RS Notes: The Protestant Reformation

Erasmus and Christian Humanism

* Italian humanism spread to Northern Europe
  + Created **Christian Humanism**
    - Believed in the ability of human beings to reason and improve themselves
      * Goal: reform the Catholic Church through inner piety (religious feeling)
* The best known Christian Humanist=**Desiderius Erasmus**
  + Developed what he called “the philosophy of Christ”
    - Showed people how to live good lives daily rather than how to achieve salvation
    - Stressed inward piety, not external observance of rules and rituals
    - Wrote *The Praise of Folly*- criticized the monks
    - “Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.”

Corruption in the Church

* Many people were calling for reform of the Church
  + Uneducated priests didn’t understand the mass or how to achieve **salvation** (acceptance into Heaven)
    - **Absenteeism**- Many priests neglected their parish because they didn’t live there.
  + Wealthy bishops were more interested in making money
    - **Simony**- Accepting bribes for Church offices
  + **Immoral Popes**
    - Alexander VI had a mistress and 7 children
      * Cesare Borgia (son) inspiration for *The Prince*
    - Sixtus planned to assassinate Lorenzo de Medici
  + **Nepotism**- give important jobs in the Church to relatives
  + **Selling indulgences**
    - A release from all or part of punishment for sins
    - Using money to build St. Peter’s Basilica, fund wars, etc.

Martin Luther

* **Martin Luther** was a monk and professor at the University of Wittenberg
  + Through his study of the Bible, he came to believe that faith alone was needed for salvation (Catholics believe in faith and good works)
    - God is merciful, so he forgives sins
    - Believed selling indulgences harmed people’s chance at salvation
  + Wrote the **95 Theses**
    - Nailed it to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel on **October 31, 1517**
    - Thousands of copies were printed
      * Exposed the corruption of the Church
* Ideas of Luther
  + Purgatory was a false doctrine
  + Salvation was through faith alone
  + The Bible alone should be the final authority for truth
  + Baptism and Eucharist are only valid sacraments
    - Only ones with scriptural support
  + Eucharist is not a transformation of bread and wine into body and blood of Christ
    - Christ is just present through it
* 1520- Luther wanted the German princes to overthrow the papacy, to make a reformed German church, using his ideas
* 1521- Luther was excommunicated
  + Summoned to appear before the imperial diet
    - Charles V tried to get him to change his ideas
    - Luther refused (it went against his better conscience)
* **Edict of Worms**
  + Luther was an outlaw in the empire
    - All books to be burned and he was to be delivered to Emperor
    - Luther went into hiding (protected by Frederick the Wise)
  + Caused many more princes to support him
    - Took control of Catholic churches and made them into state churches
    - Luther set up new services to replace mass
      * Features Bible readings, preaching the Word of God, and song
  + His doctrine came to be known as **Lutheranism** (1st Protestant Faith)

Politics in the German Reformation

* From the beginning Luther’s revolution was tied to politics
  + Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) ruled Spain, most of Central Europe and the New World
    - He wanted to keep it all Catholic and under Hapsburg dynasty
  + Charles was fighting a war with France and the Pope
    - Many German rulers were supporting Luther, so he had to make peace
* **Peace of Augsburg**
  + Accepted the division of Christianity in Germany
  + Princes could choose Catholic or Lutheran
    - All states would have same legal rights
    - Does NOT recognize religious tolerance of individuals