

HISTORY of CHRISTIANITY

Part III – The Reformation: Division and Renewal

Between Medieval and Modern Times (A.D. 1483 - 1564)

Significant Events and Landmarks of the Era

<i>A.D.</i>			
1347:	Bubonic Plague begins.	1534:	King Henry VIII proclaims himself head of Church of England.
1400:	Johann Gutenberg is born.	1536:	Erasmus dies.
1445:	Gutenberg invents the printing press.	1536:	John Calvin publishes <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> .
1467:	Desiderius Erasmus is born.	1540:	The Jesuits (Society of Jesus) is founded and approved.
1468:	Gutenberg dies.	1542:	Roman Inquisition begins.
1473:	N. Copernicus is born.	1542:	John of the Cross is born.
1483:	Martin Luther is born.	1543:	Copernicus dies.
1484:	Huldreich Zwingli is born.	1545-47:	
1491:	Martin Bucer is born.	1551-52:	Council of Trent meets.
1491-1495?:	Ignatius of Loyola is born.	1562-63:	
1492:	Desiderius Erasmus is ordained priest.	1546:	Luther dies.
1500: Time of "High Renaissance."		1551:	Bucer dies.
1506:	Francis Xavier is born.	1552:	Francis Xavier dies.
1509:	John Calvin is born.	1553:	Michael Servetus is arrested and burned in Geneva.
1510:	Luther visits Holy City.	1555:	Peace of Augsburg.
1515:	Teresa of Avila is born.	1555:	Johann Arndt is born.
1516:	Erasmus' <i>Greek New Testament</i> is published.	1556:	Ignatius of Loyola dies.
Oct. 31, 1517:	The Reformation begins.	1558:	William Perkins is born.
Jan. 1, 1519:	Zwingli is called to Great Minster Church, Zurich.	1559:	Pope Paul IV (first real papal "index") prohibits books.
1519:	Luther debates John Eck.	1560:	Melanchthon dies.
1519:	Reformer Theodore Beza is born.	1560-1618:	Dutch war for independence.
Jan. 3, 1521:	Luther is excommunicated from the Church.	1564:	Calvin dies.
1521:	Luther makes his "Here I stand" statement at Diet of Worms.	1572:	St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Protestants.
Jan. 29, 1523:	Zwingli and John Fabri dispute in Zurich.	1578:	John of the Cross' imprisonment at Toledo.
1525:	Peasant's War begins.	1582:	Teresa of Avila dies.
1529:	Zwingli and Luther dispute Lord's Supper in Marburg.	1591:	John of the Cross dies.
1531:	Zwingli dies at Battle of Kappel.	1596:	Descartes is born.
1533:	Calvin is converted.	1598:	Edict of Nantes.
		1605:	Beza dies.

Who's Who of the Era

Martin Luther - Born in 1483 in Eisleben, Luther, the great German Reformer, studied law at the University of Erfurt. During a "thunderstorm" encounter, he vowed to become an Augustinian monk. He was ordained in 1507. Luther later taught biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg, a new school which had opened in 1502. With his 95 Theses, Luther attacked the teaching of the church concerning indulgences. He rejected the idea of the church as a hierarchical institution under the bishop of Rome, handing out salvation through sacraments. He was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1521 when he refused to recant his position. At the Wartburg Castle, he translated the New Testament into German. He was a prolific author of books, he preached and taught without fear. He translated the Bible into the German language, putting it directly into the common people's hands. Luther died in 1546.

Erasmus - Desiderius Erasmus was born in Rotterdam in 1467. He became an Augustinian canon in 1487. He was ordained as a priest in 1492. He is author of *Christian Soldier's Manual*, *the Colloquies*, *Praise of Folly*, and the first ever published Greek New Testament (1516). He has been called the "journalist of scholarship." A forerunner of the Reformation, he was a serious scholar of Latin and Greek. It was later said that Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched! Erasmus died at Basel in 1536.

