

Reformation Europe

DE LAMAR JENSEN

Age of Reform and Revolution



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DE LAMAR JENSEN Brigham Young University

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*To Mary W. Jensen, Dale and Jonna Lu Williams, Ross and Marde Brunson,
Brad and Kathy Jensen, Emily Jensen, and Christine Jensen*

COVER PHOTO: *A detail from "Martin Luther and the Wittenberg Reformers," by Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515–86), depicting, in the front row (from left), Martin Luther; John Frederick, Elector of Saxony; and Philipp Melanchthon. The identities of the other figures have not been definitely established, but the man to the left of John Frederick is probably either his secretary and court preacher, Georg Spalatin, or legal scholar and translator Justus Jonas. The bearded man to the right of John Frederick may be either his chancellor, Georg Brück, or Nuremberg reformer Andreas Osiander. (The Toledo Museum of Art. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.)*

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Preface

The lessons of history are not always easy to learn, nor are their meanings simple to interpret. One of the banes of our time (and of others) is the oversimplification and rationalization of history to make it fit preconceived ideas or bolster previously made conclusions. History is the account of human experiences. To be of value it must be studied and presented both accurately and honestly, critically as well as understandingly, and in context. That is what I have tried to do in *Reformation Europe* and its companion text, *Renaissance Europe*.

No one is free from bias. To think that one's views are not subjective, and not shaped to varying degrees by one's own cultural, political, and religious frame of reference and experience, is a dangerous form of self-delusion. Yet balance and greater objectivity can be achieved through conscientious endeavor, just as the sharp abrasiveness of prejudice can be smoothed by broadening thought and sympathetic effort.

The challenge of presenting and interpreting a subject so extensive and controversial as the Reformation is indeed awesome. Many times in the preparation of this book I have thought, "Only a fool would attempt such an impossible task." Nevertheless, foolish or not, I continue to be motivated by the powerful incentives of wanting to know and wanting to teach others. As I have studied the intricacies of sixteenth-century religious ideas, compared these with the equally conflicting assertions of secular thought, and re-

lated them both to the political, economic, military, and artistic events and movements of the time, I have become increasingly conscious of the interrelationship of all human endeavor. That interrelationship will be shown in the following pages, as will the consequences of ideological conflict.

Europeans living in the first decades of the sixteenth century were caught in a great cultural convulsion resulting from the collision of Renaissance optimism, worldliness, and exuberance for life, with the concurrent anxiety over disease, death, and eternal salvation. The Renaissance reconciliation of the spiritual and the mundane was not adequate to calm people's fears about death, nor to ease the pains of life. *Reformation Europe* is partly the story of that dilemma and the desperate struggle to find its solution. It is primarily neither a theological treatise nor an ecclesiastical history but rather a general account of all aspects of European life and thought during the dynamic century and a half from the beginning of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century. Yet because of the pivotal nature of the Protestant Reformation, religion came to play a transcendent role in the overall history of the period.

Because of the continuing diversity of religious affiliations and belief, I am aware that not everyone will agree with all of my interpretations and emphases, particularly in those chapters dealing primarily with religious matters. Nevertheless, I have tried to present the knowable facts of this period accurately and to interpret them as objectively and meaningfully as I could.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The short bibliographical essays following each chapter have been written to assist the student in making purposeful selections of additional reading material, either for more extensive study or for enjoyment—or both. I feel that this is better achieved by a limited number of good books, accompanied by brief comments or evaluations, than by long impersonal lists of authors and titles.

To keep these bibliographies as brief and functional as possible the following criteria have been used: (1) Despite the enormous amount of important historical literature in foreign languages, only works written in English or translated into English are included. (2) Source materials are not included, except in certain cases in which the modern work contains particularly useful documents. (3) In order to make these bibliographies as current as possible, the most recent works are cited. Those written before 1960 are included only if they have been reissued in later editions or are of unique value. (4) First priority has been given to full-length books, but shorter essays and journal articles are sometimes included when these are the best, or only, studies of a particular topic.

