

Introduction to the Reformation

Sources

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I. What is the Reformation?

A. Chronologically

1. Begins in 1517: 95 Theses
2. Ending
 - a. 1648: End of 30 Years' War
 - b. 1660 (England): Restoration of Stuarts

B. Descriptive Labels

1. Reformation: “re-forming” (“forming again”) or “repairing”—idea of corrective or cleaning up abuses
2. Restoration: Bringing back what was lost
 - a. Religious, in sense of NT gospel
 - b. Renaissance recovery of best of classical culture
3. Renewal: Building on genuine but impoverished spiritual life
4. Revolution: turning things around (even upside-down); spiritual but also major political, economic, etc. aspects
5. Revival: abundant work of the Holy Spirit

II. Theological Significance

A. Place of Theology

1. Theology a driving force more than just religiously
2. Protestant Reformation: A united center—reject plural “Reformations”

B. Central Principles

1. Justification by faith alone
 - a. Catholics: Justification by faith *and* works
 - b. Central doctrinal point of Reformation: Exclude good works from salvation
2. Authority of Scripture alone
 - a. Catholics: Authority of tradition & need for official Church interpretation
 - b. Expressed in proliferation of translations
3. Priesthood of all believers
 - a. Catholics: Special priesthood necessary for the sacraments
 - b. Ramifications:
 - 1) Private interpretation
 - 2) Perspicuity of Bible
 - c. A root of liberty of conscience

III. What Caused the Reformation?

A. Corruption of the Church

1. Weakness and scandal of the papacy
 - a. Weakness: Avignon Papacy & Great Schism
 - b. Scandal: Alexander VI
2. Religion becoming superstition
3. Basically salvation by works
4. Spark: Sale of indulgences

B. Renaissance Humanism

1. "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched."
2. *Ad fontes*: "Back to the sources" (incl. NT)
3. Program: Clean out corruption
4. Yet non-doctrinal, even Pelagian (See González, 16-17)

C. Political Changes

1. Loss of idea of "one emperor, one pope"
2. Strong nation-states w/ kings w/ agendas
3. Continuing fragmentation of Germany

D. Printing

1. Work of Gutenberg, etc.
2. Examples: 95 Theses; Wycliffe's Bible vs. Tyndale's

E. Pre-reformers

1. Reform based on Scripture
 - a. John Wycliffe of England
 - b. John Huss of Bohemia
 - 1) Popularized Wycliffe's ideas
 - 2) Followers: Bohemian Brethren; later the Moravians
2. Moral reform
 - a. Savonarola of Florence
 - b. Method: Use state to reform church

F. Ultimately, sovereignty of God