poland in 1500 was following a path that might be described as directly opposite to that of western Europe. In western Europe the kings were getting more powerful, in Poland kings were getting weaker; in the West the nobility was getting weaker, in Poland it was getting strong; in the west the country was getting richer, in Poland it was getting poorer. Poland would disappear in 1798.

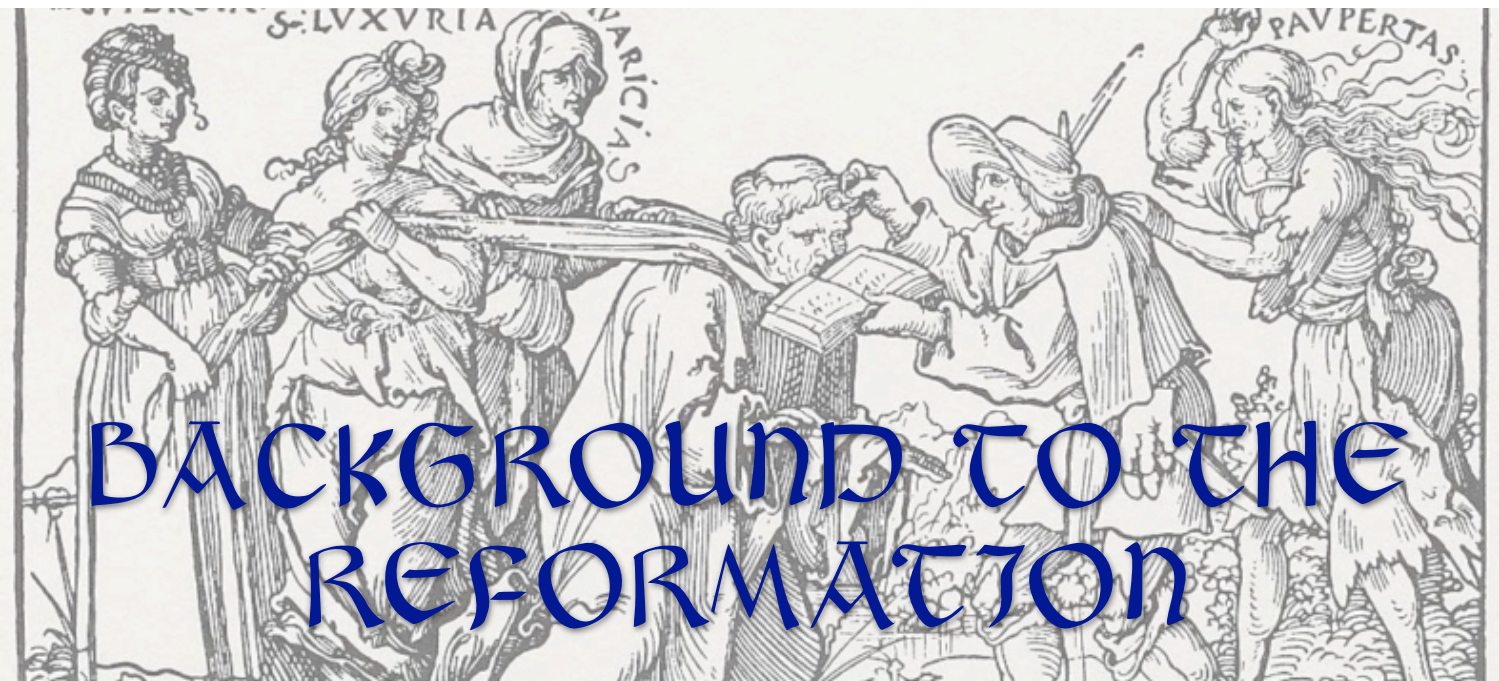
To the east of Poland was Russia. By 1500 Russia was of no consequence in Europe and we can let it go at that.

The Church in 1500

The Church at the top was in bad shape. In fact, the Pope in 1500 was a man named Alexander VI Borgia, who was perhaps the worst pope in history—both Catholic and non-Catholic historians regard him as the worst. Just to give you an idea, he spent a lot of the Church’s resources trying to help his son, who was a cardinal by the way, carve out a little empire in Central Italy, and his daughter was the notorious Lucretia Borgia, who had a habit of poisoning dinner guests. The pope’s corruption spread to other parts of the church as well.

As the Church was becoming increasingly more corrupt, movements toward reform were growing in strength as well. And one of these movements would actually wind up splitting the church itself—the Protestant Reformation, which would kick off in 1517. We will talk about it at length pretty soon.





THE FIRST TOPIC THAT WE ARE GOING TO DISCUSS IN SOME DETAIL IN IN THIS COURSE IS THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION BEGAN AS A THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT AND QUICKLY TURNED INTO NOT ONLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT OF THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES BUT, IN A WIDER CONTEXT, THE MOST IMPORTANT SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT AS WELL.

Now, since this is an introduction to the Protestant Reformation, we should note that there are three major branches of Protestantism, and we are going to discuss all of them in great detail in later lectures. But I want you to have these in your notes so that you can refer to them when you study for exams.

The first branch is **Lutheranism**. Lutheranism was founded by Martin Luther (not Martin Luther King) and was the first of the Protestant churches. Today's Lutheran churches are in this branch.

The second main branch is what we usually call **Calvinism** named after the founder of this branch, a french lawyer and theologian, John Calvin. This is the branch that gave birth to the Presbyterian churches in America. If you go to Europe—or New York or New England for that matter—you often see Reformed or Congregationalist churches or in Germany *Evangelische* churches. These are all also Calvinist churches.

The third main branch is what is called in England the **Anglican Church** (or the Church of England) and what is called in the U.S.A. the Episcopal Church. This branch produced not only those churches, but also the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, and a number of other denominations such as the Quakers.

There are other churches that are often lumped in with the Protestant denominations that are not really Protestant; these include the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and the Christian Scientists. They are not officially Protestant because their prophetic traditions are not rooted in the Protestant movement that we are going to talk about.

To understand how the Reformation took hold, we need to look at the state of the Roman Catholic Church prior to the Reformation in order to give you an idea of why people thought that it should be “reformed.” Now, in the course of the next few lectures, I am going to give you quite a bit of theology because I firmly believe that the long-lasting contribution of the Protestant Reformation to our own society was theological—the never-ending debate about how and what we can know about God. So, what I am going to present now is a thumbnail sketch of Roman Catholic theology around 1500—the theology from which the Protestant Reformation emerged.

Theological Wrangling

The essential question that had faced Catholic theologians from about 1050 to 1500 was whether or not human reason could tell a person anything about God. This debate really got going in the 13th century, and it got going then because more and more Christian thinkers were studying the works of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle. In the Middle Ages, European thinkers and scholars believed that Aristotle was the greatest genius of the Classical Age. They only had a few of Aristotle's books to work from, but in the early 1200s lots more of Aristotle's works became available and the European thinkers, as they studied Aristotle, came to realize that Aristotle offered perfectly reasonable explanations of all kinds of human and natural phenomena—but he did not know about, and thus never mentioned Jesus or the Christian God. So, here was a guy whose writings seemed to explain nature and human behavior in a much more reasonable and understandable way than any Christian was able to do—but without Christianity.

