

DBQ: PROTESTANT REFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Protestant Reformation was a cultural and political change that splintered the Catholic Church in Europe, setting in place the structures and beliefs that would define the Protestant religion. Reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Henry VIII challenged papal authority and questioned the Catholic Church's ability to define Christian practice. In 1517 Martin Luther, a Catholic priest in Germany at the University of Wittenberg, appealed to the Pope to correct abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was excommunicated by the Pope for insubordination and religious dissent erupted in Europe, which continued intermittently for the next 200 years. Historians now refer to these events, in retrospect, as the Reformation.

During this period the Catholic Church was reformed and reorganized, and numerous "protestant" sects of Christianity were separately established. These included Lutheran, Anglican and Calvinist denominations. The Protestants were later subdivided by doctrinal differences into a variety of sects known as Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Puritans, Quakers, etc.

When each ruler attempted to enforce religious conformity within their domain, religious intolerance, already the norm, was intensified. Special police and courts were set up to investigate and penalize non-

conformity. Expulsion, imprisonment, torture, the death penalty, mass executions and massacres were tools of religious repression applied by both Catholics and Protestants.

Why was the struggle so bitter, long and deadly? Because the Protestant movement, as it evolved, sought not merely to reform the Catholic Church; it aimed to replace it with a church based on the Protestant interpretation of the Bible, shorn of traditional Catholic sacraments, ritual and ecclesiastical hierarchy for which the Protestants could find no scriptural justification. At



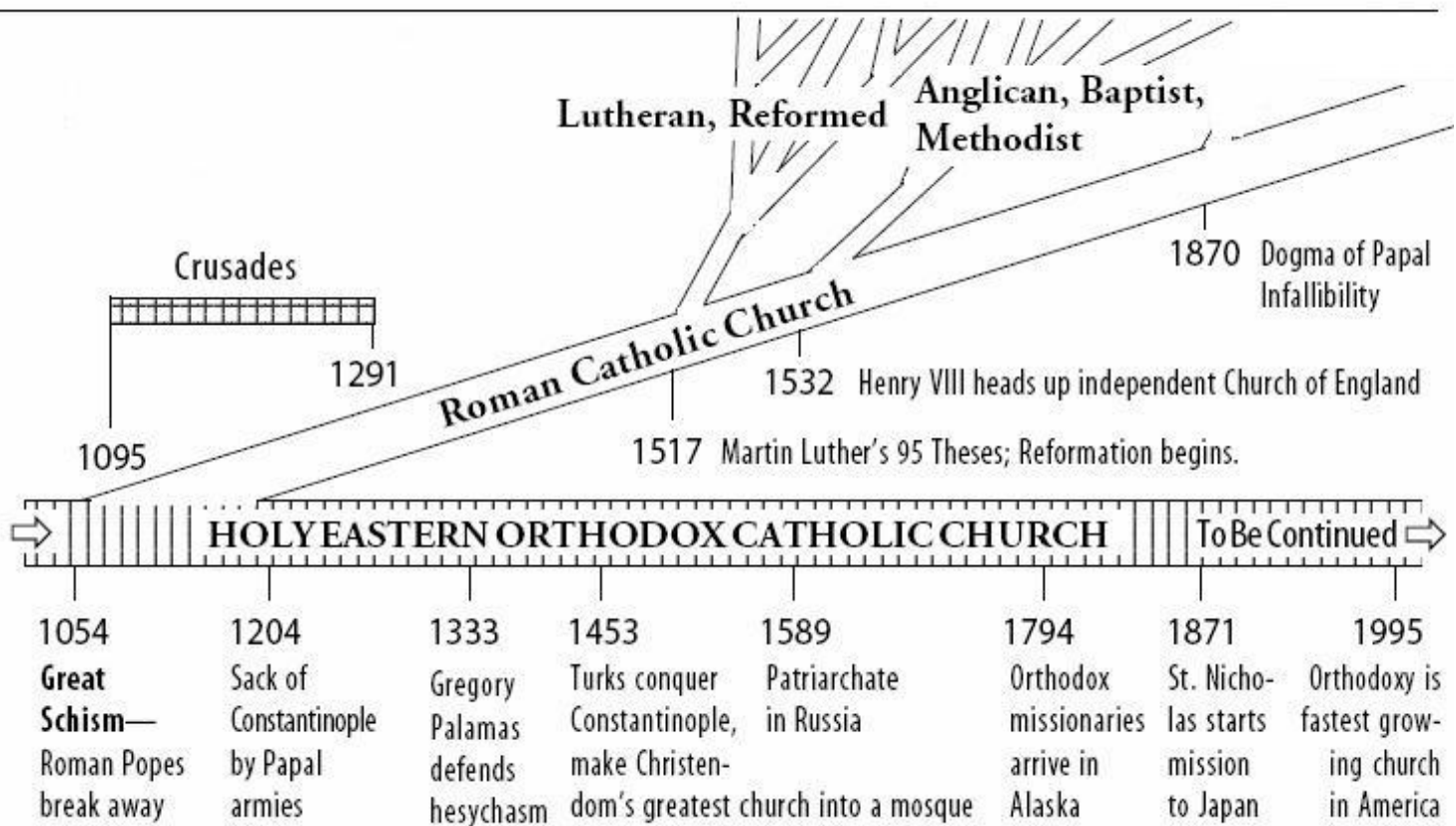
stake was the immense and pervasive power of the Pope and the Catholic Church. Finally, after 200 years, either Catholicism or Protestantism had achieved dominance in each European state. However, a state policy of religious toleration was rarely adopted until much later.

