

Global Impact



Printing Spreads Ideas

The development of a movable type printing press around 1440, shown above in a 16th-century French woodcut, revolutionized the sharing of ideas. The press made it possible to print books quickly and cheaply. This fueled Renaissance learning because scholars could read each other's works soon after they were written. The ideas of the Renaissance and, later, of the Enlightenment were spread through the printed word.

The spread of reading matter made literacy for large numbers of people suddenly possible. And an informed citizenry contributed to the rise of democracy. These informed citizens began to question authority. This ultimately spurred democratic revolutions in America and France in the late 1700s.

Renaissance and Reformation

The **Roman Catholic Church** developed from Roman Christianity. By the Middle Ages, it had become the most powerful institution in Europe. It influenced all aspects of life—religious, social, and political. It was strongly authoritarian in structure, that is, it expected unquestioned obedience to its authority.

Renaissance Revives Classical Ideas In the 1300s, a brilliant cultural movement arose in Italy. Over the next 300 years, it spread to the rest of Europe, helped by the development of the printing press. This movement was called the **Renaissance**, from the French word for “rebirth.” The Renaissance was marked by renewed interest in classical culture. This included the restoration of old monuments and works of art and the rediscovery of forgotten Greek and Latin manuscripts. Renaissance thinkers were interested in earthly life for its own sake. They rejected the medieval view that life was only a preparation for the afterlife.

Renaissance education was intended to prepare some men for public service rather than just for service to the Church. Scholars placed increasing value on subjects concerned with humankind and culture. The study of classical texts led to an intellectual movement that encouraged ideas about human potential and achievement. Some Christian writers were critical of the failure of the Church to encourage people to live a life that was moral and ethical. They also discussed ways in which the lives of all in society could improve.

Renaissance thinkers and writers began to explore ideas about political power and the role of government in the lives of ordinary people. The Greek and Roman ideas about democracy were quite different from the oligarchic governments they were experiencing.

During the Renaissance, individualism became deeply rooted in Western culture. Artists expressed it by seeking to capture individual character. Explorers and conquerors demonstrated it by venturing into uncharted seas and by carving out vast empires in the Americas. It also was shown by merchant-capitalists, who amassed huge fortunes by taking great economic risks.

The Reformation Challenges Church Power Although Christianity remained a strong force in Europe during the Renaissance, people began to be more critical of the Church. The spirit of questioning that started during the Renaissance came to full bloom in the **Reformation**. The Reformation was a religious reform movement that began in the 16th century. Those who wanted to reform the Catholic Church were called Protestants, because they protested against the power and abuses of the Church. Reformers stressed the importance of a direct relationship with God.

The Reformation started in Germany. In 1517, a monk and teacher named Martin Luther criticized the Church's practice of selling pardons for sins. Soon, Luther went further. He contradicted the Church's position that salvation came through faith and good works. He said people could be saved only through faith in God. What began as a reform movement ended up as a new division of Christianity—Protestantism.

Vocabulary
Individualism is the belief in the importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence.

Vocabulary
A pardon is a cancellation of punishment still due for a sin that has been forgiven.

C. Answer
emphas
importa
individu
lenged
of auth
leaders

Synthe
● Hor
Renaiss
the Ref
shape i
democ

TE
• Ju
US
2. H
ie
th

CO
Use
de
co

Because Protestantism encouraged people to make their own religious judgments, Protestants began to have differences of belief. They then established new churches in addition to the already-formed Lutheran Church. These included the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Calvinist churches.

Catholics and Protestants differed on many issues. The Catholic Church claimed the right to interpret the Bible for all Christians. Protestants called on believers to interpret the Bible for themselves. The Catholic Church said the only way to salvation was through the Church. Protestants said that the clergy had no special powers; people could find individual paths to God. The Protestant emphasis on private judgment in religious matters—on a sense of conviction rather than a reliance on authority—strengthened the importance of the individual even more. It also led to a questioning of political authority. (See History in Depth on this page.)

Legacy of the Renaissance and Reformation The Reformation and the other changes that swept Europe during and after the Middle Ages greatly influenced the shaping of the modern world. By challenging the authority of monarchs and popes, the Reformation indirectly contributed to the growth of democracy. Also, by calling on believers to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, it introduced individuals to reading and exposed them to more than just religious ideas.

Both the Renaissance and the Reformation placed emphasis on the importance of the individual. This was an important idea in the democratic revolutions that followed and in the growth of political liberty in modern times. ●

History Depth



The Peasants' Revolt

Luther questioned Church authority. But peasants in southern Germany took Luther's example further. In 1524, they questioned political and social authority. They wanted an end to serfdom, or being forced to serve a master. They stormed the castles of the nobles, forcing them, at least initially, to give in to their demands.

It was the largest mass uprising in the history of Germany. The peasants looked to Luther to support their rights, but Luther supported the nobles instead. As many as 100,000 peasants were killed during the rebellion.

Answer Both emphasized the importance of the individual and challenged the rule of authoritarian rulers.

Understanding How did the Renaissance and the Reformation shape ideas about democracy?

2

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

• Islam • Ten Commandments • Christianity • Islam • Roman Catholic Church • Renaissance • Reformation

ORGANIZING YOUR NOTES

How do the contributions listed on your chart support the ideas of democracy?

Category	Contribution
Judaism	
Islam	
Renaissance	
Reformation	

MAIN IDEAS

- How are the Ten Commandments different from the laws of other groups?
- Which of the Christian teachings supports the central idea of democracy?
- How did the Reformation indirectly contribute to the growth of democracy?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

- COMPARING** What ideas crucial to the shaping of democracy did Judaism and Christianity share?
- DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** How did the Reformation promote the idea of individualism?
- SYNTHESIZING** How did the printing press help promote the ideas of democracy?
- WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** Write a **summary paragraph** that illustrates how the Judeo-Christian view of reason and faith, and the duties of the individual and community contributed to the development of democratic thought.

CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A COLLAGE

Use newspapers or magazines, create a **collage** showing modern nations practicing ideas of democracy. You might include headlines, pictures, or articles about equality of all people and community efforts to combat oppression.