

Reaction paper- protestant reformation

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Reaction Paper- Protestant Reformation Protestant Reformation, first taking place in the early sixteenth century, brought about a whirlwind of change theologically, economically, and multiple other fronts. Most important was the globalization of Christianity—its transformations generated new directions of intellect beyond the sixteenth century. Works of theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin sparked the criticism of the authority and power of the Catholic Church as well as instilling new ideas towards individualism, predestination, and salvation. The emergence of Protestant Reformation brought about different views of life concerning religion, administration, and education. The theological basis of question—first introduced by Martin Luther, and further developed by John Calvin—motivated and instilled the power of individual thought and self-reliance, rather than dependence on the Catholic Church. “ Luther recently had come to a new understanding of salvation which held that it came through faith alone. Neither the good works of the sinner nor the sacraments of the Church had any bearing on the eternal destiny of the soul, for faith was a free gift of God, graciously granted to his needy and undeserving people" (pp. 722). The belief of Martin Luther associates that Bible teachings were to be interpreted by the individual reader’s conscience and interpretation and not the Church. Inadvertently, Luther’s actions challenged the authority of the Church and its hierarchy, provoking mass schism within the Church, and moreover, Christianity abroad. Since the fragmentation of the two major sects of Christianity—Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church—Catholicism solely controlled religious, educational, economic, and political rule throughout Europe. There was no legal alternative. As power and

ignorance built up over the centuries, anyone who went against the Church was considered a heretic and killed publicly at the stake. Catholic doctrine stated that it was the only true Church of Christ, was the only path towards attaining heaven. “ They have given the pope full authority over all the decisions of the council... and they have intimidated kings and princes by making them believe it would be an offense against God not to obey them in these knavish, crafty deceptions" (Martin Luther). The Church also offered religious legitimacy for the powerful and prosperous, consequently stripping necessary freedoms of the less fortunate. Luther argues this Catholic prejudice and states, “ it is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests, and monks are to be called the ‘ spiritual estate’; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the ‘ temporal estate’... all Christians are truly of the ‘ spiritual estate,’ and there is among them no difference at all but that of office" (Martin Luther). As many authoritative figures are created by the aim and control of wealth, so too was the Catholic Church; the relationship between the Church and its followers themselves was based on the compensation money. “ It is the will of the Creator, that the higher shall always rule over the lower. Each individual and class should stay in its place and perform its tasks" (pp. 480). Therefore, through the Church’s teachings, the pope was given enormous power in various ways–authorities that were soon to be largely abused. Relics, so called “ artifacts" nearest to Jesus on Earth, were sold by the Church and purchased through citizens in hopes of pleasing God (materialistically, through money to empower the Church). These relics were comprised of straw, feathers, or wood, and were officially sanctioned by the Vatican. Another criticized act of the Church was the selling of indulgences.

The pope, being God's sole representative on Earth, sold pre-signed certificates pardoning sins and permitting access to heaven, allegedly elevating one's status in the eyes of God. The years in the reign of the Catholic Church similarly reflected foundations of dictatorship in some ways: there was no toleration of indifference to authority of any sort; they made the law and determined the "true interpretation" of the Bible; and essentially filched money from Western Europe for—not just for the betterment of the Church itself, but for the personal supremacy of the pope, bishops, and other religious authorities. For example, Martin Luther illustrates the immoralities demonstrated by the clergy as well as their belief towards interpretation of the Bible: "They wish to be the only Masters of the Holy Scriptures, even though in all their lives they learn nothing from them. They assume themselves as sole authority, and with insolent juggling of words they would persuade us that the pope... cannot err in matters of faith; and yet cannot prove a single letter of it... they think the Holy Spirit never leaves them, be they ever so unlearned and wicked, they make bold to decree whatever they will... the [Church] was not ordained for doctrine of government, but only for the binding and loosing of sin" (Martin Luther). Works throughout Protestant Reformation motivated individuals, even held them responsible, to challenge the authority of the clergy, to direct a focus on scripture alone, and to rid the religion of manipulating rule-based administration. John Winthrop, a Puritan colonist in America, sought equality and moral righteousness, rather than authority over one another. Based more on scripture, he applied submission to God, "accounting ourselves knit together by this bond of love, and live in the exercise of it" (A Model of

Christian Charity). Reformation additionally stimulated new ideas of free will, works of the faith, and predestination—characteristics debated beyond the 20th century. The Catholic Church regards predestination in which salvation is made available to all, even those who are not explicitly part of the Church; all are predestined for salvation (in heaven). John Calvin reasons that humans are given free will to choose or refuse God's offer of salvation, but that we should not question God's will of salvation or damnation. Rather, predestination is sought of God's eternal decree, which He determines what He willed to become of each man. "When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things always were, and perpetually remain under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things are present" (Institutes of the Christian Religion). Works of faith also serve as a complement to faith in Catholic salvation. Faith essentially places us in a relationship with God, and without it, limits His grace in our lives. However, Protestant views sought good works as unnecessary in the Church, as we cannot earn salvation through individual efforts—God's grace is a gift that is not earned through good works. In the mid-sixteenth century, the Catholic Church provoked a Counter-Reformation in efforts to revitalize religious Church membership and diminish skepticism. "Catholics clarified and reaffirmed their unique doctrines and practices, such as the authority of the pope, priestly celibacy, the veneration of saints and relics, and the importance of tradition and good works, all of which Protestants had rejected" (pp. 723). Catholics placed new emphasis on education of priests and their supervision, censorship of books, fines, exile, and penitence. This Counter-Reformation sparked individual spirituality and personal piety.

Essentially, the Protestant Reformation fostered a very new sense of individualism and duty. People were now encouraged to read and interpret scriptures for themselves in the efforts of salvation without the material, spiritual, and authoritative payment to the Catholic Church. These new characteristics and questioned thinking created the spawning of globalization in Europe and America with the onset of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. Revitalization of Christianity is argued to be a prime suspect of Europe and America assenting into global powers in the following centuries.