Acknowledgments

I greatly appreciate the suggestions, corrections, and admonitions of those experts who have read all or parts of this book. They include representatives of most of the religious persuasions discussed here, and they have prevented me from many errors that I might otherwise have committed had they not read the manuscript carefully and critically and given me the benefit of their knowledge. I wish to thank my colleagues and students for their stimulation and long-suffering, and my family for their continuing support. The editors at D. C. Heath have been a constant help in bringing this project to a successful conclusion. My wife has assisted me in preparing the index. Having been able to incorporate into this volume some of the information and interpretations gained while doing research in Europe on more specialized studies supported by grants from the Institute of International Education, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, I gratefully acknowledge their interest and help. Finally, a generous grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation allowed me to complete the final copy and copyediting on schedule before beginning a challenging new assignment.

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INTRODUCTION

From Renaissance to Reformation

THE DYNAMIC LITERARY and artistic Renaissance reached its climax during the first three decades of the sixteenth century. By then Florence had already passed its prime. With the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492, the great age of Florentine preeminence began drawing to a close. Cristoforo Landino and Piero della Francesca died the same year; and in 1494, the fateful year of the first French invasion, Pico and Poliziano both passed away, as did Boiardo and Ghirlandaio. Pollaiuolo followed in 1498, Ficino in 1499, and Botticelli in 1510. After that the flame of Florentine art was kept alive for another ten years by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, and Michelangelo.

The glow of the High Renaissance was brightest in Rome—where Bramante, Sangallo, Raphael, and Michelangelo now amazed the world with their mightiest creations of classical-Christian beauty—and in Venice, where Bellini, Giorgione, Lombardo, Carpaccio, and Titian carried Venetian art to its climax in a blaze of harmonious light and color. But the rampant Italian (Habsburg-Valois) Wars, especially the devastating sack of Rome in 1527, contributed to the rapid deterioration of Roman art, as it did to the decline of Renaissance letters (especially after the deaths of Machiavelli in 1527, Castiglione in 1529, and Ariosto in 1533) and the loss of intellectual leadership. The stylish affectation and strained

tensions of Italian Mannerism after 1530 clearly reveal the waning of the Renaissance in Italy.

Nevertheless, Renaissance spirit and style began to flourish in modified forms beyond the Alps. Indeed, the first two or three decades of the sixteenth century saw the rapid expansion of Renaissance ideas and expression throughout Europe. In this period, the most successful reconciliations of ancient and modern thought, classicism and Christianity, scholarship and faith, action and devotion, were achieved north of the Alps in the humanism of Lefèvre d'Étaples, Guillaume Budé, Jiménez de Cisneros, Juan Luis Vives, Jakob Wimpheling, Johann Reuchlin, John Colet, Thomas More, and especially Erasmus. The poetic power of Clément Marot and Garcilaso de la Vega was supplemented by the prose distinction of François Rabelais, Fernando de Rojas, and Philippe de Commynes, while the artistic harmonization of nature and man was masterfully accomplished by Albrecht Altdorfer and Albrecht Dürer.

Occasional manifestations of Renaissance classicism, harmony, order, and balance continued throughout the century, providing a thread of continuity with the High Renaissance. These manifestations were particularly notable in the poets of the *Pléiade* during the second half of the century, in the *Essays* of Montaigne, and in the dramatic literature of Shakespeare's England and Cervantes's Spain. They also provide the warp of Baroque architecture in the early seventeenth century, and show up even stronger in the classicism of French painting from Georges de La Tour to Poussin and Claude Lorraine.

By the time the second decade of the sixteenth century drew to a close, however, a new and powerful force had appeared in the form of the Protestant Reformation, a movement of such magnitude that no area of Europe or field of thought and activity was unaffected by it. In many ways the Reformation was a repudiation of the Renaissance, a reaction against its humanism, classicism, and secularism, but also—and especially—against its ecclesiastical authoritarianism. The effect of the Reformation on northern art and literature was almost immediate, as the arts were mobilized for the war of religious polemics and propaganda. Humanism was diverted into more sectarian channels, and secular scholarship was converted to confessional commitment. Political alignments and international relations were altered by religious disputes and wars that profoundly affected economic development and social organization as well.