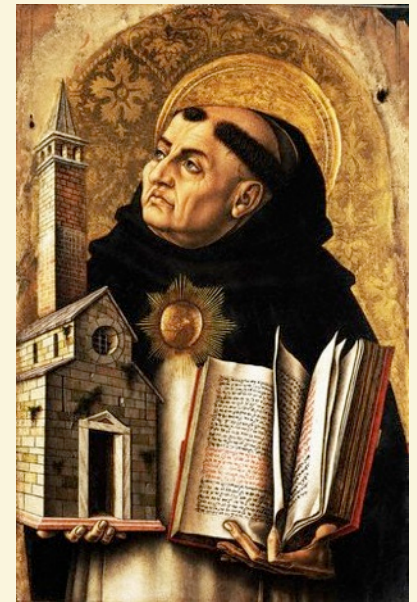
Well, how could one explain that? And that was the major issue facing Christian theologians. Could a reasonable explanation of life and the world, in other words an explanation based on reason—what one could observe in the world and then deduce from those observations—be reconciled with Christian views of the world as set forth in places like the Bible and the writings of the early Christian Fathers? To put it in a nutshell, was it possible to reconcile faith and reason; could they reach the same conclusions?

The thinker who declared that faith and reason could absolutely reach the same conclusions was the famous St. Thomas Aquinas, who lived in the middle of the 13th century. Aquinas spent a lot of his life studying theology and Aristotle and Classical philosophy and put his own understanding together in a vast book that he humbly entitled *Summa Theologiae* (*The Sum of All Theology*). In this book, St. Thomas declared not only that faith and reason could reach the same conclusions, but that they *had to* reach the same conclusions. God, after all, gave human beings the ability to reason and he gave human beings the knowledge of faith. He would never create a universe in which these two ways of finding God would be contradictory. In the end, faith and reason would always agree, and each would be a way of understanding God. And to prove it, he wrote his massive, life-long book in which he took the great teachings of the Christian Church and the great teachings of Aristotle and showed how they complimented rather than contradicted each other. And he did so, as you can guess, by using rational argument.

St. Thomas was supposed to be the last word in this discussion of faith and reason, but, he was not. Probably the most important critics of Aquinas were a group of theologians called the Nominalists. They argued that, whenever one tries to use rational argument to explain God, one is only using names, and these names (words really) do not mean anything (hence the moniker, Nominalist). Words are used in rational discourse to aid understanding. If I want you to understand, say, how gravity works, I would use words to explain the workings and physics of gravity so that you would understand how it works.

BUT, the Nominalists argued that God cannot be explained by means of rational discourse. To try to use words, which always limit and constrain when they define something, actually places unacceptable limits on God. The Nominalists argued that the essence of God is not reason, but divine will, and human beings cannot understand God by using their reason. We have NO WORDS that can contain and define the majesty and power of God. So, Nominalists concluded that the best people can really do is have faith and hope that they are doing the will of God. Can they ever know they are truly doing the will of God? No, but the only way to try, the Nominalists contended, was to follow the Bible and the authority of the Church.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), author of the *Summa Theologiae*. He argued that reason and faith complemented each other in our understanding of God.



Church Corruption

As you can probably guess, most people were not really caught up in this theological debate. As exciting as it may be, that is not what people were most concerned about. They were not happy with the Church at this time, not because of these theological issues, but because of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. And it was certainly true that what got the Protestant Reformation going was not so much Martin Luther's theological views as such, but how those views led to his criticism of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

To put it in understandable language, in 1500 it is true that the Roman Catholic Church was desperately in need of reform. For one thing, by 1500, the Church was very rich, the richest single institution by far in Western Europe. It owned lots of land, lots of wonderful buildings—all of those cathedrals and magnificent monasteries you see in Europe not to mention palaces where the bishops and archbishops lived—and it had its own tax, called the tithe. This tax was a non-optional 10% tax on income, and it raised a lot of money.

Since the Church possessed wealth, it possessed power and influence, and so the upper levels of the church hierarchy were coveted positions. Kings and great lords liked to give top church offices in their countries to younger sons or favorites so that these folks could have large incomes. Sometimes these younger sons were not even ten years old when they became bishop of this or archbishop of that. And they could be bishops in more than one place, a practice called pluralism, drawing income from two, three, or four positions. Now, you might wonder, why didn't the pope put a stop to these abuses? The answer is that such appointments had to be made *by the pope*, who was part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

The problem was that in 1500 the man who was pope was probably the most corrupt pontiff in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. He was Alexander VI, born Rodrigo Borgia of the Roman house of Borgia. He had children; he had a large family that he supported on church funds; he had magnificent tastes and loved to spend money; he had great political ambition; and he was always in need of cash. So, if a king wanted to appoint his five-year-old son bishop of wherever, he could send some money to Alexander VI and get the appointment. And Alexander was not unusual. One 15th-century pope had twelve kids.

What made this all so bad was that, while the upper levels of the Church played politics, the parish priests were generally poor and often ignorant. Many had so little

education they could not accurately recite the Mass and had no idea what it meant anyway.

To top it off, European society had been facing some serious problems prior to 1500. The Black Death had appeared in Europe in 1350 and killed possibly as much as 30% of the population of Europe. And this plague regularly recurred afterwards in many parts of Europe. Likewise in the 15th century, Europe was ravaged by war, the famous Hundred Years War between France and England, civil wars and popular uprisings of various kinds, and the Church seemed unable to respond to any of this. It seemed totally incapable of reaching out to the people and offering them help in their times of suffering.

This corruption in the Church did not go unnoticed by a lot of prominent Roman Catholic clergymen and thinkers.

Church Abuses and Superstitions

In a world beset by disease and disaster, people often clutched at supernatural straws to seek health on earth and salvation in the hereafter. Superstitions abounded among the folk of the time. Most of them were criticized and denounced by the Church, but people believed them anyway, and as the sale of relics and indulgences increasingly brought profits to Church coffers, pious denunciations of this "popular religion" declined steadily. The sad truth is that the Church was willing to put up with, even encourage, superstition so long as it was profitable.

Some people, believed that viewing the consecrated host during Mass in the morning would guard them from death throughout the day, and others neglected to swallow the consecrated wafer so that they could use it later either as a charm to ward off evil, an application to cure the sick, or a powder to fertilize their crops. Some poor country churches are reputed to have done a pretty profitable business in the sale of consecrated wafers.

Similarly, belief in the miraculous curative powers of saints was hard to distinguish from belief in magic. Every saint had his or her specialty: "St. Clare for the eyes, St. Apolline for teeth, St. Job for pox. And for sore breasts, St. Agatha." Because alleged relics of Christ and the saints were thought to radiate marvelous healing effects, traffic in relics boomed. Even Martin Luther's patron, the Elector Frederick the Wise, had some 17,000 relics, including a supposed remnant of Moses' burning bush, pieces of the Holy Cradle, and thirty-three fragments of the True Cross. Mark Twain once cynically observed, there were enough splinters of the True Cross throughout Europe "to shingle a barn."

