Section One: Society and Religion

• Section Overview
  o In the second decade of the sixteenth century, a powerful religious movement against practices in the Catholic Church erupted that attacked superstitions that robbed people of both their money and peace of mind
  o The Protestant Reformation took place at a time of sharp conflict between emerging nation-states bent on conformity and centralization within their realms and the self-governing towns and villages long accustomed to running their own affairs
  o By the late fourteenth century, territorial ruler’s laws and customs began to supersede local custom; therefore, many townspeople and villagers perceived in the religious revolt an ally in their struggle to remain politically free and independent

• Social and Political Conflict
  o Reformation first broke out in cities of Germany and Switzerland
    ▪ some cities turned Protestant and remained so, while others only embraced Protestantism for a short time
    ▪ others developed mixed faiths
  o Groups and Individuals who supported the Protestant Reformation
    ▪ Guilds embraced the Protestant Reformation
      • guildsmen had a history of opposition to governmental authority
      • members of the printers’ guild benefitted as they printed propaganda
    ▪ People who were pushed around and bullied by either local or distant authority often supported the reformation
      • religious freedom and toleration inspired people who perceived themselves as subjects rather than free citizens
      • Protestantism= a priesthood of all believers vs. Catholicism= strict hierarchical structure

• Popular Religious Movements and Criticism of the Church
  o Criticisms of the Catholic Church
    ▪ Great Schism or Babylonian Captivity
      • papacy moved from Rome to Avignon, France when a conflict developed over whether the next pope should be Italian or French
      • the Avignon popes allied themselves closely with the kings of France which alienated many other western European nations
      • the papacy returned to Rome in 1378 after the election of an Italian pope
    ▪ Decadence of the Catholic Church
      • the years in Avignon were characterized by corruption and gluttony
      • lay people felt a sense of spiritual crisis in the Catholic Church and subsequently experimented with new religious forms
    ▪ Dissenters sought religious simplicity in 15th century
      • Albigensians, Waldensians, Beguines, and Beghards in the thirteenth century and Lollards and Hussites
  o The Modern Devotion, or Brothers of the Common Life
    ▪ religious group that promoted religious devotion outside formal church offices and apart from religious vows
    ▪ people lived communal lives devoted to theological studies and prayer but took neither oaths or vows
    ▪ Erasmus and Johannes Reuchlin were educated by this order
    ▪ began in the towns of Zwolle and Deventer in the Netherlands
• Lay Control over Religious Life
  o growing sense of regional identity and secular nationalism replaced loyalty to the papacy in Rome
  o upper clergy (bishops and cardinals)—were influential members of the nobility who purchased their positions from
    the church’s benefice system
    ▪ upper clergy rarely lived in the region that was under their jurisdiction
    ▪ most German towns had issued complaints to the Vatican about clergy members
  o sale of Indulgences comes under attack
    ▪ Luther was not the first to protest the selling of indulgences
    ▪ local rulers had permitted the selling of indulgences as some of the proceeds were invested locally
    ▪ local rulers and were not happy when money was raised for distant interests like the construction of Saint Peter’s basilica in Rome
  o medieval privileges of the clergy revoked
    ▪ churches and monasteries were exempted from laws and taxes that applied elsewhere
    ▪ law also deemed it unnecessary for clergy to participate in military service, compulsory labor, standing
      watch at city gates, and other civil duties
    ▪ clergy enjoyed immunity for jurisdiction of civil courts
    ▪ by the eve of Reformation governments had begun the process of revoking the rights of the clergy

Section Two: Martin Luther and the German Reformation

• Section Overview
  o Northern humanists had set a sentiment of opposition to Rome in the German states, which provided a solid
    foundation for Luther’s movement
  o Martin Luther
    ▪ son of a successful miner
    ▪ educated in Mansfield, Magdeburg, where the Brothers of the Common Life had been his teachers
    ▪ earned a master of arts degree from the University of Erfurt in 1505
    ▪ entered the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine in Erfurt
    ▪ in 1511, he moved to Wittenberg, where he earned his doctorate in theology and became a leader in the
      monastery and the spiritual life of the city

• Justification by Faith Alone
  o beliefs of the Catholic Church regarding salvation
    ▪ salvation is a joint venture, a combination of divine mercy and human good works
      ▪ Luther believed Christians were left counting their merits and sins and struggled to maintain an
        inner peace of mind
      ▪ Luther struggled with the idea that one must live a nearly sinless life to be saved
      ▪ “faith alone” (sola fide), Luther taught, was all that was needed for salvation

• The Attack on Indulgences
  o Indulgence—a remission of the temporal penalty imposed on the penitents by priests.
    ▪ first given to Crusaders who could not complete their earthly penance because they had fallen in battle
    ▪ by the late Middle Ages, indulgences had become an aid to laypeople who were anxious about the time
      they may spend in purgatory
    ▪ in 1343, Pope Clement VI proclaimed the existence of a “treasury of merit”
    ▪ Pope Sixtus IV extended indulgences to the unrepented sins of all Christians in purgatory
  o Selling Indulgences
    ▪ sales of indulgences became a joint venture between Albrecht—the Augsburg banking house of Fugger—and
      Pope Leo X; they split the money raised 50/50
    ▪ John Tetzel was enlisted to preach—or market—indulgences in Albrecht’s territory

Thomas a Kempis wrote *Imitation of Christ*, a summary of the beliefs of the Modern Devotion