

**Preliminary Examination in Renaissance
and Reformation History**

PLEASE ANSWER FOUR QUESTIONS, WITH AT LEAST ONE FROM EACH PART.

PLEASE APPEND A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY TO EACH ANSWER

PART A

1. Explain the rise of Burgundy to Great Power status in the 15th century.
2. Why did the French invasion of Italy in 1494 initiate so many decades of war in the peninsula?
3. A generation ago, the big break-through in Renaissance historiography was the argument that, far from being the direct result of new bourgeois, or at least non-feudal, prosperity, the Renaissance in fact followed directly upon a period of protracted economic recession. Today Renaissance scholars routinely assume that whenever a society spends large sums of money on architecture -- clearly an art form -- this is a sign of great wealth. How can these apparent contradictions be reconciled? What are the hidden assumptions in both positions?
4. Leaving aside technical improvements, such as the rediscovery of perspective, there is surprisingly little to choose between mediaeval and Renaissance painting. Both overwhelmingly depict religious subjects, or at least convey morally uplifting messages. Both, within their respective means, are representational. Both rely heavily upon symbolism. Yet hardly anyone but a total ignoramus would mistake a Cimabue for a Titian -- a totally different spirit characterizes them. Why is this? When do the differences first become apparent? Of what do they consist?

PART B

5. The Whig tradition, within which (without necessarily being aware of the fact) most English-speaking historians still write, tends to see the Reformation as a great intellectual leap forward, an adumbration of the Enlightenment -- albeit clearly within ecclesiastical limits. The Germans, however, see it as one of their greatest national achievements. Is there any substance behind either of these approaches, or can the contrary be reasonably asserted: that the Reformation was in fact a relapse into localized know-nothingism and merely another outbreak of Northern barbarism? Whichever side of the controversy you choose to take, marshal your argument from as many sources as you can.
6. There were many precursors of Luther: Hus, Wyclif, the

Albigensians (among others). Confining your argument to the question of religious pluralism versus centralism, why did Luther win, whereas his predecessors lost? What does "winning" and "losing" mean in this context? What factors which favored Luther were genuinely new?

7. Philip II seemed to his contemporaries, as well as to most subsequent observers, to be the most powerful Christian ruler of his day. Do you agree with this assessment or not?

8. Write an entry suitable for inclusion in Encyclopaedia Britannica, on ONE of the following: Henry IV of France; Cardinal Richelieu; Philip IV of Spain; the Count-Duke of Olivares.

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