

**P.R. GOVERNMENT COLLEGE (A), KAKINADA**  
**NAAC Accredited “A” Grade Institution (CGPA –**  
**3.17)**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**Study Material for students**



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**TOPIC: REFORMATION & Counter Reformation**

## MEANING OF REFORMATION

### a) What is Reformation?

Webster defines the term 'Reformation as "a 16th century religious movement marked ultimately by rejection or modification of much of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice and establishment of Protestant churches".

### b) Medieval Church:

In the middle Ages, Roman church was endowed with vast influence on every walk of life in Europe. Even kings used to tremble before Pope and his representatives. But in 15th century church came to be pervaded with count-less corrupt practices. Goaded by the spirit of humanism and enquiry that had recently acquired through Renaissance Intellectuals spearheaded a religious revolution which culminated in the Reformation.

### c) Two Phases:

Speaking generally, we have to refer to the two faces as well as phases of the Reformation, namely,

1. The Protestant reformation of 1517.
2. Counter reformation.

## CAUSES OF REFORMATION

There were many causes held responsible for Reformation, They can be divided under followings heads namely

- a) Religious Factors
- b) Economic Factors
- c) Political causes
- d) Renaissance
- E) Sale of Indulgences.

### Religious Factors:

The corruption of the church was the foremost factor that brought about the Reformation. Especially the immoral practices of the clergy were detested. Some other monks abandoned the cherished ideal of celibacy by maintaining mistresses. Degenerate Popes and his representatives ceased to be spiritual guides and relished in amassing wealth for their illegitimate children. All these irreligious Practices of the Clergymen instigated the people to revolt against the established church order.

### b) Economic Factors:

The church began to accumulate a lot of wealth. It collected from every Christian household a tax called 'Peter's pence', besides "tithe" one-tenth of the income. They used to sell the offices of the church. Furthermore, huge amount of money was collected from the **sale of Dispensation**. Dispensation was an exemption from the church rules and obligations such as fasting and marriage.

### Political Factors:

Main causes of religious revolution were that, church interfered with the king's royal functions. The kings much resented this meddling attitude and infringed to overthrow the papal authority.

### **Renaissance:**

The new spirit of enquiry and humanism occasioned by the Spread of Renaissance movement caused the advent of the Reformation t gave rise to critical and analytical views on everything on earth.

### **Sale of Indulgences:**

The sale of Indulgences served as the immediate cause of the Reformation. it was a certificate of atonement issued by the church authorities in favour of a person to relieve him from the divine punishment for his sins.

### **Some other causes:**

Defeat of the Christians in the crusades,

Introduction of printing press,

Spread of literacy,

Translation of the Bible into common European languages,

Powerful middle class,

Development of national languages.

## **PROGRESS OF REFORMATION**

Germany took the initiative of launching Protestant Reformation, Moreover, it was a German called Martin Luther who became the father of Protestantism.

Martin Luther, Being a devout clergyman and professor of Theology is grown adverse to all corrupt practices prevalent among papal authorities. He was convinced that it was faith in Christ, not the Church that could lead to human salvation. The disgruntled German nobles and common people supported him wholeheartedly.

## **EFFECTS OF LUTHERANISM AND PEASANTS REVOLT**

The protestant ideology of Luther took Northern Europe by storm. Especially "the equality of all men" preached by him led to many disturbances in Germany.

Image breaking riots,

The Knights War,

Peasants' Revolt,

Anabaptism:

**Anabaptism:** a new creed, sprang up on the basis of equality The Anabaptists, rejecting the catholic view of religion, believed, that wealth should be distributed to the whole community.

Protestant movement in Europe,

Protestant movement in England,

All these leads to break of Catholic Church. And church activities,

### **Counter Reformation:-**

#### **a) Its necessity:**

Now we shall follow what the Catholic Church meanwhile did to counter the Protestant trends. Under the Able guidance of enlightened Popes and with the count full assistance of devout clergymen, certain measures were adopted to purge the church of corrupt Practices. There occurred many pronged attempts as Reformation from within this attempt is described s "The counter Reformation.

#### **Council of Trent: (1545-1563)**

Order to retrieve the lost ground, Pope Paul III called for the church council to meet at Trent in 1545; finally it suggested a number of reforms in the Catholic Church.

1) It prohibited abuses such as the sale of Indulgences and the Violation of celibacy 2) The Index, a list of heretical books, was banned from use by Catholics.

#### **Society of Jesuits:-**

Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish nobleman, founded "order of Jesus". A band of selfless workers, called Jesuits, were enlisted in this society. Their missionary zeal was responsible for the spread of Christianity to far off countries like China and India.

Effects of Reformation:

#### **1) Baneful effects:**

In many parts of Europe, the rival religious factions took to arms and continuous civil strifs caused untold misery. Religious wars among various nations ensued, culminating in Thirty years' war (1618-1648)

#### **2) Beneficial effects:**

It affected to a large extent the history of western civilization. The Protestantism not only broke the unity of the church but also weakened its influence. It infused a spirit of nationalism both in politics and religion. Ultimately it paved way for many modern "isms" as socialism etc.