

To what extent did the reformation transform europe? essay

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To what extent did the reformation transform Europe? Revolution resulting to disintegration of the unity of Roman Catholic Church is called reformation. Christian revolution took place in 16th century although it had started earlier.

Reformation can be traced from different development during medieval time. Some of the development which preceded revolution were, Leadership vacuum by the Roman Catholic leadership system, development of printing press, outbreak of Bubonic plague famously known as the Black Death resulting to death of a third of the population, influx of pagan literature and finally raid of Muslim Turks conquering Balkans[1]. Roman Catholic political system was the major contributor to the major reformation of Christian Church in 16th century. This system was blamed of widespread corruption guided by unbiblical doctrines and superstitions. Worst of all was sale of the church position with the higher bidder being able to top most post and church encouraging its follower to buy salvation accompanied with claims of extravagance of Papacy[2]. Although 16th century Church revolution is the most remarkable revolution, Christian Church revolution had earlier started in 12th century with emergence of Waldensians a gospel movement trashing Roman Catholic Church. This movement translated the bible into French advocated for study of bible and life accordance to its teachings. According to Hammond, a group was lead by Peter Waldo which would later suffer persecution of the papacy hence thousand of Waldensians were murdered others fled.

Waldensians can be said to be the oldest and the beginning of Christian church reformation[3]. Breaking of the plague in the ancient Europe has been sighted as a factor resulting to reformation of 16th century. Black Death caused by plague made John Wycliffe a professor at Oxford University search the Holy Scripture hence salvation in Christian. He led the England in the in controversy with the Roman Catholic Church and championed the independence of England against the papal administration. He led boycott to paying taxes to Pope by the King Edward leadership. Wycliffe questioned some of the practice carried by the Roman Catholic Church for example; he condemned corruption, superstitions practices and the claim on the power to forgive sin by the church leadership and confirmed that only God had such powers.

Wycliffe translated the New Testament which resulted while his friend by Nicholas translated Old Testament but later excommunicated from Catholic Church and imprisoned by the Roman Catholic Church authorities. Wycliffe translation of the New Testament was followed by convincing lay preacher to read and preach the word of scripture in English. According to the law of the time Wycliffe was summoned before the Pope's council but refused making a renewed effort to reformation. Later, Wycliffe writings on the reformation played a major role as they acted as inspiration of the later reformers for example Luther and Huss and making him as the father of reformation[4]. According to Hammond, Huss continued Wycliffe fight of exposing the failure of leadership of Roman Catholic Church and translated his writing into Czech. On attempt by Roman authority to persecute him, he was protected by

emperor but together with his follower continued to be guided by motto 'truth conquers'.

Reformer continued to mushroom in protest against corruption and immorality which was rampant in the church. This resulted to having social reformers campaigning for integrity and moral standard in the Church authorities and doctrinal reformer[5]. Doctrinal reformers preached against teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. A good example of doctrinal reformer was Martin Luther who went against various principle of Roman Catholic Church. On the issue of the authority which was vested to the leadership of the church or council headed by papal, he was opposed to it. Luther claimed that it is only the bible that had authority above every thing and not the council as it was claimed by the Roman Catholic Church. On the issue of salvation, Luther went against the Church claim that it had the power to salvation and taught that salvation is only at discretion of the God alone and atonement of Christ but not pope. According to Luther all the true believer or the follower of the word of God qualified to the priesthood.

This was a contradiction of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church on the priesthood. The claims were followed by 31st October 1517 95 thesis posted by Luther in Wittenberg marking the beginning of the major reformation[6]. This thesis challenged the practice of indulgence and his challenge to the papacy was renown all over Europe. Challenged due to his stand on the scripture's teachings he claimed that Pope and the council have always erred and contradicted the scripture and said that his stand,

reasoning and conscience is subject to scripture. This caused Luther to be an outlaw, authorities after his head and stayed with foreign protection.

Against the will of the Roman Catholic Church, Luther translated both Old Testament and New Testament in 1534 and 1522 respectively into German. Power of writing is another major contributor to the reformation. It was used by all major reformists starting with Wycliffe and Huss who instituted bible study and reform. Agenda of the first reformers did not spread well due to lack of a proper printing technology hence limited distribution. Martin Luther reformation had a major impact due his realization of the power of printing.

According to Hammond, he wrote efficiently more than 400 titles, aimed at enlightening the society on Catholic superstitions, abuses and teaching that contradicted word of the bible. To him power of writing was a gift from God as it was able to convey God's message long after the preacher delivered his message. Luther's realization of power printing was followed by flooding Germany with 400000 copies of his reformation work and making of Germany bible. Translation of bible to bible language by Luther, inspired translation to other local languages of England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Iceland against the will of the Roman Catholic Council. Described as the world's first great journalist, Luther's printing contributed to most remarkable reformation. His art of translation change the history in that common language was introduced as opposed to scholarly Latin only practiced and known by the educated elite. Luther contributed to more understanding of the Bible literature through production of broadside pamphlets containing understandable materials even to semi literates.