The Reformation has frequently been described as a repudiation of Renaissance "paganism" and a return to Judeo-Christian theocracy. It did advocate a renewal of piety and a rejection of the vanity of human pleasures, and it produced the greatest resurgence of biblical theology since the time of the Latin fathers. Many of the religious reformers were uneasy about the humanists' exaltation of worldly things, and saw in this a dishonoring or even degrading of God. The Reformation emphasized instead human corruption and sinfulness. The depravity of

human nature was so profound, according to Calvin, "that everything in man—the understanding and will, the soul and body—is polluted and engrossed by lust."

Yet the Reformation also had much in common with the Renaissance and can be understood in part as a continuation and intensification of the Renaissance spirit, especially the spirit of reform. The Renaissance was an age of reformers. They wanted to reform education, correct the errors of medieval scholarship, improve the translations of legal and religious texts, enrich the content as well as style of literature, recover the wisdom of the ancients, recapture the order and simplicity of nature, and renew and refine the relationship between man and God by thoroughly reforming the church.

Christian humanists of the early sixteenth century combined all of these endeavors and, by a blending of piety and learning, hoped to effect a revitalization of religion. Indeed, through erudition, reason, and education, they aspired not only to transform the church but also society at large. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) was the leading voice of this reform movement. A many-faceted genius, Erasmus had a thorough training in the classic authors as well as in languages and grammar, which he mobilized in the cause of Christian scholarship. He was the greatest classical scholar of the age and used his knowledge of Greek and Latin sources to demonstrate the profound effect of ancient culture on Christianity and to use the best in classical civilization for Christian service and to improve morality. For Erasmus, erudition was not a pursuit extraneous to a religious life but rather was the very heart of it. He believed the classics not only had the capacity to inculcate good taste, stimulate sound and clear thinking, and cultivate lucid, accurate, and precise verbal and written expression, but also that their study, along with the Bible, would promote greater religious devotion and goodness. This "*pietas literata*" (piety through literature) was the basis of Erasmus's educational philosophy and his religious reformism.

Erasmus was not alone in his devotion to Christian humanism. Many men and women in every country of Europe shared his enthusiasm for classical culture and his dissatisfaction with the formalism and banality of the ecclesiastical establishment. They, too, wanted to expose corruption and purge the church of its punctiliousness. This, of course, opened the way to a crescendo of anticlericalism during the first two decades of the sixteenth century. Led by Erasmus's *Adages* (1500), *Enchiridion* (Handbook of the Christian Soldier, 1503), *The Praise of Folly* (1509), *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), the caustic satire *Julius Excluded from Heaven* (published anonymously in 1517 but written earlier), and several editions of delightful *Colloquies*, many other humanists, including Crotus Rubeanus, Ulrich von Hutten, Rabelais, and Thomas More, took up their pens to attack clerical abuse and ecclesiastical bigotry.

At the same time (and frequently in the same works), the Christian humanists laid the foundation of a positive religious reform, based on

biblical scholarship and using the historical and philological study of Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible as a starting point. In this regard, the religious works of John Colet, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Johann Reuchlin stand with Erasmus's Greek and Latin New Testament as evidences of their desire for genuine religious reform.

In a different and even more intense way, the Reformation continued to promote the goals of cleansing and reform—so vigorously, in fact, that reform eventually led to revolution instead of reconciliation. Erasmus wanted to regenerate the church in order to strengthen and unite it; Luther believed it was his duty to correct the church even if that correction destroyed it.

The "Bible revival" was also common to both the Renaissance and the Reformation, since it began even prior to the Protestant emphasis on the written word. Going back to the sources was basic to Reformation scholarship and to humanism, and the transition from late fifteenth-century biblical scholarship to Protestant scripturalism was natural and continuous. Lefèvre d'Étaples's, Reuchlin's, and Erasmus's interest in the Bible were as genuine as Luther's and Calvin's, although perhaps not as theologically profound (Luther thought not, anyway, when he chided Erasmus "to suffer my lack of eloquence, as I in return will bear with your ignorance in those matters").