The Catholic Church retained its power and authority in Spain, Portugal, France, Ireland, and in southern and eastern Europe. Protestant denominations prevailed in central and northern Germany, Holland, the Scandinavian countries and in England and Scotland. Meanwhile, major political realignments and consolidations occurred within the nations of Europe, leading to establishment of strong secular states that progressively reduced the influence of religion in government.

DIRECTIONS

1. Read each of the documents and answer the questions ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER.
2. Categorize the documents thematically (SPICE) and provide an explanation of how each document relates to the theme(s).

HONORS: Write a 3-5 paragraph essay on the Causes and Consequences of the Protestant Reformation utilizing all of the documents as sources.



Document 1

In the 1370s in England, the scholar John Wycliffe was openly critical of the church, and specifically what he perceived to be the arrogance and corruption of the clergy. The brief passage below expresses Wycliffe's attitudes toward the Church.

But see now the sinfulness of man's curse. If a true man shall displease a worldly *prelate* [bishop or high priest] by teaching and maintaining God's law, he shall be slandered for an evil man, and forbidden to teach Christ's Gospel, and the people shall be charged upon pain of the greater curse [excommunication], to flee, and not to hear such a man, for to save their own souls. And this shall be done under the colour of holiness; for they will say that such a man teacheth heresy, and bring many false witnesses and notaries against him in his absence, and in his presence speak no word. And they pretend, by means of this invented and false law, that if three or four false witnesses, hired by money, say each a thing against a true man, that then he shall not be heard...

Also [bishops and high priests] make many new points of belief, and say it is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ...unless a man also believe that the bishop of Rome [the Pope] is head of holy church. And certainly the apostles of Jesus Christ never constrained any man to believe thus concerning himself. And yet they were certain of their salvation in heaven. How then should any sinful wretch, who knows not whether he shall be damned or saved, constrain men to believe that he is head of holy church? Certainly, in such case, they must sometimes constrain men to believe that a devil of hell is head of holy church, when the bishop of Rome [the Pope] shall be a man damned for his sins.

Source: Wycliffe, John. *De Conversatione Ecclesiasticorum*. From *Tracts and Treatises of John de Wycliffe*, ed. Robert Vaughan. London: Blackburn and Pardon, 1845.

Questions

1. What is Wycliffe's complaint about the Church?
2. What is Wycliffe's criticism of the Pope in Rome?

Document 2

Pope Gregory XI condemned John Wycliffe for questioning the Catholic Church.

