

Absolute power corrupts absolutely essay sample

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The Renaissance and Reformation period brought great uncertainty and change to the Catholic Church and brought the start of a new religion. As we look at this time period for the purpose of this paper there will be a focus on this change from the perspective of where did ultimate authority resided.

The perspective of the Catholic Church was that the ultimate authority resided with the Pope and he held the power over both religious growth and secular government. During this time many Kings and leaders looked to the church for guidance and approval but this would not last.

To have a background on why the questioning of authority and the strength of the church would have come up one must first understand that the Catholic Church had been receiving criticism since the late middle ages due to errors and corruptions, and these issues were causing people to question the church. This caused the church to feel threatened and to try and answer this threat the church attempted to solidify their power by issuing more doctrine and ostracizing those who challenged it. In the next few paragraphs we will look at both the Catholic Church's attempt to retain the ultimate authority within the church, the realization that the Catholic Church must change and Luther's response and establishment of his own church.

(Lennon)

Popes were the powerful pinnacle of the Catholic faith, and to insure that they remained the center of power they moved to create power plays to secure it. This started as early as the 14th century to try and solidify this power through their writings, doctrines and actions. These men felt that the church should grow in strength and did not have to be accountable in all that they did. These Pope's created doctrine that expressed in many ways that

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the papal power was the ultimate authority and that it resided in the church. An example of this can be seen in the action taken and written works by the Popes of the time. Pope Boniface wrote to Kings and Princes of the time to tell them how the church should hold the power and that the secular government should fall under the church.

Pope Boniface said that the power and authority that he had was a power that was given to man and used by man, but it was a divine power that they had been granted as successors of Peter, and this it is this grace by God that gives them the power to be the Vicar of Christ. Pope Leo X, also pushed the full authority over all councils, and Christian believers and having them be subject to the Pope of Rome. Pope Leo believed that the Pope should be able to adjourn or cancel counsel as the Pope saw fit. Yet, not all Catholics felt that the church should not change, some of them felt that the only way to protect the church from Luther and the Protestant movement would be for them to have change and for it to come from internal to the church. There were many that believed that the Pope and counsel needed a form of checks and balances so that they would not abuse the power that they are granted. This power though did not come without change and it came in the form of Martin Luther. (Lennon)

Martin Luther, when standing against the Catholic Church in a letter in Germany was founded on the fact that Catholics do not truly hold the power that they claim and more importantly that it is not vested in scripture. Martin Luther, felt that the Catholic Church was causing corruption throughout all the globe. Luther, was not alone in his disgust with the Catholic Church. John Wycliff, also became very frustrated with the church in the indulgences that <https://assignbuster.com/absolute-power-corrupts-absolutely-essay-sample/>

he saw happening. These indulgences were being sold as a way into heaven, and a way to get family members out of purgatory. These indulgences were being sold by priest to plus up the coffers of the church, no matter the state it left the people who were buying them. Wycliff, felt that how could a people who were so indulgent in the things that they did consider themselves on the right path. Wycliff also felt that if the Pope found himself so might and equal to Christ, and placed on such a high pedestal then how could he have so many indulgences when Christ himself was so selfless and did not require material things. These were issues that many people held with the church, and a reason that many of them became open to the idea of the new church that was founded by Martin Luther. (Lennon)

The reality is that in this transition the church was facing change, and it was not a change or movement that the Catholic Church was going to take lightly. So the church stood up against Martin Luther and accused him of blasphemy. This caused him to be exiled but it did not however, stop Martin Luther, from creating an ability to pull power from the Catholic Church and expose it for corruption. This also gave Martin Luther the following need to start his own religious sect.

The ultimate power was pulled away from the Catholic Church as it related to the control that they possessed over the secular governments, and some Kings and Princes. This was done because people were given an option in what they were going to believe and in what religion they were going to practice. The event of Protestant reformation caused the church to realize that they could no longer be held without consequences, but it did not completely bring the church into the light. The move that Martin Luther did

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was it caused the Catholic Church to realize that it was touchable and it could not continue to act inside of a vacuum and that people would hold them accountable.

References

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