John Calvin - John Calvin (1509-1564), a Frenchman, was born at Noyon, Picardy. He attended Orleans, Bourges, and the University of Paris. In Paris, Calvin was introduced to the teachings of Martin Luther. His sudden conversion came in 1533. He broke with Roman Catholicism, and went to Basel to live. In 1536, Calvin published the first of *The Institution of the Christian Religion* or (*The Institutes*). Calvin's friend, and the Reformer of Geneva, Switzerland, Guillaume Farel, persuaded Calvin to help with the Reformation movement in Geneva. But the people of French-speaking Geneva did not agree with Calvin. Both Calvin and Farel were made to leave Geneva. In Strasbourg, Calvin lived and wrote his commentary on the book of Romans. In fact, he wrote many commentaries during his lifetime. He returned to Geneva in 1541. But as a foreigner, Calvin failed to win many hearts at first. Later, John Calvin founded the Geneva Academy, a school of theology.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer - Cranmer (1489-1556), a godly man, helped shape the Protestant Church of England after the Reformation. Born in Nottinghamshire, educated at Cambridge University, he was summoned to Canterbury as archbishop in 1532. Lutheran in his theology, he was responsible for the Great Bible (1538), the Litany of 1545, two Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552, the *Reformation of Church Laws* (1571), the *Articles*, the *Homilies*, and *Institution of a Christian Man*. Accused of being a heretic, he spent his last years in solitary confinement. He was burned at the stake at Oxford in 1556.

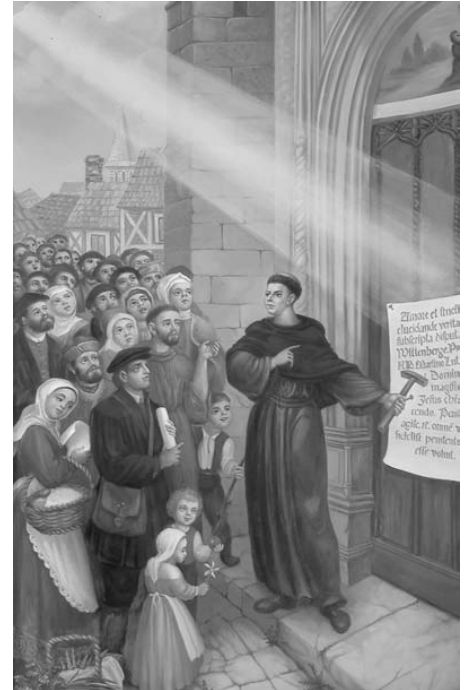
Huldrych Zwingli - Born in 1484, the Swiss Reformer Zwingli was educated in Basel, Berne, and Vienna. Zwingli was deeply influenced by Erasmus, when they met in 1515. He became pastor of the Great Minster Church in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1519. In 1528, his *Commentary on True and False Religion* was published. He was married secretly to Anna Meyer and was the father of their four children. He died in the Battle of Kappel in 1531, fighting against the Catholics.

Martin Bucer - Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a Reformer at Strasbourg, and one of the chief statesmen among the Reformers, tried to mediate between Zwingli and Luther on the Lord's Supper issue. A peacemaker, he wanted to unite the German and Swiss Reformed churches. He worked hard to reconcile various religious parties. His discussions with Philip Melancthon finally led to peace in the debate over the sacraments. In 1549, forced to leave Strasbourg, he traveled to Cambridge. There he advised Thomas Cranmer on *The Book of Common Prayer*. He had a great impact on the Church of England, pointing the way towards Puritanism. He died in 1551. Later, during the reign of Queen Mary, his body was exhumed and burned.

Historical Creeds and Confessions

95 Theses

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. At that time, people used the church doors as a sort of community bulletin board. The 95 Theses was an argument against indulgences sold by the Roman Catholic Church. Leo X (1513-1521) was pope at this time and spent his time and energy managing the large and corrupt papal bureaucracy. This left him no time to give moral leadership over Europe. Leo X made two comments when he first saw the 95 Theses in 1518: He said, "Luther is a drunken German. He will feel different when he is sober"; and "Friar Martin is a brilliant chap. The whole row is due to the envy of the monks." Relations between Luther and the papacy deteriorated after 1519. The papacy regarded Luther as a "son of iniquity." Luther was, indeed, perceived as a threat to the vested interests of the church. Luther was called a "political outlaw" at the Diet of Worms in 1521, when he was excommunicated by the church.