The often-quoted aphorism, "Luther hatched the egg laid by Erasmus," illustrates the continuous and causal relationship between Renaissance and Reformation. Both were committed to reform; both dealt with people and their relationships to their fellow human beings, to their surroundings, and to God; both gave great impetus to writing and reading, and were reciprocally related to the development of printing; both contributed substantially—although not always intentionally and not immediately—to the development of religious and political freedom. The Reformation was also an important factor in the continued consolidation of the national states.

Yet, however strong were the cords of continuity between the Renaissance and Reformation, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century a major transformation began that has affected most aspects of life to the present day. One of the significant characteristics of European society until the sixteenth century was its ecclesiastical unity. The universal jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic church gave a certain homogeneity and uniformity to society and provided a stabilizing influence, despite many distractions and disorders. This religious unity was destroyed by the Reformation, and a drastically different world came into existence. The disappearance of the *Respublica Christiana* caused strains and fissures that resulted in Europe-wide upheavals. The stability and consonance of Renaissance society gave way to novelty, disparity, and discord. Tension and uncertainty characterized life throughout much of the sixteenth century, because people were unable to comprehend or accept religious heterogeneity. What began as a religious revival and attempt, in Roland Bainton's words, "to give man a new assurance in

the presence of God and a new motivation in the moral life," resulted also in aroused passions, dogmatic assertions, and unbelievable human cruelty.

The pain of religious fracture was accompanied by the stress of political, social, and economic disorder. The consolidation of monarchical power proceeded at an increased pace as the authority of the pope was whittled away and religious war eliminated many of the crown's most dangerous rivals. The strength of local and regional rulers was further reduced by new social mobility and by the seemingly unpredictable fluctuation of prices. But civil war and inflation were double-edged swords that also reduced many kings to penury and brought violent death to others. Still, the aggrandizement of the state continued, and with the social upheavals of the century providing new bureaucrats to operate the administrative machinery, some monarchs aspired to no less than "absolutism." With the rising tensions of ideological war, international diplomacy also became tinged with sectarian dogmatism, and rulers used religious pronouncements as well as military weapons to attack their enemies.

The bewilderment caused by these religious and social upheavals, and the groping for meaning and direction through the labyrinth of early sixteenth-century politics, are reflected in the *belles lettres* and art of the age, as well as in the polemical pamphlet literature generated by the printing press. Insecurity masked by pontifical pronouncements characterized the religious and political tracts of the time, as traditional values came under attack and the old norms of truth and error collapsed. Long-held notions about the world and nature were likewise challenged, and the authority of popes, priests, and kings was questioned. Attempts to comprehend or control the new forces that had been unleashed were awkward and mostly unsuccessful. The restlessness of the time was clearly reflected in Mannerist art, with its tensions and distortions.

In the second half of the century, the anxiety of the Reformation Age seemed to generate even greater assertiveness and fanaticism. Doubt was replaced by dogmatism, because boldness appeared to be the best response to the cultural malaise. But an outward show of confidence was no substitute for genuine solutions to the dilemma. Beneath the veneer of conviction, doubts and unresolved conflicts still lingered. In a seeming attempt to belie their insecurity, people of the early seventeenth century stopped at nothing to prove the superiority of their particular party or sect and to display their personal prowess. Baroque artists overwhelmed the eye with monuments of grandiose proportions, dramatically proclaiming their power and passion, just as soldiers paraded their valor and strength.

The intensity of life (and death) reached a peak in the epoch of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the period many scholars call the age of crisis. It was indeed a time of the culmination of the forces set loose by the Reformation—a final tempestuous struggle for stability following a

century of revolt and revolution. By the second half of the seventeenth century, Europe had come full circle since the High Renaissance. The age of Reformation finally ended when a new synthesis and resolution was found in the neoclassicism and scientific rationalism of the age of Newton, Locke, and Christopher Wren.

