

Introduction to the Reformation

I. Background

A. Renaissance

1. Negative Contribution: Degradation of the Renaissance papacy
 - a. Previously: Avignon Papacy, Great Schism
 - b. Moral depravity of Alexander VI
 - c. “Warrior-pope”: Julius II
 - d. Religious apathy & greed of Leo X
2. Contributions of Renaissance Humanism
 - a. Foundation—Return to the sources, e.g., the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Erasmus’ Greek NT)
 - b. Methodology
 - 1) Look at what the text says over rational deduction
 - 2) Follow grammatical-historical interpretation
 - c. Technology—Development of movable-type printing
 - d. Ideology—Sees need for reform
 - e. Failure—lack of theological critique, even some “Pelagianism”

B. Mysticism/Devotion

1. An emphasis on “heart religion” and direct access to God
2. Example: Brethren of the Common Life

C. “Pre-reformers”

1. Doctrinal: Wycliffe & Huss
 - a. It was through Huss that Wycliffe’s teachings flowed into Europe.
 - b. Challenged the doctrine of the church
 - 1) Church, as the elect, is *fundamentally spiritual*, not fundamentally visible
 - 2) Downplayed the hierarchical, sacramental body
 - c. Challenged the sacraments (esp. Wycliffe)
2. Moral: Spiritual Franciscans; Savonarola
 - a. Attacked the corruption and worldliness of the papacy
 - b. Savonarola
 - 1) “Puritan in Babylon” of Renaissance Florence
 - 2) Particularly contrasts with worldliness of Alexander VI

II. Divisions

A. Chronological (1517-1648)

1. Traditional (Political)
 - a. 1517: Posting of the 95 Theses
 - b. 1648: Peace of Westphalia
2. Other schemes
 - a. “First Reformation” 1517-64: Death of Calvin (end of the major doctrinal contributions)
 - b. “Second Reformation” from Elizabeth I
 - c. “Long Reformation” (late medieval to early 1700s)

B. Theological

1. Lutheran
 - a. Earliest; began with Luther
 - b. Stress on mystery and paradox

- c. More accepting of tradition
- d. Strongest in Germany and Scandinavia
- 2. Reformed
 - a. Began with Zwingli and Calvin
 - b. Stress on systematizing, resolving
 - c. Regulative principle of what is found in Scripture
 - d. Southern Germany, Switzerland, Low Countries, Scotland, minorities in France and Poland
- 3. Radical
 - a. “Miscellaneous,” including mystics and rationalists
 - b. “Radical” against tradition & mainstream
 - c. Reconstruct more than reform the church
 - d. Most important: Anabaptists (Evangelical Anabaptists)
- 4. Anglican
 - a. Diverse—different emphases at different times w/ different parties
 - b. Doctrine: Initially strongly Protestant, generally Reformed (with some Lutheran flavor)
 - c. Practice: Traditionalist with Catholic similarities
 - d. Starting Point: “Middle way” or “Elizabethan settlement”
- 5. Catholic, or “Counter,” Reformation

III. Common Tenets

A. Justification by faith alone

- 1. *Sola fide*
- 2. Denies Catholic idea of merit; humans can have no merits of their own, only those of Christ
- 3. Justification is fundamentally about righteousness, *imputation* (crediting) against the *infusing* of Catholicism.
- 4. Adds element of *assurance*

B. Authority of Scriptures

- 1. *Sola scriptura*
- 2. Nothing may bind the conscience of a Christian but that which is found in the Word of God.
- 3. Rejected the authority of tradition, church, & popes

C. Priesthood of believers

- 1. Rejected special priesthood and related doctrines such as the Mass
- 2. Insisted on Christ as the sole mediator
- 3. Related doctrine: Right of private interpretation (Authority + Priesthood = Perspicuity of Scriptures)

D. Import of these tenets

- 1. The Reformation is has a doctrinal heart, not just cleaning up abuses.
- 2. The Reformation is *evangelical*, pertaining to the gospel.
- 3. The Reformation is fundamentally a revival of religion—the normal work of the Spirit in abundant measure.