By the insinuation of many, if they are indeed worthy of belief, deploring it deeply, it has come to our ears that John de Wycliffe, rector of the church of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, Professor of the Sacred Scriptures (would that he were not also Master of Errors), has fallen into such a detestable madness that he does not hesitate to dogmatize and publicly preach, or rather vomit forth from the recesses of his breast, certain propositions and conclusions which are erroneous and false. He has cast himself also into the depravity of preaching heretical dogmas which strive to subvert and weaken the state of the whole church and even secular polity, some of which doctrines, in changed terms, it is true, seem to express the perverse opinions and unlearned learning of Marsilio of Padua of cursed memory, and of John of Jandun, whose book is extant, rejected and cursed by our predecessor, Pope John XXII, of happy memory. This he has done in the kingdom of England, lately glorious in its power and in the abundance of its resources, but more glorious still in the glistening piety of its faith, and in the distinction of its sacred learning; producing also many men illustrious for their exact knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, mature in the gravity of their character, conspicuous in devotion, defenders of the Catholic Church. He has polluted certain of the faithful of Christ by sprinkling them with these doctrines, and led them away from the right paths of the aforesaid faith to the brink of perdition.

Wherefore, since we are not willing, nay, indeed, ought not to be willing, that so deadly a pestilence should continue to exist with our connivance, a pestilence which, if it is not opposed in its beginnings, and torn out by the roots in its entirety, will be reached too late by medicines when it has infected very many with its contagion; we command your University with strict admonition, by the apostolic authority, in virtue of your sacred obedience, and under penalty of the deprivation of all the favors, indulgences, and privileges granted to you and your University by the said see, for the future not to permit to be asserted or proposed to any extent whatever, the opinions, conclusions, and propositions which are in variance with good morals and faith, even when those proposing strive to defend them under a certain fanciful wresting of words or of terms. Moreover, you are on our authority to arrest the said John, or cause him to be arrested and to send him under a trustworthy guard to our venerable brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London, or to one of them.

Source: From Thatcher, Oliver J. *The Library of Original Sources. Vol V: The Early Medieval World*. Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co, 1907.

Questions

1. What are Pope Gregory's criticisms of John Wycliffe?
2. What actions are the Pope asking the University of Oxford to take against Wycliffe?

Document 4

*As early as 1508, the Dutch writer Erasmus was criticizing pardons, but his writings did not get the attention of church officials because Erasmus presented his criticisms in a less confrontational manner than did Martin Luther in his Ninety-Five Theses. The following is an excerpt from *The Praise of Folly*.*

And what shall I say of those who comfortably delude themselves with imaginary pardons for their sins, and who measure their time in purgatory with an hourglass into years, months, days, and hours, with all the precision of a mathematical table? There are plenty, too, who, relying upon certain magical little certificates and prayers – which some pious imposter devised either in fun or for the benefit of his pocket, -- believe they may procure [a rich life], nay in the end, a seat at the right hand of Christ in heaven... The trader, the soldier, and judge think that they can clean up [the sins of a lifetime] by sacrificing a golden coin from their ill-gotten gains...

The greater part of the monks exhibit such confidence in ceremonies and trivial human traditions that one would think a single heaven would scarce suffice as a worthy reward for their merits. They little think that Christ will put them off with a "Who hath required these things at your hands?" and will call them to account only for the stewardship of his legacy of love. One will confidently call attention to his paunch, filled with all kinds of fish; another will pour out a hundred bushels of psalms; a third will enumerate his myriad fastings and will tell how a single meal nearly killed him; a fourth will produce as many ceremonies as would fill seven merchant ships; a fifth will plead that for three-score years he never so much as touched money except he fingered it through double thick gloves . . . But Christ shall interrupt their boastings: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees! I left you one great precept, but of that alone I hear nothing from you. I told you plainly in my gospel, with no disguising parables, that my Father's kingdom was promised, not for crows, petitions, and fastings, but for deeds of love. I know them not who rely on their own merits.

Source: Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Praise of Folly*. From *Readings in European History*, ed. James Robinson. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1906.

