

Protestant reformation: martin luther's 95 theses essay sample

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The sixteenth century, known as the Renaissance, was a time of momentous change in Europe. This time period impacted the World in many ways including the arts, music, literature, science, and religion; however religion made the biggest impact to the culture (MacCulloch, 107, 2). Religion was integral to every part of the culture; the image of Christ was the focal point its paintings, the Church was part of government, and sponsor of architecture. The Roman Catholic Church was the most extensive and powerful institution in Europe during the Renaissance. The seeds of religious turmoil were the result of corruption in the Roman Catholic Church. Priests and religious leaders started to become greedy with their power. Being the only ones that could read the Bible because translations were only in Latin, they started misquoting the Bible for their own personal advantage. One major issue of corruption were indulgences which were documents issued by the Roman Catholic Church that were used to redeem sins(Estep, William R, 117).

Martin Luther realized indulgences were not mentioned in the Bible and he decided to go against the teachings of the Catholic Church by writing the 95 Theses which led to the Protestant Reformation (Thompson, Stephan P, 15-16). The history of Martin Luther and the 95 theses represents a major turning point in world history because the Protestant Reformation started by Martin Luther reshaped the political and social life of European Society.

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleban, Saxony (Germany). His father wanted him to be successful in life. He made sure his son attended Latin school in order to have a great education (Estep, William R, 113-114) His father was determined for him to be a lawyer, but Martin had

different plans; he wanted to dedicate his life to God. (Bainton, Roland H, 1976). He became a monk and he entered the Augustinian friary. In 1507 he became an ordained priest and in 1508 he began teaching theology at the University of Wittenberg (" Martin Luther", 2003). Martin Luther was a dedicated monk. He fully dedicated himself to fasting, long hours in prayer, and reading the Bible.

He spent an entire year indulging himself into the Scriptures to order to fully understand them. During this time, he also began questioning the church leader's teaching of his day. Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar, was a commissioner for indulgences. He was sent by Pope Leo X of the Roman Catholic Church to Germany in order to sell indulgences to raise money to build St. Peters Basilica in Rome (MacCulloch, 609, 1). Johann Tetzel made the people believe that if they bought an indulgence their sins would be forgiven and their families would be rescued from Purgatory(Ganss, Henry, 2012). Martin Luther believed, from reading St. Paul's letters in the Bible, indulgences do not offer forgiveness of sins since only the Lord does (MacCulloch, 606). He was furious when his students bought indulgences after hearing the preaching of Johann Tetzel. Martin Luther decided to take matters into his own hands. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted the 95 theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The theses were addressed to Albert of Mainz protesting the sale of indulgences and were written in Latin. (Estep, William R, 119)

The church leaders were intended to be the only ones who could read the theses but they were quickly translated into German. The translated 95

theses revealed to the people the non-Biblical practices of the Catholic Church such as purgatory, indulgences, and the teaching of salvation through good works (" Martin Luther: Ninety- Five Theses (1517)"). Before the 95 theses were posted in Wittenberg, no monk had ever spoken against the Church before, especially in that way that Martin Luther did (" Luther Posts His 95 Theses, October 31, 1517.", 2003). Within a short time, Martin Luther's 95 theses greatly influenced the people of his day. The printing press allowed people to read Martin Luther's teaching in their native language. Only two weeks after he posted the theses, Luther's ideas spread throughout Germany and by two months they spread throughout Europe. The entirety of European society wanted to read them and many agreed or disagreed with the teachings of Martin Luther. Johann Tetzel was one of the many Catholic leaders that disagreed with Luther's teachings and was Luther's first public antagonist. Tetzel knew that the theses were written about him and his teachings (Ganss, Henry, 2012). When people read Luther's theses; they soon began to realize how bad indulgences were and became very angry with Tetzel.