Superstitions of this kind were offensive enough to religious idealists and reformers, but the granting of dispensations and the promises of spiritual benefits for money were far worse. To many people, the worst abuse of Church was the sale of indulgences. In Catholic theology, an indulgence is a pardon by papal authority of all or part of the punishment in this life for one's sins. Traditionally, to receive an indulgence, a person had to confess his or her sin and do a penance. But, during the Crusades, the Church issued "plenary indulgences" to knights willing to go on a Crusade, because the difficult trip and the risk of life in battle were considered a great sacrifice, or worthy penance. By the late 1300's people believed that the pope could promise time off in purgatory as well. Now, you should remember that by the 1300's the papacy needed revenues. So, the Church began to sell indulgences. In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV needed a lot of money. So, he declared that the benefits of indulgences could be extended to the dead as well as to the living. By the early 1500s, a person could not only buy his or her own way into heaven, but could also send his dead relatives.

All of these various elements of "popular Christianity" were repugnant to reformers and many other learned Christians. In fact, before Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation, there were several Church reform movements afoot. I want to mention a few because the

Reformation and the reforms the Roman Catholic Church would undertake later are rooted in these reform movements. There are several movements that should be mentioned.

Church Reform Movements

The first reform movement was opposed to the Church to the extent that it amounted to heresy—that is, movements that were doctrinally opposed to the Church entirely. Most of these heretical movements were led by people who believed that the Church was too wealthy, too remote from its believers, too steeped in sin, and that the Church had wandered too far from the "primitive church" of the earliest period of Christianity.

In England and Bohemia, heretical movements became serious threats to the Church. The initiator of heresy in late-medieval England was an Oxford theologian named John Wyclif (c. 1330-1384, sometimes spelled Wycliffe). Wyclif came to believe that only a few humans were predestined to be saved while the rest were irrevocably damned. Wyclif thought that those who were predestined would live simple pious lives like Jesus and the Apostles. Yet he found most members of the clergy lived in luxury and extravagance. So he concluded that most Church officials were damned. For Wyclif the only solution was to have secular rulers appropriate ecclesiastical wealth and reform the Church by replacing corrupt priests and bishops with men who would live simple, godly lives. At first, Wyclif received support from influential aristocrats. But then he started attacking some of the most basic institutions of the Church. This radicalism frightened off his influential protectors, and Wyclif probably would have been formally condemned for heresy had he lived longer.

Wyclif had attracted numerous lay followers who were called Lollards. The Lollards continued to propagate some of his most radical ideas. Above all, the Lollards taught that pious Christians should shun the corrupt Church. They advised believers to study the Bible and rely on their individual consciences. They demanded that the Bible be translated into vernacular languages so all could read it, and that the services of the church be in the vernacular, as well. Lollardy was ruthlessly suppressed in England after about 1400. Nevertheless, a few Lollards continued to live and worship underground, and their descendants helped contribute to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Wyclif's influence was much greater in Bohemia. Around 1400, Czech students who had studied in Oxford brought Wyclif's ideas back to the



John Wyclif preaching to influential English noblemen and merchants. Wyclif's radical movement was persecuted in England.

Bohemian capital of Prague. There Wyclif's ideas were adopted by an eloquent preacher named John Hus (c. 1373-1415). Hus had been denouncing Church practices and corruption in well-attended sermons. He employed Wyclif's ideas to back up his own calls for Church reform. Between 1408 and 1415 Hus rallied many Bohemians to the cause of reform. Hus avoided complicating his message with theological complaints as Wyclif had done, so he gained a great deal of support. The politics of the Great Schism (period of multiple popes) prompted the king of Bohemia to lend Hus his protection, and influential aristocrats supported Hus. Most of Bohemia was behind him when Hus agreed to travel to the Council of Constance in 1415 to argue in favor of Church reform. Although Hus had been guaranteed safety, when he arrived at the Council he was tried for heresy and burned. Hus's supporters in Bohemia were justifiably outraged and quickly raised the banner of open revolt. Nobles, clergy and peasants broke from the Catholic Church, seized Church lands, and instituted religious reforms. Bohemia did not return to the Catholic fold for nearly 200 years.

Other reformers did not want to break with the Church, only to change it. These reformers shared basic ideas with the heretics, but they wanted Church reform rather than separation. These can be roughly divided into three groups.

The first group had the idea that what is wrong with the Roman Catholic church was nothing institutional—no organizational problems—it was the people who made up the Church. What I mean by that is the people in the Church—the priests, bishops, monks, archbishops, and the pope himself—were insufficiently spiritual. Those who supported this idea argued that the people who made up the Church should become better—more like Christ. Probably the leading spokesman for this view was Thomas á Kempis, who wrote a book that could be called a best-seller in those days, *The Imitation of Christ*, in which he set out how one could model his life after Christ. He had many followers and many organizations that tried to follow his advice.

A second view was that it was the organization that needed changing—the institution of the Church itself was corrupt, and since the leader of the corruption was the pope, then the leaders of the Church would have to come together in a big council and reform the Church from the outside, without the participation of the pope. This had deep roots in Christian tradition because there were a number of famous councils in the past, even in the 15th century that had led to Church reform.

A third view was the idea that kings should reform the Church. In other words, the king of England should

straighten up the Church in England, the King of France the Church in France, the Holy Roman Emperor should reform the Church in Germany, and so forth. This also had a history in Christianity; indeed, probably the greatest reformer in Christian history was the famous Roman Emperor Constantine, who lived in the fourth century, and who had held a series of councils in which the basic doctrines of Christianity were hammered out.

Finally, a fourth view, similar to the first, was that Christianity had lost track of its origins. The Church had become a huge bureaucracy, wealthy landowner, and powerful political force, something that Christ and the Twelve Apostles would never have envisioned. This view argued that the first thing people should do is learn what the early Christians were like, and that meant reading the Bible. But the Bible had been translated and changed and wasn't entirely trustworthy, so it became important to read it in its



Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) was the most influential leaders of the Christian Humanist movement. Although Erasmus remained a Roman Catholic throughout his lifetime, he harshly criticized corruption in the Roman Catholic Church and even turned down a Cardinalship when it was offered to him.

original language (Greek). The chief proponent of this idea was a man named Erasmus of Rotterdam, who is known as the leading Christian Humanist. He believed that classical learning, the study of Greek and Latin, and the reading of early Christian writings in those languages would give people an idea of what Jesus really had in mind for his followers—and that was not power and wealth on this earth. The Christian humanist movement would have an enormous impact on later Catholic Church reform, and also on educational reform among and within both Catholic and Protestant learning institutions. Christian Humanism even informs many ideas about liberal arts education in modern institutions of higher learning today!

These were the early Church reform movements, but they were unable to reform the Church before Martin Luther undertook his mission to do so. And Martin Luther decided early on that the Church was beyond reform, and the only way to return Christianity to the true path, as he saw it, was to create an entirely new church—a Protestant Church.

Saxoniae oppidum, Vniuersali litterarum studio celebre.

MARTIN LUTHER'S REFORMATION

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION WAS BEGUN BY A MAN NAMED MARTIN LUTHER, AND, TO UNDERSTAND WHY HE BEGAN THE REFORMATION, IT IS NECESSARY TO KNOW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HIM.