Questions

1. According to Erasmus, how is the church misguided in its practice of pardons?
2. According to Erasmus, how are monks behaving in ways contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ?

Document 5

Orthodoxy surrounded by the Snares of Heresy. Facsimile of a wood-engraving in the Livre des Persecutions des Crestens, Paris.



Source: Lacroix, Paul. *Military and Religious Life in the Middle Ages, and at the Period of the Renaissance*. London: Bickers and Son, 1874.

Questions

1. How does this drawing indicate society's attitude toward people who might challenge traditional religious beliefs?

Document 6

Indulgences and pardons were an integral part of the religious landscape on the eve of the Reformation. Pope Clement VI (1343) and Pope Sixtus IV (1476) gave the official theories supporting indulgences.

Clement VI, *Unigenitus* (1343)

...The purposes [of indulgences] served should be proper and reasonable: sometimes total, sometimes partial remission of punishment due for temporal sins, as well generally as specifically...and for these ends the treasure should be applied in mercy to those who are truly penitent and have made their confession.

Sixtus IV, *Salvator noster* (1476)

...With the longings of such great paternal affection as with God's help we can achieve, in reliance on the divine mercy and the plenitude of our power, we grant by concession an indulgence as follows: If any parents, friends or other Christians are moved by obligations of piety towards these very souls who are exposed to the fire of purgatory for the expiation of punishments which by divine justice are their due, let them during the stated period of ten years give a fixed amount or value of money...

Albert of Mainz, *Instructio summaria* (1515)

...these four indulgences that the preachers must concentrate their utmost diligence, infiltrating them one by one into the ears of the faithful in the most effective way, and explaining them with all the ability they have.
The first principal grace is the plenary remission of all sins...[man] obtains through it perfect remission and God's grace anew...remission of sins, punishments in purgatory are remitted in full. ...the punishments of the said purgatory are totally wiped out.
If anyone for any reason seeks to be excused visit to churches: such a visit may be compounded by a larger financial contribution.

Source: *Reformation Reader*, 2nd ed. Ed. Denis R. Janz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Questions

1. What does a person gain by purchasing an indulgence?
2. How did this affect the political and economic power and authority of the church?

Document 7

The Ninety-Five Theses or Disputations on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences of 1517 is the most famous document of Martin Luther's Reformation. Their importance lies in the fact that they are a small initial step that stirred up an international controversy and thereby set in motion the dramatic events that followed.

6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God; or, to be sure, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in these cases were disregarded, the guilt would certainly remain unforgiven.

20. Therefore the pope, when he uses the words "plenary remission of all penalties," does not actually mean "all penalties," but only those imposed by himself.

21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

24. For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.

27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.

32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.

Source: *Reformation Reader, 2nd ed.* Ed. Denis R. Janz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Questions

1. What is Luther's primary criticism of the pope and the Church?

Document 8

Pope Leo X responded to Luther's writings with a proclamation in 1520. He threatened that unless Luther disavowed himself of his views and writings (recanted) he would be excommunicated (cut off from the Catholic Church). The proclamation demanded that Luther retract his views within sixty days.

Give heed to the cause of the holy Roman Church, mother of all churches and teacher of the faith, whom you by the order of God, have consecrated by your blood. Against the Roman Church, you warned, lying teachers are rising, introducing ruinous sects, and drawing upon themselves speedy doom. Their tongues are fire, a restless evil, full of deadly poison. They have bitter zeal, contention in their hearts, and boast and lie against the truth.

Wise in their own eyes, according to the ancient practice of heretics, they interpret these same Scriptures otherwise than the Holy Spirit demands, inspired only by their own sense of ambition, and for the sake of popular acclaim, as the Apostle declares. In fact, they twist and adulterate the Scriptures. As a result, according to Jerome, "It is no longer the Gospel of Christ, but a man's, or what is worse, the devil's."