Out of love and concern for the truth, and with the object of eliciting it, the following heads will be the subject of a public discussion at Wittenberg under the presidency of the reverend father, Martin Luther, Augustinian, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and duly appointed Lecturer on these subjects in that place. He requests that whoever cannot be present personally to debate the matter orally will do so in absence in writing.

1. *When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.*
2. *The word cannot be properly understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, i.e. confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.*
3. *Yet its meaning is not restricted to repentance in one's heart; for such repentance is null unless it produces outward signs in various mortifications of the flesh.*
4. *As long as hatred of self abides (i.e. true inward repentance) the penalty of sin abides, viz., until we enter the kingdom of heaven.*
5. *The pope has neither the will nor the power to remit any penalties beyond those imposed either at his own discretion or by canon law.*
6. *The pope himself cannot remit guilt, but only declare and confirm that it has been remitted by God; or, at most, he can remit it in cases reserved to his discretion. Except for these cases, the guilt remains untouched.*
7. *God never remits guilt to anyone without, at the same time, making him humbly submissive to the priest, His representative.*
8. *The penitential canons apply only to men who are still alive, and, according to the canons themselves, none applies to the dead.*
9. *Accordingly, the Holy Spirit, acting in the person of the pope, manifests grace to us, by the fact that the papal regulations always cease to apply at death, or in any hard case.*

10. *It is a wrongful act, due to ignorance, when priests retain the canonical penalties on the dead in purgatory.*
11. *When canonical penalties were changed and made to apply to purgatory, surely it would seem that tares were sown while the bishops were asleep.*
12. *In former days, the canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution was pronounced; and were intended to be tests of true contrition.*
13. *Death puts an end to all the claims of the Church; even the dying are already dead to the canon laws, and are no longer bound by them.*
14. *Defective piety or love in a dying person is necessarily accompanied by great fear, which is greatest where the piety or love is least.*
15. *This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, whatever else might be said, to constitute the pain of purgatory, since it approaches very closely to the horror of despair.*
16. *There seems to be the same difference between hell, purgatory, and heaven as between despair, uncertainty, and assurance.*
17. *Of a truth, the pains of souls in purgatory ought to be abated, and charity ought to be proportionately increased.*
18. *Moreover, it does not seem proved, on any grounds of reason or Scripture, that these souls are outside the state of merit, or unable to grow in grace.*
19. *Nor does it seem proved to be always the case that they are certain and assured of salvation, even if we are very certain ourselves.*
20. *Therefore the pope, in speaking of the plenary remission of all penalties, does not mean "all" in the strict sense, but only those imposed by himself.*
21. *Hence those who preach indulgences are in error when they say that a man is absolved and saved from every penalty by the pope's indulgences.*
22. *Indeed, he cannot remit to souls in purgatory any penalty which canon law declares should be suffered in the present life.*
23. *If plenary remission could be granted to anyone at all, it would be only in the cases of the most perfect, i.e. to very few.*
24. *It must therefore be the case that the major part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of relief from penalty.*
25. *The same power as the pope exercises in general over purgatory is exercised in particular by every single bishop in his bishopric and priest in his parish.*
26. *The pope does excellently when he grants remission to the souls in purgatory on account of intercessions made on their behalf, and not by the power of the keys (which he cannot exercise for them).*
27. *There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of the purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.*