Luther was born in 1483 in the village of Eisleben in the Holy Roman Empire. His family was fairly successful, provided him with a good early education and sent him off to the University of Erfurt to study law. Luther was a good student, earned his bachelor's and master's degrees and prepared to enter law school.

And it was at this time (1505) when things became interesting. He had just entered law school when he took a short vacation to visit his family. As he was walking back to Erfurt, he got caught in a thunderstorm, and, as he was running down the road to find shelter, a lightning bolt hit right next to him and knocked him over. At that instant of terror, Luther vowed to St. Anne, the patron saint of his family, that, if he lived, he would enter a monastery. Well, he lived, went on to Erfurt, and, instead of continuing his study of law, entered the Augustinian Monastery in that city to become a monk—much to the surprise of his family and to the anger of his father.

This Augustinian monastery was nothing unusual for the time; it was not a hotbed of new theology or anything like that. It was pretty ordinary as a matter of fact. But, as he was training for the life of a monk, Luther began to have some serious theological and philosophical—some would say psychological—problems.

Of course, the goal of every Christian is to be saved, to achieve salvation, and Luther was no different. He wanted to be saved as well. And he engaged in those activities that the Roman Catholic Church and his monastery said were essential for salvation—attending to the sacraments, confession, communion, penance, and such, and also doing good works, practicing humility, and generally leading a good life—the kind of life that the Church taught one should lead in order to be saved.



Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) was a German monk, priest, professor, theologian, and church reformer, whose teachings inspired the Reformation and deeply influenced the doctrines and culture of the Lutheran and Protestant traditions.

But Luther had increasing trouble with those requirements. After all, the Christian sins are not really external sins; they are not sins that you actually do. The Christian sins are internal sins, sins that you feel inside yourself. What are the seven deadly sins? Gluttony, envy, sloth, anger, jealousy, greed, pride? Those can as easily be *feelings*, not acts. The worst Christian sins are not breaking the Ten Commandments; they are having these feelings that all of us seem to have.

Luther began to really obsess about his inability to get rid of these feelings he had—pride, anger, envy—no matter how often he went to mass or went to confession. His fellow monks tried hard to persuade him not to worry so much about them, but he could not help himself. He would get angry if people mentioned words such as “law,” or “justice” around him because those words convinced him that he was not going to be saved.

Perhaps believing that young Martin needed to get out more, and certainly tired of the young monk’s constant complaints of his impending doom, the abbot decided to send Luther to teach as a college professor. Frederick the Wise, the ruler of Saxony, the German state the monastery was in, had just established a new university in the town of Wittenberg, and the head of the monastery sent Luther there to teach theology.

Luther declared in his later writings that it was at Wittenberg that he had the great theological revelation that would lead to the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s guiding insight came when he contemplated God’s justice. For years he had worried that God seemed unjust. God set standards that He knew men could not meet and then He punished them with eternal damnation when they didn’t meet them. When he was a professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, Luther discovered that he had focused too much on God’s wrath and failed to see the importance of God’s mercy. God could punish, it was true, but He could also save those who had faith in Him. Thus God’s justice was to be found, not in the punishment of sinners, but in the forgiveness of sin. Since the fateful moment of truth came to Luther in the tower room of his monastery, it is customarily called his “tower experience.”

Lecturing in Wittenberg in the years immediately following 1513, Luther dwelled on the text of St. Paul to the Romans (1: 17) “the just shall live by faith” to reach his central doctrine which is called “justification by faith alone.” Luther stated that God’s justice does not demand endless good works and religious ceremonies, for no one can hope to be saved by what he or she does. Rather, humans are “justified,” that is, granted salvation, by God’s saving grace alone. Like Wyclif, Luther concluded that only a few

humans were predestined to be saved, and that God offered salvation as a gift to those predestined few. But, unlike Wyclif, Luther could not completely accept the awful consequences of predestination. Luther essentially refused to talk about it, announcing that:

A dispute about predestination should be avoided entirely... I forget everything about Christ and God when I come upon these thoughts and actually get to the point of imagining that God is a rogue. We must stay in the word, in which God is revealed to us and salvation is offered, if we believe him. But in thinking about predestination, we forget God . . . However, in Christ are hid all the treasures (Col. 2:3); outside him all are locked up. Therefore, we should simply refuse to argue about election.

Because we have no way of knowing whether we are saved or not, we can only be guided by our faith. In Luther’s view those who had faith would do good works anyway, but it was the faith that came first. Luther’s ideas were a direct challenge to the Catholic Church.

Luther and the Indulgence Controversy

At first Luther remained merely an academic lecturer, teaching within the realm of theory, but in 1517 he was provoked into attacking the Church.

Now, the Church was always looking for a way to make some money, and about the best way was the sale of indulgences. I talked about them a little in the last lecture, but here are a few more sordid details. One way to pick up money that had emerged in the last couple of centuries was to issue indulgences. Indulgences are the remission of the temporal punishment for a sin after the sin has been forgiven. Despite this rather complicated theological explanation, it looked to most people as if they were simply buying forgiveness, and the Church did nothing to discourage that interpretation of indulgences. To make matters a little worse, the church also proclaimed that certain people, like the saints and Jesus himself, had actually done more good deeds than they needed to to get into heaven and had thus created a surplus of good deeds. The Church controlled this surplus in something called the “Treasury of Merit” so, if you thought you needed a few more good deeds for yourself or someone else, you could purchase some of these good deeds from the Church.

Albert of Hohenzollern, a German nobleman, had sunk himself into enormous debt. In 1513, he decided to make some money by investing in two archbishoprics, those of Mainz and Magdeburg. Pope Leo X was certainly happy to sell them, so the two reached a deal that Albert could purchase both of them for the sum of 34,000 ducats, which was a lot of money, even for Albert. Well, to pay this huge sum, Albert and the Pope agreed that the Church would

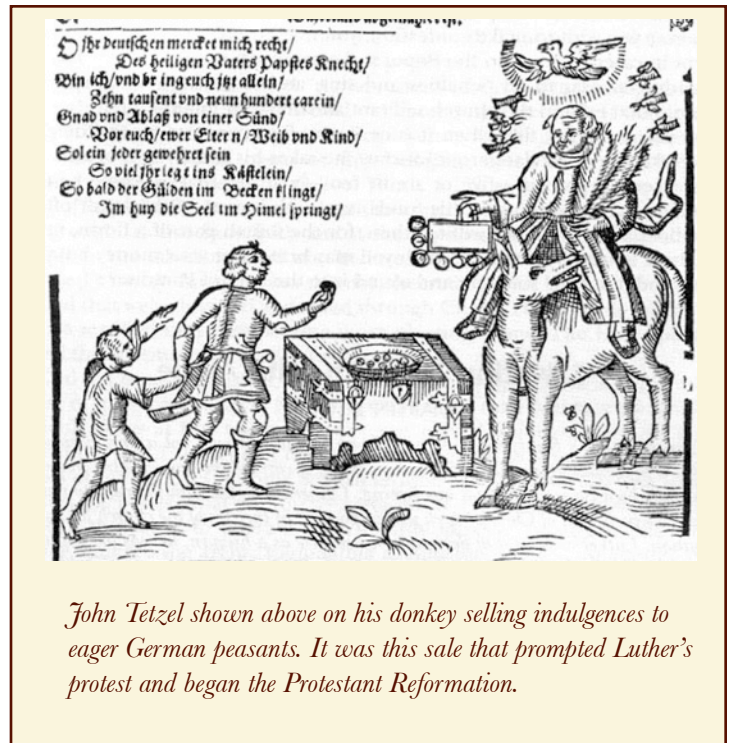
have an indulgence sale in these two archbishoprics. They would sell indulgences and good deeds from the Treasury of Merit to the people. Half the profit would go directly to the Pope, and the other half would go to Albert to help him with his purchase; in other words, all of the money would eventually get to the Pope.

