

The Reformation (16th-17th centuries)

Definition

- The Reformation was a religious movement in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries
- The Reformation changed various aspects of European traditions
- Include the split of the Christian Church and the reforms of the Roman Catholic Church

Background of the Reformation

- Before the Reformation, there was only 1 church in Europe
 - The Roman Catholic Church was the largest Christian Church
- Christians questioning the Church
 - During Renaissance, Christians studied and emended the early copies of the Bible
 - In 1516, Dutch theologian Erasmus published the original Greek version of the New Testament
 - They found inaccuracies in the Latin Bible and the Church has misinterpreted some Christian doctrines
 - Europeans subsequently found out more misinterpretations made by Church.
- Rulers' discontent with the Church
 - In medieval Europe, the Church had great influence on politics
 - They were discontented with the Church and want to regain their power
- Wrongdoings of the Church
 - During late Medieval Times, strong kings emerged
 - In late Medieval Times, the Church became corrupt.
 - Church ran casinos and sold 'indulgences', claiming that indulgences could reduce the sufferings of the purchasers and their relatives in purgatory

Development if the Reformation

- Immediate cause: mass selling of indulgences
 - In early 1517, the Church sold massive indulgences to raise money for building
 - Some clergy in the German states even exaggerated the function of indulgences
 - Angered many German theologians
- Martin Luther and the Ninety-Five Theses
 - The Ninety-Five Theses was written in Latin
 - It was translated into German and spread throughout the German states
 - The Ninety-Five Theses was further translated into different language and spread strong reactions from people of Europe.
 - People can only be redeemed through faith in God
 - Only God can forgive people's sins. The Pope does not have this power
 - Selling or buying indulgences is sin. It a false promise for followers who want to enter Haven
 - In October 1517, German priest Martin Luther posted the 'Ninety-Five Theses' on a cathedral
 - Martin Luther criticized the corruption of the Church and priests, and raised the issue of indulgences for discussion
 - It led to the Reformation
- Rise of the Protestant Church
 - The ideas of Martin Luther seriously hindered the revenues of indulgences and the Church's prestige
 - Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Church in 1521
 - But German people supported Martin Luther
 - Martin Luther then set up a new sect 'Lutheranism'
 - Later, more new sect, including the Calvinism and Anglican Church, were established. These sects were known as Protestantism.
 - Some European rulers even withdrew from the Roman Catholic Church and made Protestantism their official religions
- The Counter-Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church
 - The Roman Catholic Church started the Counter-Reformation to restore its prestige
 - It suppressed the Protestant Church and carried out reforms
 - Reforms
 - Rulers who still followed the Church were granted more rights to autonomy and religious affairs
 - The Church also banned the sale of indulgences and recognized some societies to promote its image

Impact of the Reformation

- Causing conflicts and wars
 - The Reformation spirit Christianity into Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant church
 - In 16th and 17th centuries, religious difference led to political instability and even military conflicts in Europe.
 - Thirty Year's War was regarded as the first great war in modern Europe
- Changing the outlook of Europe
 - Political aspect
 - The Roman Catholic Church was weakened. Many Europeans rulers separated religion from politics
 - Promoted the separation of religion and politics
 - The Europeans rulers regained power from the Church and gradually established absolute rule
 - Economic aspect
 - Protestantism encouraged followers to glorify God by working hard
 - Encourage Europeans to be more concerned with their daily work
 - Intellectual and social aspects
 - Protestantism advocated religious tolerance and freedom.
 - It also encouraged public meetings
 - Protestant Church used education as a way to preach
 - It also taught new subjects like natural science
 - sowed the ideological seeds of liberty and democracy in modern Europe
 - Education became more popular in Europe and the educational standard of Europeans improved.