Other reformers in 16th century were John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli among others. Calvin became a great reformer of Geneva after he fled persecution from Roman Catholic Empire to France. Zwingli a young priest studied the bible and realized the Roman Catholic teachings and practice contradicted the words of the scripture hence his reformation mission[7]. Reformation resulted to major transformation in social, political, religion Europe. It greatly impacted on the language development and education which initially were on the Italian language which was only understood by the elites of the society. Lutheranism contributed immensely to development of language. Printing and translation of the bible to Germany language inspired other reformers to translate scripture in the language suiting them hence development of various languages.

Initially the printing according to the Roman Catholic authority was to be in the in scholarly Latin meaning development of other language was not possible. Therefore reformation resulted to development of other language since bible and its teachings pamphlets were done in local understandable language making local people to learn their language. Initially, European people were restricted to learn the scholarly Latin language as it was the only monopoly language through which important literature such as Bible was written in. Before reformation in Europe, Roman Catholic religion dominated all forms of people lives.

Reformation resulted to start of protestant churches opposed to the Roman Catholic claims that God appoints Pope directly and his power to guarantee salvation and give pardons. Other practices resulting to breaking of Roman

Catholic Church were purchasing of souls out of purgatory. Issue of forgiveness marked another form of controversy. No one could receive forgiveness without intermediary from the priests. 95 thesis presented by Martin Luther resulted to disintegration of Roman Catholic power and masses[8]. Power enjoyed by the church council was put in argument by the masses questioning its legitimacy.

This resulted to Church losing some of its people following Luther's teachings and arguments. Some of the major arguments questioning legitimacy of Roman Catholic were direct relationship to God as opposed to believed through Pope who was said to have been appointed by God. Questioning of the Catholic Church wealth and standing like the most powerful institution, Member of Church Council lived like emperors and involvement in political issues. Selling of the services such as marriage and baptism for a fee, selling of letter meant for forgiveness of people's sins. This made it easy for the reformation agenda to take roots hence emergence of protestant churches throughout Europe[9]. This resulted to change of perception for example, the issue of purgatory buying their way to church changed, new churches accepting them out of goodness and love. Luther's thesis challenged the issue of buying pardon and salvation resulting to loss of monetary funds. Reformation resulted to losing of the masses which translates to loss of political power.

Roman Catholic initially enjoyed collection of taxes channeled from peasants to landowner then to the king who would remit money collected to the Pope. Kings were getting financial assistance from the when needed from the

Roman Catholic Church. This means that Catholic Church was a powerful form of Authority as it enjoyed international powers[10]. Reformation resulted to limitation of these powers as the kings' had option of remitting collected taxes or use without confirmation of the church. That is, reformation gave the kings discretion of collecting taxes without consulting Roman Church authority making lose of power and control previously enjoyed by the church.

[11]Independence of collection of taxes and control of tax distribution resulted to individual countries being able to raise their own army and able to defend their independence against Pope's army. This resulted to emergence of independent entities from ruling of Pope marking loss of power. Emergence of many other religions in Europe can be traced from reformation. Protestant Churches in Europe can be traced from reformation times. Churches established stressed for individual relationship with God as opposed to Roman Catholic Pope Power of intervention between humanity and God. Reformation resulted to cultural and social changes. For example, Pope Leadership advocated for church teaching to be conducted in Latin language. Reformation resulted to translation of scripture teaching into different local languages.

[12] This opened for local churches to enjoy service on their local vernacular as opposed to the directive of Pope on use of Latin language. This resulted to development of many languages as opposed to Pope Doctrine promoting one language. Translation of bible as a result of reformation made scripture teaching to be read and understood by many people in Europe.[13] Initially

only society elite and people understanding Latin language could read the bible making many people to convert to Christianity. Art of translation resulting from reformation contributed immensely in development of education. Universities were established in different part of Europe from the basis of translation of academic materials for example university of Koenigsberg in Prussia and Tartu University in Sweden based on translation of texts.

[14]Reformation resulted to Counter Reformation a Catholic movement against Luther's claim and Lutheranism which had already taken root in Europe. Counter Reformation grew as a religion movement which was supported by Jesuits who are known for their contribution in charitable, education and missionary works.[15] It also resulted to anti-Semitism where both Roman Catholic and Protestant became against Jews restricting and forcing them to stay in segregated areas. Reformation was a form of witch hunting of Roman Catholic leadership which made many people to be killed in effort to counter the reformation wave. Bibliography: Hammond, Peter: The Reformation, (2006).

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