Luther did not know the sordid details of Albert's bargain, but he did know that a Dominican monk named John Tetzel was hawking indulgences throughout much of northern Germany. Tetzel deliberately gave people the impression that the indulgences he sold were an immediate ticket to heaven for oneself and one's dear departed in purgatory. This was too much for Luther. So on October 31, 1517, he nailed a list of ninety-five arguments objecting to Catholic indulgence doctrine to the door of the university church at Wittenburg (the *Ninety-Five Theses*). This act is often used to mark the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Luther probably did not intend to make his criticism of Tetzel and the Church public. The church door acted as a sort of university bulletin board. Luther wrote his objections in Latin, not German, and meant them to be used for academic debate among Wittenburg faculty members. However, he chose to hang his manifesto on Halloween. The next day is All Saints' Day, a Holy Day of Obligation, and a day when people came pouring into Wittenberg to attend mass. They saw the *Ninety-Five Theses*, read them or had someone read them, discussed them a lot, and got printers to print up copies and spread them around. The *Ninety-Five Theses* brought instant attention to Luther, including the attention of the Church, which decided that this guy might be trouble.

Luther was immediately called upon by Tetzel and Church authorities to withdraw his criticism or defend himself. Luther refused to back down. In 1519, in a public debate, Luther defiantly maintained that the pope and all clerics were merely fallible men and that the highest authority for an individual's conscience was the truth of Scripture. The pope charged Luther with heresy.

In 1518, the Church sent a Cardinal named Cajetan to visit Luther and get him to recant. Cajetan and Luther debated the issues for three days. Luther went away thinking that he might not have a future in the Roman Catholic Church, and Cajetan went away thinking the same thing—that Luther might not have a future in the Roman Catholic



John Tetzel shown above on his donkey selling indulgences to eager German peasants. It was this sale that prompted Luther's protest and began the Protestant Reformation.

Church. In 1519 the Church sent another person to deal with Luther, this one was a theologian named Johann Eck, who challenged Luther to a public debate on his ideas. Eck proved to be a debater superior to Luther, but, instead of getting Luther to admit that he was wrong, the debates made Luther think more about his ideas—refine them, put them in perspective—and in the end convinced him that he could no longer be a part of the Roman Catholic Church.

Consequences of Luther's Protest

In 1520 Luther published three great pamphlets that meant the breakup of western Christianity and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. From 1520 there is no longer one unified Christian Church in Western Civilization.

What I want to do now is go through the basic Lutheran principles so that you can understand them. Essentially, Luther asked no new questions about Christianity, and he really came up with no new answers either. Rather, he stressed answers that the Roman Catholic Church could not accept, and that represented the break between him and the church.



QUESTION 1: HOW IS A PERSON SAVED? Now, this is the most important question in Christian theology. In 1517, the Roman Catholic Church stressed that a person is saved mostly through good works. A person strove to do as many good works as possible. Now, that's more than helping little old ladies across the street. It involved a tremendous variety of things, like attending the Mass, participating in the sacraments, reciting the Lord's prayer and the *Ave Maria*, and other prayers, doing penance and other activities. If you sinned, it was necessary to atone for that sin.¹

Luther rejected utterly the idea that a person could be saved through good works; believing that good works could get one to Heaven meant trying to strike a bargain with God. Such a bargain could never be struck. One can never do enough good works to make a deal with God. Besides, Luther went on, human beings are sinners. Period. Sin, he argued, is self-love, and no person can love anything more than he or she can love himself or herself. Thinking that good works will get one to Heaven is the ultimate in self-love, because a person who believes that believes that he or she is sufficiently powerful to bargain with God.

So, said Luther, one is saved only by faith, and faith alone. And how does one get this faith? One does not earn it, one does not even seek it, it is a free gift from God out of his infinite mercy. God freely gives faith through His grace. Now, it is important for you to understand that having faith is a condition, it is not a power. In other words, when you have faith, you are not a better person; you are still a sinner. The only change is that now you can trust in God to save you. If you think you are a better person because you have faith, then that is simply proof that you are more a sinner than ever, because thinking you are a better person is evidence of pride—self-love.

Now, if all that is true, how do you know you have faith? That was a difficult question for Luther. He declared that, if you worry about whether or not you are saved, you have faith. In other words, if you went through the same experiences that he did, then you are probably bound for Grace.

QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY? If you have religious questions, where do you go for religious answers? For Catholics, that is easy. You ask the priest, who asks the bishop, who asks the archbishop, who asks the pope, who asks God. In other words, religious authority rests in the hierarchy of the Church.

Luther declared that is not true. He argued that religious authority rests in the “Word of God” contained in the Holy Scriptures. If you want answers, they are in the Bible. Well, that sounds good, but, as all of you who have ever read the Bible know, it is not all that easy to understand. So, is Luther saying to each of us, go to the Bible and figure it out for yourself? The answer to that question is *absolutely not*. Luther did not at all believe that anyone could go to the Bible and find the answers he wants. Luther declared that the Bible was not the written word of God but the “spoken word of God.” People can agree or disagree over the text of the Bible, but they do not truly understand it until they have faith. In fact, when the Bible suddenly opens to you, that is one more piece of evidence that you have faith. Well that is interesting, but, again, how do you know that the Bible has opened its meaning to you? Well, Luther basically said that you know it has opened its meaning to you when you agree with him. Luther had no use for people who interpreted the Bible differently from him.

QUESTION 3: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Again, that is easy for Catholics: the Church is the visible institution of the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the Church includes the priests, bishops, monks, friars, nuns—all that which is known as the clergy, as well as the property of the Church—churches, monasteries, etc. Luther said that is certainly not the Church. The Church is the community of believers. He argued that every person is a priest (priesthood of all believers) and no person was closer to God than any other person.

Well, this is a fine idea, but who then takes on the responsibilities of the Church? Who performs the Mass, the sacraments, who runs the schools, who takes care of church property, who trains the clergy? Luther said that the ultimate responsibility for these tasks was the state—the government. And in those days, that meant the kings and princes. That turned out to be an advantage to Luther, because it gave his new church an immediate authority and protector.



¹ On October 31, 1999 the Catholics and Lutherans reached agreement in Augsburg, Germany, that justification is by faith and that such justification is a free gift from God and that good works stem from that faith. In other words, the Catholic Church accepted the Lutheran position.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE REFORMATION

UP TO NOW WE HAVE TALKED A LOT ABOUT THEOLOGY, AND WE HAVE ONE MORE LECTURE IN WHICH WE ARE GOING TO TALK EVEN MORE ABOUT THEOLOGY, BUT TODAY WE ARE GOING TO GET AWAY FROM THEOLOGY AND TALK ABOUT THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE REFORMATION. WE ARE GOING TO START WITH POLITICS.

