
The Renaissance was a time of creative ideas, great achievements, new nations with strong leaders, and numerous inventions and discoveries. The printing press made it possible for trends and technologies to spread through Europe. People of the period were better-informed and Humanism's focus on human thought and accomplishments led some to question long-held ideas and ways of doing things.

DaVinci introduced the idea of flight; explorers found all-water routes to the east and discovered new lands; and Galileo concluded that the earth revolved around the sun. People of the Renaissance believed they could and should think for themselves. It was this unwillingness to accept the status-quo that brought about major religious changes during the period.

The Reformation was a 16th century protest movement in Europe aimed at changing some teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformation, also called the Protestant Reformation, resulted in several new religions that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, which had up to that time been the only Christian religion in Europe..

One Catholic priest named Martin Luther was angered by the corruption that existed in the Church. In 1517 he nailed a list of "95 Theses" stating his points of disagreement on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. Among his complaints was the Church's common practice of selling indulgences, or forgiveness from sin. The printing press saw that the "95 Theses" were read throughout Europe, beginning the Reformation.

Which sentence do you think best states the **MAIN IDEA** of the passage?

- A. The Renaissance was a time of creative ideas, great achievements, new nations with strong leaders, and numerous inventions and discoveries.
- B. It was this unwillingness to accept the status-quo that brought about major religious changes during the period as well.
- C. The Reformation was a 16th century protest movement in Europe aimed at changing some teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.
- D. The printing press saw that the 95 theses were read throughout Europe, beginning the Reformation.

Briefly explain why you chose the sentence you did. _____

Make up a title that you think would be appropriate for this passage.

† CALLS FOR REFORM †



*Martin Luther, a German priest, was one of the most outspoken critics of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1500's. In October, 1517, outside the Wittenberg Castle Church, Luther nailed his "95 Theses" to the front door. Not long after, on a cold and wintry morning, he made these comments at mass. These and other criticisms of the Church launched the **Reformation**, led to Luther's excommunication, and the founding of the first Protestant religion.*

My Friends, we gather here today to worship Our Lord and give thanks for his many blessings. Certainly we have much for which to be thankful: for our God, for our lives, our families, our beautiful houses of worship, and so much more. However, along with all of the tremendous grace and goodness in our world, great evil also exists. In fact there is evil in our midst in our own beloved Church which must be addressed. I for one cannot in good conscience hold my peace regarding the issue. Though there are many problems I could detail, most fall into two categories, Church corruption and the sale of indulgences, which I shall explain in simple and general terms.

For so long the Roman Catholic Church has been a great power in our lives and in Europe. Church leaders are known to live well and do much as they please. Great wealth has come to the Church through tithes, which have long been collected either in coins or in kind from Christians of all backgrounds and classes. Yet despite its income, the Church has mounted great debts by the funding of massive building projects and the high living of popes, bishops, and other Church officials. There are even truthful tales of popes selling Church jewels for personal income!

It was in part because of the Church's mounting debts that the sale of indulgences became common practice. Money from such sales was used to repay Church debts, of course, but some of that money also went into the purses of popes and other Church leaders.

First, I sincerely believe that the selling of forgiveness is wrong and corrupt. Any Christian who is truly sorry for ill deeds has a right to full forgiveness from sin, even without indulgence letters. 'Christians must be taught that to give to the poor or to lend to the needy is a better work than the purchase of pardons.' Furthermore, money from Church sources of any kind should be used for the good of the Church and its flock and not for feathering the nests of the corrupt men who tend them!

†CALLS FOR REFORM†



*John Calvin, a Swiss **Reformation** leader of the 1500's, wanted to return Christianity to a simpler time with beliefs and practices rooted directly in the New Testament Bible. In his most famous book, Institutes first published in 1534, the reformer detailed his view of Christianity. A few years later he gave this talk explaining Calvinism, the Protestant religion he established, to a new group of followers:*

My Dearest Friends in Christ, thank you for coming to listen to me on this most glorious day which God hath made! I am indeed blessed that you have chosen to take upon yourselves the heavy burden but great joy of living your lives for God and the Calvinist community. To do so, there are but a few understandings by which all among us live. Many as you know are intended to improve upon Roman Catholic practices and beliefs which so many believe have proven harmful to both the Church and Christians.

Perhaps first and foremost, Calvinists reject the authority of popes, who have fleeced their flocks as often as they have fed them. Indeed, many Church officials have historically used their positions for personal gain. In our Protestant religion there are no bishops and popes to profit from the sins of churchgoers. Calvinist churches are instead controlled by local leaders: pastors and church elders who well know and care about those they serve.

Our church leaders are in fact closely involved in the lives of our members. They even make personal visits to every member family's home to see that the religion is being practiced by all as it should. As servants of God, Calvinists must live according to His will. God has for each one of us a plan; it is our duty to know God, know his plan, and fulfill His will for us. To that end we read, study, and obey the Holy Bible as our guide, rather than heeding the talk of men, who themselves are greedy and corrupt.

For so long, under the Roman Catholic Church, people of Europe obeyed the church instead of God's word. They paid money to build grand, glorious buildings, paid tidy sums for officials to live lives of luxury, and spent vast amounts on artwork of religious scenes. We Calvinists understand the waste of such actions. A church is a building, and gold, jewels, and art are idols.

As Calvinists we reject idols; we live simple lives, work hard, read the Bible, and pray. We devote our lives to God and His will. We need no fancy things to reward our work, as our reward is in the Hereafter.

† CALLS FOR REFORM †



*St. Ignatius Loyola was first a soldier but after a serious injury decided to dedicate himself to the Catholic Church in 1521. He called for reforms in the Church and formed the Jesuit order of priests. Loyola and the Jesuits brought about the **Counter-Reformation** and its needed reforms. Though the Jesuits began with only a few members, the order grew to become a major force in the Church, as is evidenced by these comments Loyola made to a group of priests in 1551:*

Men, blessed be all among you for devoting your lives to God and the Holy Church. Our order of priests, the Society of Jesus or Jesuits, began in 1539 with a mere eight members and has grown now to nearly a thousand! Our order is, as you know, one of strict obedience to the Church. We Jesuits must believe that the white we see is black if the Church so defines it, since our mission is to serve the Pope and his flock.

In fulfilling our mission, education has become our primary tool. We have opened schools in various places in Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and India. Our goal is to teach Protestants and others about the Church and its wonders. And indeed the Church is in itself a wonder of which we should be proud and to which we must remain loyal.

Of course it is true that some problems have existed in the Church. The Church is a community, human beings joined in their love of God. Humans by their very nature are imperfect: sinful creatures who must pray for guidance and forgiveness. This is the task that members of our order and Church leaders are undertaking at the Council of Trent in Austria. This meeting, which began in our Lord's year of 1545, has already addressed many issues and continues to seek ways to improve and make needed reforms to help the Church and its followers.

Luther, Calvin, and others have led loyal Catholics astray by merely naming problems. Our mission as Jesuits is to solve problems. We love the Church, the pope, the bishops, the mass, our many beautiful rituals and traditions, and above all our Lord, so we work to strengthen His Church.

When we see weakness, we provide aid as needed. The Church is the center of our lives, and it is our calling to support it. We can and must do all within our power as mere men to bring the people of Europe back into the fold. Through prayer, education, and Church councils as the one at Trent, we can accomplish our mission now and long into the future.

✠ Reviewing Reformations ✠

The Protestant Reformation

The Counter-Reformation