In virtue of our pastoral office committed to us by the divine favor we can under no circumstances tolerate or overlook any longer the pernicious poison of the above errors without disgrace to the Christian religion and injury to orthodox faith. Some of these errors we have decided to include in the present document; their substance is as follows:

10. Sins are not forgiven to anyone, unless when the priest forgives them he believes they are forgiven; on the contrary the sin would remain unless he believed it was forgiven; for indeed the remission of sin and the granting of grace does not suffice, but it is necessary also to believe that there has been forgiveness.

13. In the sacrament of penance and the remission of sin the pope or the bishop does no more than the lowest priest; indeed, where there is no priest, any Christian, even if a woman or child, may equally do as much.

19. Indulgences are of no avail to those who truly gain them, for the remission of the penalty due to actual sin in the sight of divine justice.

24. Christians must be taught to cherish excommunications rather than to fear them.

Moreover, because the preceding errors and many others are contained in the books or writings of Martin Luther, we likewise condemn, reprobate, and reject completely the books and all the writings and sermons of the said Martin...We forbid each and every one of the faithful to read, assert, preach, praise, print, publish, or defend them.

We enjoin, however, on Martin that in the meantime he cease from all preaching or the office of preacher....

Source: *Reformation Reader, 2nd ed.* Ed. Denis R. Janz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Questions

1. What is the pope's response to criticism of church practices?
2. What are the "errors" that the pope is referring to in this proclamation?

Document 9

*With the sixty-days past, Luther gathered with students near a church outside of Wittenberg castle and threw the proclamation of the pope on a bonfire of already burning Catholic and anti-Luther writings. He then wrote a pamphlet entitled *Against the Execrable Bull of Antichrist* in response to the pope.*

I have heard that a bull against me has gone through the whole earth before it came to me, because being a daughter of darkness it feared the light of my face. ...whoever wrote this bull, he is Antichrist. ...this bull condemns me from its own word without any proof from Scripture, whereas I back up all my assertions from the Bible.

I demand that they show absolutely...point by point and not in a lump, just what is heretical. Let them show where I am a heretic, or dry up their spittle.

They say that some articles are heretical, some erroneous, some scandalous, some offensive. ...this bull is the sum of all impiety, blasphemy, ignorance, impudence, hypocrisy, lying - in a word, it is Satan and his Antichrist.

Woe to all who live in these times. The wrath of God is coming upon the papists, the enemies Of the cross of Christ, that all men should resist them. You then, Leo X, you cardinals and the rest of you at Rome, I tell you to your faces: "If this bull has come out in your name, then I will use the power which has been given me in baptism whereby I became a son of God and co-heir with Christ, established upon the rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. I call upon you to renounce your diabolical blasphemy and audacious impiety, and, if you will not, we shall all hold your seat as possessed and oppressed by Satan, the damned seat of Antichrist; in the name of Jesus Christ, whom you persecute.

...as they excommunicated me for the sacrilege of heresy, so I excommunicate them in the name of the sacred truth of God. Christ will judge whose excommunication will stand. Amen.

Source: Bainton, Roland. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950.

Questions

1. What is Luther's primary criticism of the pope's proclamation?
2. What authority does Luther claim to have?

Document 10

Since the crusades, Anti-Semitism increased in Europe. Luther failed to convert Jews in any appreciable numbers and he became embittered with that failure. It is in this sense that he wrote Concerning the Jews and Their Lies.

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews. With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames...I shall give you my sincere advice:

First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them.

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.

Fifth, I advise that safeconduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home.

Sixth, I advise that usury [loans] be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. The reason for such a measure is that, as said above, they have no other means of earning a livelihood than usury, and by it they have stolen and robbed from us all they possess. Such money should now be used in no other way than the following: Whenever a Jew is sincerely converted, he should be handed one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred florins, as personal circumstances may suggest. With this he could set himself up in some occupation for the support of his poor wife and children, and the maintenance of the old or feeble. For such evil gains are cursed if they are not put to use with God's blessing in a good and worthy cause.

Seventh, I commend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow.

Source: McKim, Donald K. *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2003.

Questions

1. What is the source (reason) for Luther's anti-Semitism?
2. How did Luther's ideas influence discrimination against Jews in Germany and in Europe?