

Free protestant reformation in europe in the sixteenth century essay example

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The sixteenth century is a century that Europe experienced great change in on many fronts. It was a century that witnessed growth of royal power, discovery of new lands and the appearance of centralized monarchies (Hillerbrand, pg. 3). It was also the century where humanistic ideas of the Italian Renaissance were spreading all over Europe and this renaissance helped secularize the European society. The most revolutionary event in this century was the Protestant Reformation that forced people to make a choice between being a Catholic and being a Protestant.

A number of visible signs of disorder within the church pointed to the need for moral or administrative reform. Martin Luther, a protestant reformer and founder of Lutheranism, challenged the Roman church on the matter of indulgencies and this propelled him into the movement of doctrinal change in the church. His Ninety five theses played a key role to the success of the Protestant Reformation. Outside Germany, a protestant reformist by the name of John Calvin who founded Calvinism had a more impact on Europe than Luther. Calvinism, the harsh and rather dogmatic religion, spread from Geneva to northern Europe and later England became the center of Protestantism. While Lutheranism spread in Germany and some of the Scandinavian countries, Calvinism made in roads across Europe.

Many factors played a key role in the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Some of the factors included: The Renaissance - It was a period where art flourished, study of classics prospered and the printing press was invented by to facilitate spread of ideas. It refocused the thinking on ancient Greek scholars. People raised questions about salvation by instigating new ideas and this brought about the belief in individualism, which stated that there

was the human ability to choose between right and wrong. Martin Luther's Ninety five theses, his arguments about Roman Church indulgencies, spread through books. Renaissance triggered a new flow of ideas and people started questioning their faith in the Catholic Church. This ultimately led to the Protestant reformation.

The changing political structures in Europe also contributed to the Protestant reformation. Nationalistic trends began all over Europe and there was a growing sense of national identity. France by now existed as an identifiable nation and the England parliament continued to grow. The Holy Roman Empire during that time exercised little control and was almost without power that it previously had. Luther's Ninety-five theses, stirred nationalistic feelings among the Germans against the wealthy Holy Church of Rome headed by the pope. Martin Luther's teachings that appealed to patriotism earned him the support of princes who used religion as a tool to gain political independence.

Papal corruption was another contributor to the success of the Protestant Reformation. During this period papacy was corrupt and worldly (McGee, pg. 32). Lavish homes and palaces for the Church were being noticed by people from all walks of life. The popes and bishops were living like Kings and princes rather than be people to lead others to spirituality. At the same time the popes bought and sold offices, and they also sold indulgencies. There was stagnancy in the growth of the church and no one preached the gospel completely. The clergy had become lax, immoral and corrupt and people took notice.

Many nations had also begun enjoying economic wealth at around this time.

Germany by that time had found out that it enjoyed a fantastic mineral wealth. This new found wealth led to exploitation by the papacy. With this newly acquired wealth, many secret societies and guilds grew and some of them had disguised themselves as the church. With the growing sense of nationalism and wealth, more countries began rejecting papacy leading to a successful Protestant reformation.

Protestant reformation was a success due to political, economic and religious reasons (Wilson, pg. 14). It meant greater spiritual freedom for some individuals but also led to spiritual disunity and disorganization for Europe. It also contributed to the power of nations including England, Scotland and the Scandinavian countries.

Works cited

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