

## **Some Significant Historical Contributions To The Protestant Revolution**

Explosion of Portuguese exploration, prompted by Prince Henry “The Explorer” (1394-1460), along with the development of the *caravel*, a more maneuverable & faster ship design.

After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 and the end of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, Europeans found it more difficult to use Asian trade routes to the Orient. The Portuguese thought that a new route could be found around the southern tip of Africa & expanded their explorations in that direction.

In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg used metal moveable type to produce the first printed Bible. Since this first Bible sold for about three years’ wages of a semi-professional & was printed in ancient Latin, the Word of God remained out of reach for the common citizen. However, as is the typical case with technology, the printing process eventual became more widespread and economical. It eventually was used by Protestants to realize their goal of making the Bible readily accessible to all people in their own language.

Spain’s Granada War ended with the expulsion of Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. The “Catholic Monarchs,” Ferdinand & Isabella, ordered Jews & Moslems to either convert to Catholicism or leave. The Spanish Inquisition was used to police those who had supposedly converted. They probably agreed to fund Columbus’ expedition as a potential means of financial recovery during this post-war period.

Columbus’ “discovery” triggered a competition of exploration & exploitation of these new lands by Spain, Portugal, England, France and the Netherlands throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Spanish Conquistadors (“Conquerors”) basically took control of native populations, used them as a labor force to gather resources & pressured them into accepting Roman Catholicism.

The deplorable actions of the Papacy & an ever more secular Roman Catholic hierarchy continued to bother Christians more serious about the Faith.

- In 1514, Albert of Mainz became the Archbishop of Mainz at age 24. To pay back loans used to purchase these offices, he arranged with Pope Leo X the right to sell indulgences (50 % of the money raised was to be sent to Rome in order to fund the rebuilding of St. Peter's basilica).
- John Tetzel, the chief fundraiser for Albert, became known for the phrase "As soon as money in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory's fire springs."
- Martin Luther wrote his 95 theses, which he posted on the door of his church building in Wittenburg, Germany, on 31 October 1517, to oppose Tetzel's fundraising.
- Luther was tried for heresy in 1521. His response to demands he recant his writings was "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."
- Luther intended to fix the problems of Catholicism. His German Church kept many of the ceremonies & traditions. His revolt against Rome came in connection with that of many others.
  - In England, around 1521, William Tyndale was convinced that the way to God was through Scripture, not via Papal decrees. When told by a fellow clergyman that "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's!" Tyndale responded: "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, many more years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you do!"
  - In Switzerland, beginning in 1522, Ulrich Zwingli was preaching against Lenten fasting, Church hierarchical abuses, forced celibacy of priests, use of images in worship, etc.
  - Throughout Europe, during the 1520's & 30's, the "Anabaptists" ("re-baptisers") began teaching an extreme form of separation between Church & State. They took no oaths & were pacifists.
  - In 1530, John Calvin, a French lawyer, abandoned Roman Catholicism. In 1536, he was brought to Geneva by William Farel, in order to help in the "reformation."
- In 1534, King Henry VIII, broke with Rome, establishing the Church of England.
  - While some things changed, the Church continued to oppose the work of Protestants.
  - Tyndale was strangled & burned at the stake in 1536. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"
- Thomas Cramer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, made extensive reforms to the Church of England during the reign of Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553).
- During the rule of Mary I ("Bloody Mary"), reigned 1553-1558, all the gains of English Protestantism were reversed.
- When Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603) came to the throne, Protestantism regained control in England.