28. *It is certainly possible that when the money clinks in the bottom of the chest avarice and greed increase; but when the church offers intercession, all depends in the will of God.*
29. *Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed in view of what is said of St. Severinus and St. Pascal? (Note: Paschal I, pope 817-24. The legend is that he and Severinus were willing to endure the pains of purgatory for the benefit of the faithful).*
30. *No one is sure of the reality of his own contrition, much less of receiving plenary forgiveness.*
31. *One who bona fide buys indulgence is a rare as a bona fide penitent man, i.e. very rare indeed.*
32. *All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgence, will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.*
33. *We should be most carefully on our guard against those who say that the papal indulgences are an inestimable divine gift, and that a man is reconciled to God by them.*
34. *For the grace conveyed by these indulgences relates simply to the penalties of the sacramental "satisfactions" decreed merely by man.*
35. *It is not in accordance with Christian doctrines to preach and teach that those who buy off souls, or purchase confessional licenses, have no need to repent of their own sins.*
36. *Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys plenary remission from penalty and guilt, and this is given him without letters of indulgence.*
37. *Any true Christian whatsoever, living or dead, participates in all the benefits of Christ and the Church; and this participation is granted to him by God without letters of indulgence.*
38. *Yet the pope's remission and dispensation are in no way to be despised, for, as already said, they proclaim the divine remission.*
39. *It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, to extol to the people the great bounty contained in the indulgences, while, at the same time, praising contrition as a virtue.*
40. *A truly contrite sinner seeks out, and loves to pay, the penalties of his sins; whereas the very multitude of indulgences dulls men's consciences, and tends to make them hate the penalties.*
41. *Papal indulgences should only be preached with caution, lest people gain a wrong understanding, and think that they are preferable to other good works: those of love.*
42. *Christians should be taught that the pope does not at all intend that the purchase of indulgences should be understood as at all comparable with the works of mercy.*
43. *Christians should be taught that one who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does a better action than if he purchases indulgences.*
44. *Because, by works of love, love grows and a man becomes a better man; whereas, by indulgences, he does not become a better man, but only escapes certain penalties.*
45. *Christians should be taught that he who sees a needy person, but passes him by although he gives money for indulgences, gains no benefit from the pope's pardon, but only incurs the wrath of God.*
46. *Christians should be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they are bound to retain what is only necessary for the upkeep of their home, and should in no way squander it on indulgences.*

47. *Christians should be taught that they purchase indulgences voluntarily, and are not under obligation to do so.*
48. *Christians should be taught that, in granting indulgences, the pope has more need, and more desire, for devout prayer on his own behalf than for ready money.*
49. *Christians should be taught that the pope's indulgences are useful only if one does not rely on them, but most harmful if one loses the fear of God through them.*
50. *Christians should be taught that, if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence-preachers, he would rather the church of St. Peter were reduced to ashes than be built with the skin, flesh, and bones of the sheep.*
51. *Christians should be taught that the pope would be willing, as he ought if necessity should arise, to sell the church of St. Peter, and give, too, his own money to many of those from whom the pardon-merchants conjure money.*
52. *It is vain to rely on salvation by letters of indulgence, even if the commissary, or indeed the pope himself, were to pledge his own soul for their validity.*
53. *Those are enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid the word of God to be preached at all in some churches, in order that indulgences may be preached in others.*
54. *The word of God suffers injury if, in the same sermon, an equal or longer time is devoted to indulgences than to that word.*
55. *The pope cannot help taking the view that if indulgences (very small matters) are celebrated by one bell, one pageant, or one ceremony, the gospel (a very great matter) should be preached to the accompaniment of a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.*
56. *The treasures of the church, out of which the pope dispenses indulgences, are not sufficiently spoken of or known among the people of Christ.*
57. *That these treasures are not temporal are clear from the fact that many of the merchants do not grant them freely, but only collect them.*
58. *Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, because, even apart from the pope, these merits are always working grace in the inner man, and working the cross, death, and hell in the outer man.*
59. *St. Laurence said that the poor were the treasures of the church, but he used the term in accordance with the custom of his own time.*
60. *We do not speak rashly in saying that the treasures of the church are the keys of the church, and are bestowed by the merits of Christ.*
61. *For it is clear that the power of the pope suffices, by itself, for the remission of penalties and reserved cases.*
62. *The true treasure of the church is the Holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God.*
63. *It is right to regard this treasure as most odious, for it makes the first to be the last.*
64. *On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is most acceptable, for it makes the last to be the first.*
65. *Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets which, in former times, they used to fish for men of wealth.*

