Objectives

- Summarize the factors that encouraged the Protestant Reformation.
- Analyze Martin Luther’s role in shaping the Protestant Reformation.
- Explain the teachings and impact of John Calvin.
Terms and People

- **indulgences** – in the Roman Catholic Church, pardons for sins committed during a person’s life

- **Martin Luther** – the German monk who triggered the revolt against the Roman Catholic church in 1517

- **Wittenberg** – city in northern Germany where Luther drew up his 95 Theses

- **Charles V** – the Holy Roman emperor who ordered Luther to recant his 95 Theses
Terms and People (continued)

- **diet** – assembly or legislature

- **John Calvin** – a reformer who preached predestination and the living of a saintly life

- **predestination** – the idea that God had predetermined who would gain salvation

- **Geneva** – the Swiss city where, in 1541, John Calvin was asked to establish a Christian community

- **theocracy** – a government run by religious leaders
How did revolts against the Roman Catholic Church affect northern European society?

In the 1500s, the Renaissance in northern Europe sparked a religious upheaval. Northern European calls for church reform eventually unleashed forces that would shatter Christian unity.

This movement is known as the Protestant Reformation.
The early 1500s were uncertain times in northern Europe.

Disparities in wealth, a new market economy, and religious discontent all bred uncertainty.

The printing press spread knowledge quickly.

Humanist ideas for social reform grew in popularity.

Increasingly, people questioned the central force in their lives—the Church.
Increasingly, the church had become involved in worldly politics.

- Popes competed with Italian princes for political power.
- They plotted against powerful monarchs who sought to control papal lands.
- They lived lavish lifestyles and hired artists to beautify churches.
To finance their lifestyles, church officials charged fees for services such as baptisms and marriages.

Some clergy also sold **indulgences**. Only the rich could afford to buy them.

- An indulgence lessened the time one spent in purgatory before going to heaven.
- In the Middle Ages, they were often granted for doing good deeds.
- Many Christians, including Erasmus, objected to their sale.
Christian humanists called for a less worldly church, one based more on Bible study.

As early as the 1300s, John Wycliff had begun protests against the Church in England.

Jan Hus led a similar protest, for which he was executed, in what is today the Czech Republic.
Angered by the sale of indulgences in Wittenberg, Germany, Luther drew up his 95 Theses.

He argued that indulgences had no place in the Bible, and Christians could only be saved by faith.

Rather than recant, Luther rejected the authority of Rome.

The German monk and professor, Martin Luther, sparked a revolt in 1517.
Overnight, copies of Luther’s 95 Theses spread and sparked debate across Europe.

In 1521 Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther. The Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, declared Luther an outlaw and ordered his books to be burned.

But many agreed with Luther and became his followers.
Luther’s teachings differed from the Roman Catholic Church

- He believed that all Christians had equal access to God, and did not need a priest to intervene.
- He wanted ordinary people to study the Bible.
- He banned the granting of indulgences, prayers to saints, pilgrimages, and confession.
The printing press quickly spread Luther’s writings throughout Germany and Scandinavia.

- His followers took on the name “Protestants” because they were in protest against papal authority.
- Luther simplified the mass, but emphasized the sermon. Ministers used their sermons to attack corruption in the Roman Catholic Church.
Some German princes saw Lutheranism as a chance to throw off the rule of both the Church and the Holy Roman emperor.

| Some saw an opportunity to seize Church property in their territories. | Others embraced the new church out of nationalistic loyalty. | Many were tired of paying to support clergy in Italy. |
The people demanded an end to serfdom.

Luther denounced the violence, favoring respect for political authority.

With his support, the nobles suppressed the uprising. Thousands died as a result.

In 1524 a peasants’ revolt erupted across Germany.
Charles V tried to force the German princes to return to the Catholic Church.

In 1555, after several brief wars, Charles and the princes signed the Treaty of Augsburg.

Each prince chose a religion for his realm—either Catholic or Lutheran.

In the north most chose Lutheranism; in the south most chose Catholicism.
Reformers in Switzerland also challenged the authority of the Catholic Church.

- Ulrich Zwingli, an admirer of Erasmus, also stressed the importance of the Bible and rejected elaborate Church rituals.

- The city council in Zurich adopted his ideas.

**John Calvin**, a French-born priest and lawyer, was strongly influenced by these Reformation ideas.
Calvin accepted most Lutheran beliefs but added his own belief in predestination.

He preached that God had long ago determined who was, and was not, going to gain eternal salvation. | There were two kinds of people, saints and sinners. | Only the saved could live a truly Christian life.

Calvinists attempted to live saintly lives to demonstrate that they were among those God had selected.
The people of Geneva, Switzerland, invited Calvin to lead their community.

- He established a theocracy. Religious leaders felt entrusted by God to build a Christian society based on hard work, discipline, thrift, and honesty.

- Offenses such as swearing, laughing in church, or fighting resulted in fines or worse. Many Protestants saw Geneva as a perfect Christian community.
By the late 1500s, Calvinism had spread throughout northern Europe.

Challenges to the Catholic Church set off a series of religious wars.

- In Germany, Lutherans and Catholics fought Calvinists.
- In France, Calvinists battled Catholics.
- In Scotland, John Knox, a Calvinist preacher, helped overthrow a Catholic queen.

To escape persecution in England, groups of Calvinists sailed for America in the early 1600s.
Section Review

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