Since the first lecture we have not talked much about politics in Europe in the 16th century, so let's refresh your memories a little bit. Virtually every form of government at this time was that of monarchy. Sometimes they had other titles like dukes or electors and there was one emperor. These were forms of government that came down from the Early Middle Ages, when great warriors turned out to be the principal political leaders.

But unfortunately it was not quite so clean as each country simply having a king. For example, Germany was divided into a whole bunch of little states, each one with some kind of government peculiar to itself. For example, some of these little states were ruled by what one might call miniature kings—dukes, princes, counts, people like that—they are usually just referred to as the German princes. A few were cities, ruled by town councils. The cities on the Baltic Sea were like that. And there were even a lot of really tiny states ruled by knights.

Theoretically, all of these were part of Germany of which the emperor was the head. And they met in a government called the Holy Roman Empire. The catch was that this Emperor did not really exercise a whole lot of power over these little states. In fact, it is easy to compare the Holy Roman Empire of those days with the United Nations today. Just like the United Nations, the Holy Roman Empire could pass laws, but the little states often did not have to follow them if they did not want to. When the Protestant Reformation began, some of these states became Lutheran and some remained Catholic, and it usually depended on the will of the prince.



Charles V Habsburg

In 1520, when Luther wrote his three books launching the Protestant Reformation, the most powerful ruler in Europe was Charles V Habsburg. In 1520 Charles was only 20 years old—about your age—and he was ruler over a huge amount of territory. He was not only Holy Roman Emperor; he was also ruler of Austria (the Habsburg Monarch), all of today's Netherlands, Belgium, and northeastern France, all of Spain, and all of the newly acquired Spanish lands in the New World.

Despite his youth, when the Protestant Reformation erupted, Charles was keenly interested in it for a number of reasons. First of all, it was happening in his lands—Germany—and causing a lot of commotion. Second, it had political consequences. His nobles, his primary supporters, rather quickly divided into Catholic and Protestant camps. Third, Charles considered himself to be a guardian of what he considered to be the true Christian faith, which meant Roman Catholicism. He favored considerable reform in the Church—he did not like the way the Church was being run—but he also believed that the Roman Catholic Church was the way to salvation, and he believed that he should do all that he could to make sure his subjects had a chance at being saved. So, he wanted to play a key role in bringing all of his subjects back into the Roman Catholic fold.

And he tried to do it. In 1521 he invited Luther to come before him and present his views, subject, of course, to questioning not only by Charles but by his own theologians. Luther did so, but he failed to convince Charles that his position was correct. Charles had guaranteed Luther that nothing would happen to him if he came to testify, but, when the discussion was over, Charles ordered him arrested. By then Luther had powerful friends, namely, a few of the German princes, and they helped him escape and hide. He hid for a year in a place called the Wartburg Castle, which is somewhat famous because during that year Luther translated the New Testament into German. That Bible became the Bible of the German Protestants and is really the foundation of the German language of today.

Charles' Difficulties

Lutheranism was not the only problem Charles faced. He had two other difficulties that were very serious indeed and which plagued him throughout his reign. One was a threat posed by France on his West, and the other was a threat posed by the Ottoman Empire on his East. First let's look at the threat by France.

To understand why France was an enemy of Charles V, all you have to do is look at the map. France was surrounded by the lands of Charles V. The king of France, Francis I and

quite a ruler at the time, believed that, for France to be safe from Charles, it had to push back those boundaries. And to do that it had to fight wars with Charles V. The Habsburg-Valois Wars, as they are called, began in 1521 and simply kept on going off and on until after both Francis and Charles were dead, ending in 1559.

The second threat came from the East, from the Ottoman Empire. We spoke briefly about the Ottoman Empire on the first day of class. In 1500, the Ottoman Empire was considered a great danger to Europe. It was a Turkish state, and in 1500 it was warlike, aggressive, and powerful. But it was not Christian. It was also Moslem, and many Christians considered it to be the most serious threat on earth to western Christianity. The Ottoman Empire had begun in Anatolia and had been advancing westward ever since. In 1526 it would conquer Hungary, and it would extend its borders to within 60 miles of Vienna, one of Charles's most important cities.

Not only was this great state a threat, but it just so happened that at this time the ruler of the Ottoman Empire, called a sultan, was the greatest ruler in Ottoman history, who had a name to match, Suleiman the Magnificent. He was eager to make his mark on the world, and for an Ottoman sultan that meant advancing against the Christian West, conquering as he went. And it was up to Charles to stop him. Like the wars with France, Charles fought against the Turks all of his life.



Left: Francis I of France.
Below: Charles V Habsburg
Bottom Left: Suleiman the Magnificent

Now, why am I telling you all of this in a lecture about the social and political impact of the Reformation? The reason is that the wars against France and Turkey essentially prevented Charles from restoring religious unity to Germany. He would finally get a break from these wars, call the Protestant and Catholic princes together, tell them they had to figure out compromises to rejoin the Catholic Church (he did not want to allow anyone to remain Protestant), and then receive word that either the Turks or the French were on the march again—and head off to lead his armies. He could not restore religious unity to Germany because he never had time to do it—and he was the only person who could have done it.

Social Consequences of Luther's Reformation

The Protestant Reformation had some interesting social consequences as well, and the most interesting one occurred in the 1520s. As I have already mentioned, Lutheranism from the beginning was a popular movement among various levels of German society. But I also mentioned that, even though a lot of people followed Luther, they did not fully understand what Luther was trying to say.

In 1524, peasants in southwestern Germany were inspired by Luther's writings about Christians being free (Luther argued that they were free in their own hearts) and decided that Luther meant that they should also be free of their obligations to pay dues and to work for their lords. And these peasants staged a revolt. The revolt spread rapidly into central Germany, and, as it did, it became increasingly violent. The peasants did not simply demand an end to their obligations to their lords; they killed their lords and their families and burned down their houses.

The peasant revolt eventually approached Wittenberg, where Luther still lived. Luther had been at least sympathetic to the peasant demands for better treatment, but he still believed that people should know their own place in society and be happy with it. As the revolt began to threaten his own land, however, Luther turned against it with some vehemence. He wrote a startling pamphlet with the fiery title, "*Against the Murdering Hordes of Peasants*."

In this remarkable pamphlet, he called upon the German nobility to simply kill any rebellious peasants. He appealed to the nobles to become "both judge and executioner," to "knock down, strangle, and stab." And he went on to write, "such wonderful times are these that one prince can get to heaven better with bloodshed than another with prayer."

Now, what you should be saying is, "Wait a minute, I thought he said that no one could get to heaven by works, good or vicious." Well, you are right. But one characteristic that Luther did not possess was consistency. He was a

passionate, emotional man, and he often did not think things through very carefully. This is one time when he did not think much at all. In 1525 the princes and the nobles put down the Peasants' Revolt with incredible savagery.