66. *The treasures of the indulgences are the nets which to-day they use to fish for the wealth of men.*
67. *The indulgences, which the merchants extol as the greatest of favours, are seen to be, in fact, a favourite means for money-getting.*
68. *Nevertheless, they are not to be compared with the grace of God and the compassion shown in the Cross.*
69. *Bishops and curates, in duty bound, must receive the commissaries of the papal indulgences with all reverence.*
70. *But they are under a much greater obligation to watch closely and attend carefully lest these men preach their own fancies instead of what the pope commissioned.*
71. *Let him be anathema and accursed who denies the apostolic character of the indulgences.*
72. *On the other hand, let him be blessed who is on his guard against the wantonness and license of the pardon-merchant's words.*
73. *In the same way, the pope rightly excommunicates those who make any plans to the detriment of the trade in indulgences.*
74. *It is much more in keeping with his views to excommunicate those who use the pretext of indulgences to plot anything to the detriment of holy love and truth.*
75. *It is foolish to think that papal indulgences have so much power that they can absolve a man even if he has done the impossible and violated the mother of God.*
76. *We assert the contrary, and say that the pope's pardons are not able to remove the least venial of sins as far as their guilt is concerned.*
77. *When it is said that not even St. Peter, if he were now pope, could grant a greater grace, it is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.*
78. *We assert the contrary, and say that he, and any pope whatever, possesses greater graces, viz., the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as is declared in I Corinthians 12 [:28].*
79. *It is blasphemy to say that the insignia of the cross with the papal arms are of equal value to the cross on which Christ died.*
80. *The bishops, curates, and theologians, who permit assertions of that kind to be made to the people without let or hindrance, will have to answer for it.*
81. *This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult for learned men to guard the respect due to the pope against false accusations, or at least from the keen criticisms of the laity.*
82. *They ask, e.g.: Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love (a most holy thing) and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very minor purpose.*
83. *Again: Why should funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continue to be said? And why does not the pope repay, or permit to be repaid, the benefactions instituted for these purposes, since it is wrong to pray for those souls who are now redeemed?*

84. *Again: Surely this is a new sort of compassion, on the part of God and the pope, when an impious man, an enemy of God, is allowed to pay money to redeem a devout soul, a friend of God; while yet that devout and beloved soul is not allowed to be redeemed without payment, for love's sake, and just because of its need of redemption.*
85. *Again: Why are the penitential canon laws, which in fact, if not in practice, have long been obsolete and dead in themselves,—why are they, to-day, still used in imposing fines in money, through the granting of indulgences, as if all the penitential canons were fully operative?*
86. *Again: since the pope's income to-day is larger than that of the wealthiest of wealthy men, why does he not build this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of indigent believers?*
87. *Again: What does the pope remit or dispense to people who, by their perfect repentance, have a right to plenary remission or dispensation?*
88. *Again: Surely a greater good could be done to the church if the pope were to bestow these remissions and dispensations, not once, as now, but a hundred times a day, for the benefit of any believer whatever.*
89. *What the pope seeks by indulgences is not money, but rather the salvation of souls; why then does he suspend the letters and indulgences formerly conceded, and still as efficacious as ever?*
90. *These questions are serious matters of conscience to the laity. To suppress them by force alone, and not to refute them by giving reasons, is to expose the church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christian people unhappy.*
91. *If therefore, indulgences were preached in accordance with the spirit and mind of the pope, all these difficulties would be easily overcome, and indeed, cease to exist.*
92. *Away, then, with those prophets who say to Christ's people, "Peace, peace," where in there is no peace.*
93. *Hail, hail to all those prophets who say to Christ's people, "The cross, the cross," where there is no cross.*
94. *Christians should be exhorted to be zealous to follow Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hells.*
95. *And let them thus be more confident of entering heaven through many tribulations rather than through a false assurance of peace.*

Reflection and Review Questions

1. Who was Martin Luther? What was happening in the world when he was born?
2. How did the invention of the printing press promote the Gospel? How did it promote the reformation?
3. What were “indulgences”? What problems plagued the Medieval Church and why?
4. What is meant by “justification by faith” or *allein*?
5. Who was John Calvin? What did his work of “Institutes of the Christian Religion” impact the development of the reformation Christianity?