

The Protestant Reformation Explained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yLHpRDCUlw>

In the high Middle Ages there was a series of bitter and ongoing disputes between Roman Catholic Popes and European kings, especially the King of France. In 1309 the King of France pressured Pope Clement V to establish the Papacy in Avignon, France:

Pope Clement V: 1305–1314 (moved to Avignon, 9 March 1309)

Pope John XXII: 1316–1334

Pope Benedict XII: 1334–1342

Pope Clement VI: 1342–1352

Pope Innocent VI: 1352–1362

Pope Urban V: 1362–1370 (in Rome 1367–1370; returned to Avignon 1370)

Pope Gregory XI: 1370–1378 (left Avignon to return to Rome on 13 September 1376)

There were also two Avignon-based antipopes (Popes not officially recognized as such):

Clement VII: 1378–1394

Benedict XIII: 1394–1423 (expelled from Avignon in 1403)

From 1376/7 two rival Popes existed so the Church was widely seen as corrupt, a situation not helped by the practice of simony, the buying and selling of Church offices. However, the main corrupt practice was the buying and selling of indulgences.

In the 12th century the Church developed the doctrine of Purgatory which held that after death a person's soul does not go to heaven or hell but a kind of middle space called Purgatory. The time a soul spent in Purgatory was linked to how a person had lived. Consequently, in the 16th century Pope Leo X offered Catholics indulgences for sale in order to finance the completion of St Peter's basilica. The more money that was spent on indulgences meant less time spent in Purgatory. Effectively, this enabled people to have sins forgiven without the process of Confession.

At the same time an Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, came to the conclusion, after studying the Bible, that salvation from God was a gift of grace and not a reward for good works. He came to believe in the Priesthood of All Believers which meant he considered there was no longer to class of priestly people he also held to the tenet of sola scriptura – final authority for Christians was the Bible and not Papal dogma.

Martin Luther outlined his complaints against the Catholic Church in a document entitled the 95 Theses. Though written in Latin it quickly spread throughout Germany thanks to the printing press and his ideas were shared by many other people. These ideas became known as the Protestant Reformation.

The next most significant figure in the Protestant movement was John Calvin who wrote down the ideas of the Protestant reformation. His key thoughts are shown on the screenshot:

CALVIN'S DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

I. Predestination

- God had from before the foundation of the world decided who would be saved and who would go to hell
- Salvation and damnation was not a matter of human choice, but of God's choice

II. Elect

- The elect were those whom God had chosen to save
- Those who were truly elect had no choice in the matter and could never lose their salvation