That pamphlet ended Lutheranism as a popular movement. It seemed to show that Luther was someone who wished to preserve the political and social status quo and had no sympathy for the concerns of the common people. From 1525 on, the common people of Germany and of Europe interested in Protestantism turned to its other forms like Anabaptism and Calvinism. But the German princes loved Luther. Not only had his writings declared that they should be heads of the church, but now he also designated them as the upholders of the social and political order. The people were no longer enthusiastic Lutherans, but many of the princes sure were. But, why did German princes establish Lutheranism within their territories? This question is very important because without support from German leaders his cause surely would have failed. Lutheranism as a popular movement would have failed as so many other heretical movements had before it.

In fact, Lutheranism flourished only in those territories where rulers were also Lutheran. In those areas where the leaders remained Catholic, Luther's sympathizers were forced to flee, face death, or conform. In short, the word of the prince in religious matters was simply law.

In most ways the motives of the people and their princes for turning to Lutheranism were very similar. Motives of personal piety surely played some role in individual cases. But less pure factors were at work as well. If the common people disliked the idea of their money being drained off to Rome, princes liked it less. Many princes were quick to perceive that Lutheranism offered a way to stop payments to Rome, *and*, even better, take that money that was going to the pope, and give it to the prince as the head of the Lutheran church in his state. Remember that Luther had recommended that civil authorities should also head up the church. Throughout Europe by the 1500s (and even earlier), secular rulers had been looking for ways to make the state dominant in all walks of life, religious as well as secular. Rulers sought to control the appointments of Church officials in their own realms and to limit Church meddling in their affairs. The German princes saw Luther's reformation as a opportunity to preserve their own sovereign authority against the Roman Church. As the heads of the church in their state, princes would receive increased revenues (tithes), would control church offices, would control various social services that the Catholic Church had run (hospitals, orphanages, education, etc.). All this would empower the state over much of life in 16th century Europe.

Politics and Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire

In Germany after 1525 the conflict between Catholicism and Lutheranism ceased to be a struggle for the hearts and minds of common people and more and more became a political battle between Lutheran and Catholic princes and the Holy Roman Emperor and the Lutheran princes.

To give you a few highlights, in 1530 Charles V, leader of the Catholic princes of course, had a pause between his wars with the Turks and the French and had the opportunity to bring the Catholic and Protestant princes together to work a compromise that would end the religious disunity of Germany. But, as you can guess, the Catholic and Protestant princes could not agree on a compromise, and Charles ordered the Protestant princes to return to the Catholic fold. The negotiations collapsed and Charles told the Protestants he would make sure they would become Catholic again, by force if necessary. But, before he could enforce his will, word arrived that the French and the Turks were on the march again, and he had to rush off to deal with them. I might add that, whenever that happened, Charles always needed the support of the Protestant as well as the Catholic princes, so things were always put on hold while they all fought Germany's common enemies.

In 1547 Charles had another chance to reunite the Church in Germany, and this time he started with military force. He went to war against the Protestant princes, and he actually defeated them. But, once again before he could impose his will upon them, word arrived that the Turks were on the march, and he had to go and deal with them.

Finally, in 1555 Charles simply gave up. He sat down with the Catholic and Lutheran princes and composed the Religious Peace of Augsburg. This peace treaty contained two important provisions:

1. It recognized the Lutheran religion (not Calvinism) as a legal religion in Germany.
2. It declared that each German prince or state could decide what religion it wanted as its state religion. This meant that, if a prince were Lutheran, he could order all people living in his state to be Lutheran; if a prince were Catholic, he could order all people living in his state to be Catholic. The principle was known as "*cujus regio, ejus religio*."²

What this means is that the true winners in the religious struggle in Germany between 1520 and 1555 were the princes, especially the Protestant princes. They got all of that church property and they could completely control the religious faiths of their subjects. It all added to their power and influence. In 1556 Charles simply quit. He stepped down as Holy Roman Emperor, as King of Spain and Sicily, as Duke of Austria, as Duke of Luxembourg, as Count of Zeeland, as Count of Flanders (and about twelve other titles) and retired to a monastery in Spain—the only emperor to quit in the nine-century history of the Holy Roman Empire.

² Essentially, "the religion of the prince is the religion of his subjects." Not a literal translation, but that's what it means.



AFTER LUTHER PUBLISHED THE BOOKS THAT CONTAINED HIS BASIC IDEAS IN 1520, A LOT OF PEOPLE IN GERMANY LIKED HIS IDEAS AND BECAME FOLLOWERS OF LUTHER. THE REASONS THEY LIKED HIS IDEAS WERE NOT, OF COURSE, ALWAYS THE SAME.

Some became Lutherans because they thought he was right. They read his books and were convinced that salvation came from faith and faith alone, and believed that Catholicism stressed good works too much. Others liked Luther because he defied authority. Luther was a pretty earthy guy—his writings were not well-constructed arguments; they were full of all sorts of insults leveled at the Pope and the Roman clergy. He called the Church a “licentious den of thieves” and said that Rome outdid Sodom and Babylon in its immorality and evil. He called the Pope all kinds of names, of which “devil” was one of the milder ones. Just like today, a lot of people admired that kind of rhetoric and so joined the Lutheran movement.

As part of this defiance of authority, people also liked what Luther said about freedom. One of Luther’s three main books was entitled “The Freedom of a Christian.” Now, what he meant in that book was a Christian is spiritually free no matter what his political, economic, or social status, but a lot of people interpreted it to mean that a Christian should be politically, economically, and socially free as well, which is not at all what Luther meant. As we have seen, that misinterpretation caused serious problems, not only for Germany but for Luther himself.

Still others liked his attacks on the wealth of the Church. Not only did the Church pay no taxes, it collected taxes, and a lot of people thought that, while many Christians went hungry, the Church was far too rich and far too possessive of its wealth to help its own people. It had strayed far away from exemplary model of the lives of Christ and the Apostles and the original Christian message.

A lot of powerful political figures really liked his idea that the state should be responsible for the Church. When the princes looked at all of the wealth of the Church in their lands, they thought, “If I become a Lutheran, I could confiscate all of that property and declare that I am using it for religious purposes. I will then be able to control the wealth of the Church in my own lands, not have to watch taxes go out of the country, and be able to use some of those resources for my own needs.”