Suggestions for Further Reading

GENERAL

Broad coverage of the entire period from 1500 to the middle of the seventeenth century is ably accomplished by Harold J. Grimm in *The Reformation Era, 1500–1650*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1973), which thoroughly discusses the Reformation and its consequences. Another excellent synthesis, set approximately half a century later, is Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1979), in the Norton History of Modern Europe series. This is a smaller book (322 pages compared to Grimm's 594) but devotes significantly more space to political, economic, and social matters. Two other recent books, of slightly shorter span, are also worth noting: Henry Kamen, *The Iron Century: Social Change in Europe, 1550–1660* (New York, 1971), which is very heavily socioeconomic in orientation, and Charles Wilson, *The Transformation of Europe, 1558–1648* (Berkeley, 1976). A wide range of topics are covered in Lawrence Buck and Jonathan Zophy, eds., *The Social History of the Reformation* (Columbus, 1972), a collection of essays in honor of Harold Grimm, and in Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel, eds., *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1969), a collection of interpretative essays in honor of E. Harris Harbison.

The sixteenth century is carefully examined in two outstanding volumes in The History of Europe series, edited by J. H. Plumb (Fontana History of Europe in Great Britain). They are G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517–1559* (London and New York, 1963), and J. H. Elliott, *Europe Divided, 1559–1598* (London and New York, 1968). The second half of the century is also summarized in Marvin R. O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation, 1559–1610* (New York, 1974), volume 4 of William L. Langer's Rise of Modern Europe series. The best single-volume analysis of the sixteenth century is H. G. Koenigsberger and G. L. Mosse, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1968). More recent accounts include David Maland, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1973); Leonard W. Cowie, *Sixteenth Century Europe* (Edinburgh, 1977); and De Lamar Jensen, *The Sixteenth Century*, rev. ed. (St. Louis, 1979), a very brief narrative in The World of Europe series.

THE REFORMATION

Many interesting and worthwhile accounts of the Reformation are available in English, including Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation*, tr. by Audrey Butler, 2 vols. (Garden City, 1963); Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Baltimore, 1964), Vol. 3 in the Pelican History of the Church; A. G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York, 1966); Hans J. Hillerbrand's brief *Men and Ideas in the Sixteenth Century* (Chicago, 1969), his more penetrating *Christendom Divided: The Protestant Reformation* (London and New York, 1971), and his summary *The World of the Reformation* (New York,

1973); John P. Donnelly, *Reform and Renewal* (n.p., 1977); and most recently, Peter J. Klassen, *Europe in the Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, 1979), a balanced and well-written history. The excitement of eye-witness accounts is provided in Hans Hillerbrand, ed., *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants* (New York, 1964). A significant dimension to Reformation studies is added by Roland H. Bainton's *Women of the Reformation*, 3 vols. (Minneapolis, 1971-77). The first volume deals with women in Germany and Italy, the second in France and England, and the third in Spain, Portugal, Scotland, more in England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Transylvania. On Erasmus's role, see Bainton's *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York, 1969).

REFORMATION INTERPRETATIONS

Enlightening discussions of the causes, meanings, and results of the Reformation are contained in Joseph Lortz, *How the Reformation Came*, tr. by Otto Knab (New York, 1964); H. A. Enno van Gelder, *The Two Reformations of the Sixteenth Century* (The Hague, 1964), which calls Christian humanism the first and more fundamental Reformation; Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1968); and S. E. Ozment, *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective* (Chicago, 1971) and *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism in Sixteenth Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, 1975); the latter is most instructive in the light of Bernd Moeller's *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, tr. by H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1972). Guy E. Swanson's challenging *Religion and Regime: A Sociological Account of the Reformation* (Ann Arbor, 1967) should be read along with the penetrating critiques and rejoinder in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1 (1971), 379-446. See also Abraham Friesen, *Reformation and Utopia: The Marxist Interpretation of the Reformation and Its Antecedents* (Wiesbaden, 1974).