

# The Protestant Reformation

## Big Idea

In northern Europe, Christian humanists sought to reform the Catholic Church, and Protestantism emerged. As you read, use a diagram like the one below to identify steps that led to the Reformation.



## Read to Learn

### Prelude to Reformation (page 412)

#### Analyzing Information

*What did the Christian humanists think that people should do in order to become more pious?*

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During the second half of the fifteenth century, the new classical learning of the Italian Renaissance spread to northern Europe. From that came a movement called **Christian humanism**. Its major goal was reform of the Catholic Church. The Christian humanists believed in the ability of human beings to reason and improve themselves. They thought that by reading the basic works of Christianity and the classics, people could become more pious, or inwardly religious. The best-known Christian humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, thought that Christianity should show people how to live good lives. He thought that external forms of medieval religion, such as relics and fasts, were not all that important.

Erasmus and others were calling for reform of the Church for several reasons. One was corruption. Many popes acted as political and military leaders rather than as spiritual leaders. Many church officials used their church offices to gain wealth. Also, many parish priests were ignorant of their spiritual duties. Ordinary people wanted **salvation**, or acceptance into Heaven. The Church made this process mechanical. People could collect relics to gain salvation. Or, they could buy an **indulgence**, a certificate of release from all or part of their punishment for sin. A popular movement called Modern Devotion also contributed to an environment where people would be receptive to ideas that went against the Church.

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# Read to Learn

## Martin Luther (page 415)

### Determining Cause and Effect

*What led to Luther's writing of the Ninety-five Theses?*

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Martin Luther was a monk and a professor at the University of Wittenberg, in Germany. Through his study of the Bible, he came to believe that human beings could never do enough good works to earn salvation. Instead, they could be saved if they had faith in God, because God was merciful. This idea, called justification (being made right before God) by faith alone, became the chief teaching of the Protestant Reformation. In 1517 Luther posted an attack on the selling of indulgences, called the Ninety-five Theses, on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Thousands of copies were printed and spread to all parts of Germany.

By 1520 Luther was calling on German princes to overthrow the papacy in Germany and establish a reformed German church. He also attacked the Church's system of sacraments and called for clergy to marry. The Church excommunicated Luther in 1521. He was also required to appear before the emperor, Charles V. Charles thought he could convince Luther to change his ideas, but Luther refused. Luther was made an outlaw within the empire. A revolution occurred, with German rulers taking power over the Catholic churches. Luther set up a new service to replace the mass. Luther's doctrine soon became known as **Lutheranism**.

## Politics in the German Reformation (page 417)

### Drawing Conclusions

*After the Peace of Augsburg, were the German people able to choose whether to be Catholic or Lutheran?*

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The fate of Luther's movement was closely tied to political affairs. The Holy Roman emperor was Charles V, who was also Charles I of Spain. Charles wanted to keep his large empire under the control of his dynasty, the Hapsburgs. He also wanted to keep the empire united by keeping it Catholic. However, conflict with France over territory led to more than 20 years of wars.

The pope was on the side of the French king, which made things harder for Charles. Further, Germany was a land of several hundred territorial states. They all owed loyalty to the emperor, but many had freed themselves from his authority.

By the time Charles V was able to bring military forces to Germany, the German princes were well organized, and Charles was unable to defeat them.

In 1555 the Peace of Augsburg ended religious warfare in Germany. Under it, the German states were free to choose between Catholicism and Lutheranism. Subjects did not have the right to choose their own religion; instead, their ruler chose it for them.

