

The Fifth Age of the Church

Part I

Renaissance

- Movement from collective awareness to individual awareness
- People's sense of self/vocation
- Individual human activity becomes primary
- Christian humanism: not the way we think of humanism. Rather, an emphasis on classical languages, rhetoric, and literature as opposed to scholasticism based on logical proof.

Desiderius Erasmus

- “You’d extricate yourself faster from a labyrinth than from the tortuous obscurities of realists, nominalists, Thomists, Albertists, Ockhamists, and Scotists. . . . Such is the erudition and complexity they all display that I fancy the apostles themselves would need the help of another Holy Spirit if they were obliged to join issue on these topics with our new breed of theologians” (*Praise of Folly*).
- He felt that “scholastic disputations honed intellectual skills but failed to make better Christians of the protagonists. ‘We are not training pugilists; we are training theologians’” (Erika Rummel).

Rise of National Identity

- Movement from rural fief and city state to nations.
- Seems opposite of individualism, but is actually a natural consequence.
- In Medieval world, power and wealth was in land. In Renaissance world, power shifted to intellect and portable (often political) skills.

- In Medieval world local nobles controlled the land and the people on the land. Kings needed support of landed nobles in order to govern.
- Individual freedom and mobility led to less dependence on landed nobles.
- Land and titles became gifts of kings to be given or taken.
- Church had part to play in this shift with its awarding of dioceses to absent bishops etc.

Renaissance Church was Temporal

- Church was a major landholder from the papal states to monasteries and diocesan estates.
- Papal states existed for over 1,100 years. Had its own army and navy.
- Tension between bishops and pope was high; papal monarchy vs. conciliarism.



Result of Material Orientation

- Popes and bishops concentrated on managing and retaining property, wealth, and power rather than spiritual and moral matters.
- As a result, clergy education suffered, religious orders became rivals for power and political tools of popes and bishops, and the faithful were treated as pawns.

Theology Did Thrive in North

- Renaissance differed in north and south.
- In the south, individuals turned to the arts.
- In the north, printing was primary artistic venture, and Bible and theology were the topics.
- “The northern renaissance, in fact, *is* the Reformation” (Vidmar, 175).

Reflection

- The sale of indulgences is often pointed to as the trigger for the Protestant Reformation.
- On page 188 of your text, Vidmar lists “legitimate” sources of revenue for the papacy. Some of these continue today.
- In your small group, discuss the legitimacy of these income sources.
 - Are there conditions that make them more or less legitimate?
 - What factors around these revenue sources might lead to unrest among the people then and now?

Factors Leading to Reformation

- Political: power, taxes, self-determination
- Philosophical: individual rights, including interpretation of Scripture
- Religious: morality, scandal, biblical interpretation
- Corruption: financial, benefices, absenteeism, ostentation, nepotism