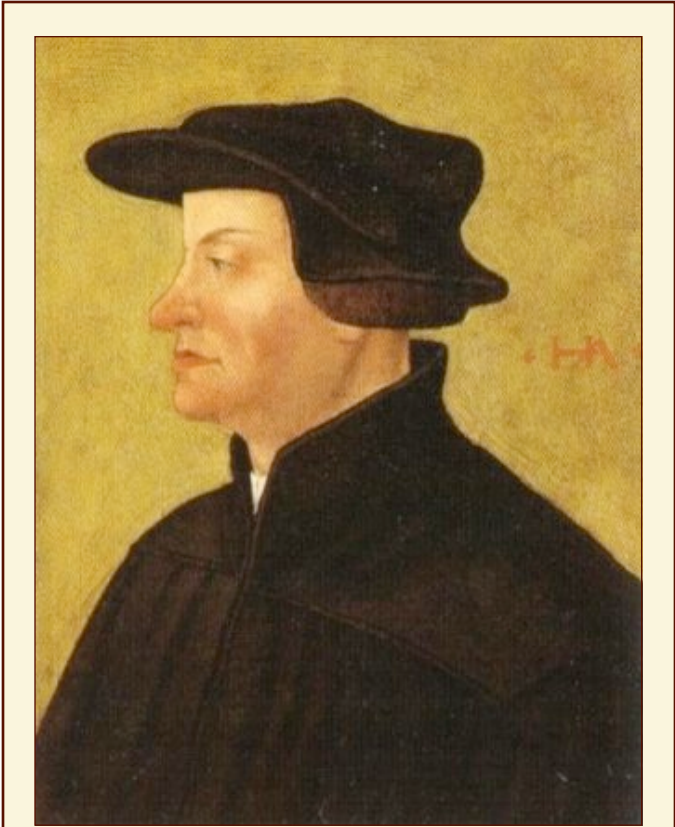
Finally, one must admit that a lot of Germans liked Luther’s verbal blasts at Italians. Another of the three books he wrote in 1520 was entitled “A Letter to the German Nobility” in which he called on the German princes to take over the Church in Germany and get rid of all the Italians who were robbing poor Germans to send money to Italian popes.

Lutheranism attracted a large number of Germans—a variety as well. As you should know, one of basic principles of Lutheranism was that religious authority rested in the Bible. Luther himself translated the New Testament into German in 1521 and this German New Testament became a 16th-century best seller. And, as you can guess, it was not long before people were reading the bible on their own, and they began to come up with some ideas that were not quite the same as Luther's. In other words, from the beginning, Lutheranism, and now we should use the term Protestantism, began to split into different movements. The first non-Lutheran Protestant movement was that of Ulrich Zwingli, which began really fast, in 1521.

Zwingli was a Catholic priest in the Swiss city of Zurich. He had been a chaplain for Swiss soldiers, and was quite a biblical scholar. He read Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* with some fascination, and he followed closely Luther's debates with Johann Eck and all of the stuff that was written about them.

When Luther published his pamphlets in 1520, Zwingli transformed his congregation into a Lutheran one. At about this time, he also began a correspondence with Luther. But quite soon, the two began to disagree on a number of fairly important matters.

For one thing, Zwingli became more and more convinced of the correctness of the doctrine of predestination. We are going to get into that a lot when we talk about John Calvin, so just write it down for now and put in parentheses in your notes, "see the lecture on John Calvin." Luther never liked predestination. Second, Zwingli's theology and morality were based on a single principle: if the Old or New Testament did not say something explicitly and literally, then no Christian should believe or practice it. Zwingli believed so much that religious authority rested in the Bible that he thought church



Ulrich Zwingli by Hans Asper (1549)

Fascinated by Luther's 95 Theses, Zwingli, a Swiss chaplain founded his own brand of Protestantism, which, though based on Luther's ideas, soon moved off in other directions.

services should be almost exclusively devoted to reading and explaining the Bible. So, in his church Zwingli destroyed all of the statues, all of the stained glass windows, and even the organ because he did not want any music to detract from hearing the Word of God. Luther liked music; he even wrote some hymns, and he thought that was going way too far in focusing on the Bible.

Third and most important, Zwingli and Luther broke over the nature of communion. Zwingli looked upon communion not as a sacrament but as only a thanksgiving service for grace already received. In 1529, Zwingli and Luther met in the Lutheran German state of Hesse to resolve their differences, but, as you might guess, the discussion degenerated into the two shouting Bible verses at one another. Luther cited the famous passage, "This is my body," while Zwingli focused on the Gospel of John in which Jesus explains metaphorically that he is the bread of life. Finally, Zwingli shouted, "John 6 will break your neck." Luther replied coldly, "Our necks do not break so easily; remember, you are in Hesse now, not in Switzerland." That was the end of any reconciliation.



Luther and Zwingli debate Theology in 1529.



Anabaptist Martyrdom

Because Anabaptists believed in adult, rather than infant baptism, Catholics and even some Protestants would execute them by drowning. Above, an Anabaptist named Maria Van Monjou is executed in 1552 at Antwerp.

Now, you may be saying to yourselves, “I don’t remember ever hearing about any Zwinglian churches; I don’t know any Zwinglians.” Well, there is a good reason for that. Around 1530, Zwingli got the idea that God wanted him to spread his brand of Protestantism by force. So, he got the city of Zurich to wage war on its Catholic neighbors, and in 1531 he led his forces against a Catholic army and lost. The Catholics captured a wounded Zwingli on the battlefield, killed him, quartered and burned his body, and scattered his ashes (no grave was to be found where people could go and remember). That was pretty much it for Zwinglianism.

But, before Zwingli’s church disappeared, it had a spin-off that is still around, and that is the Anabaptist movement (however, its descendants today are not the Baptists). The Anabaptists emerged as an independent Protestant movement the same way Zwinglianism had—its leaders read the Bible and found stuff that disagreed with what Zwingli believed. A number of members of Zwingli’s church came to the conclusion—by reading the Bible—that there is no biblical authority for infant baptism. There is nothing in there about baptizing babies. They told Zwingli that infant baptism was in fact not valid, and that every adult Christian had to be “re-baptized,” and that is the meaning of the word

“Anabaptist.” Well, just as Luther liked certain things that his own arguments seemed to go against, Zwingli liked infant baptism, and he tried to argue with these people that infant baptism was okay. But they kept insisting, “It is not in the Bible.”

So, in the best tradition of religious toleration and understanding at this time, Zwingli had them expelled from Zurich. They wandered into southern and western Germany and picked up a lot of followers, and they also picked up additional ideas from the Bible that neither the Lutherans nor the Zwinglians had. Some of these ideas are pretty whacky. One of the Psalms says to shout the Lord’s praises from the rooftops, so they did so literally. Matthew 18 says that one cannot enter heaven except as a little child, so some dressed up in diapers and drank from baby bottles. Some tried to convince young women that they could not get into Heaven as virgins because to get into heaven, you must give up “all that you hold most dear.” One even copied Isaiah by putting a hot coal on his tongue so that he could declare that he had unclean lips; unfortunately he could not say anything afterwards. But these acts were just humorous; others got them into trouble. The most serious was their reading of a passage in Matthew that says, “Swear not at all.” They interpreted that to mean that they could not take any loyalty oath to any worldly entity. Now, think of that for a minute. In our own society, they could not pledge allegiance to the flag or the country for that matter. They could not pledge to pay off their debts (even the credit card slip you sign contains a pledge that you will pay it). And they could not take an oath to bear arms in defense of the state. They could not be witnesses or jurors in court cases, nor hold civil offices, which usually have some oath one takes at inauguration. Now, in our own day we would be suspicious of such people; in those days they were considered traitors. A lot of states arrested them and sometimes even sentenced them to death. In fact, a favorite form of execution for Anabaptists was drowning—“You want to be baptized; we’ll baptize you.”

The Anabaptists were persecuted throughout Europe, but they did not disappear. They still exist, especially in the United States, and here there are two groups that are pretty well known. One is the Mennonites, who are numerous in the Midwest, and the other, more conservative group, is the Amish, who are also numerous in the Midwest and East. The Amish are the ones who resist modern technology.



Anabaptists are still around. One group are the Amish of Pennsylvania.