His indulgence sales went way down and he became very upset with Luther (Estep, William R, 124-125). Martin Luther's intent was for the pope to remove the sale of indulgences because he felt that it corrupted the Church, and he also questioned the existence of purgatory. Gabrielle Della Volta, a newly elected leader of the Augustinian monks, was another antagonist who wanted to silence Martin Luther (Estep, William R, 121-122). Pope Leo X ordered him to discipline Luther and silence the Augustinian monks in the

Catholic Church. Luther, being an Augustinian monk, was not happy about this order and was summoned to appear before the German Augustinians to debate to the Church leaders. Luther never went because one of his close friends advised him not to go (122). The Catholic Church called him a heretic and excommunicated him from the Church. Martin Luther was falsely accused (MacCulloch, 610, 1). Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation which was a major turning point in world history (MacCulloch, 608, 1).

Before the posting of 95 theses and Protestant Reformation was the only one Christian church in Europe, which was the Roman Catholic Church and it greatly influenced government and its rulers. At this time there was separation of Church and State which allowed the government to not be controlled by the Catholic Church any longer. Instead of the state being in control of Church hierarchy, leaders are now closer to the people instead of answering to Roman authorities. After publication of the 95 theses many rulers in Germany saw the corruption of the Catholic Church. As a result, the teachings of Protestantism appealed to them (Ziegler, Philp G, 2012). Many leaders, as well as common people, believed that the Roman Catholic Church used their tax money for the benefit of Rome exclusively. The Protestant Reformation started a new Christian tradition that influenced European society and changed the governments of almost half of Europe. Luther made it clear that he wanted the "liberty of a Christian" which was the freedom of all the restrictions of the Catholic Church. People started using their new

identify of self-determination to change government and seek individual liberty.

The Protestants wanted to read the Bible for themselves (Thompson, Stephan, 21-22). The printing press allowed the Bible to be translated into the major tongues of Europe which were German, French, and English. For common person to read the Bible in their own language was revolutionary. People were able to read the Bible themselves instead of listening to the priest. Protestant church services were conducted in the common tongue instead of Latin. People started to use their own judgment in order to make sure the church teachings were in line with the Bible (MacCulloch, 120-121, 2). Many Christians throughout Europe however still had questions.

Christians wanted to know the answer to four primary questions. How a man could be assured forgiveness of sins and gain access to Heaven? Where does religious authority lie? What is the church? And how should a Christian live his life? Luther answered the first question by saying a man cannot be saved by his good works but only through faith. The second question he answered saying that religious authority is not in the Catholic Church but in the "Word of God" which is the Bible. The third question Luther stated that the whole community of Christian believers make up the church and are priests.

The last question, he replied that one serves God through one's calling.

Luther called these four questions the four central Protestant beliefs (Williston Walker, Norris A. Richard, Lotz W. David, Handy T. Robert, 419-423). These questions allowed individuals to have self-determination in their own lives and they did not have to listen to the church any longer. A major

consequence of the Protestant Reformation was the Thirty Years' War. This war was the most destructive conflict in Europe before the twentieth-century World wars. The war was a conflict over the Holy Roman Empire's power and its authority over the political and religious orders in Europe. The Protestants no longer wanted to answer to the Holy Roman Empire any longer and instead wanted to be independent. This war resulted in the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire as the only governing power in Europe. The war set religious boundaries between Catholic and Protestant majority countries that are still in place in Europe today. (MacCulloch, 644-647) 495 years ago, Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation by writing his 95 theses as a disagreement with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church (Williston Walker, Norris A. Richard, Lotz W. David, 420).

The Protestant Reformation became a major turning point in world history because of its change to society. The Protestant Reformation led to the Thirty Years War which resulted in the Holy Roman Empire not being the center control over the government and the people. The Roman Catholic Church became separate from many of the governments of Europe and would again be the central power. Catholic leaders disagreed with Luther's teaching and called him a heretic but could not stop the reformation. The impact of the Protestant Reformation created many protestant Christian denominations which all differ slightly from each. Today the largest protestant denomination in the world is the Lutherans with 75 million members (Zieglar, Philp G, 2012). Lutheranism appealed to the Protestants because it was all the teachings of Martin Luther is what started this whole

revolution (Quere, Ralph W, 2012). The consequences of this turning point were the Thirty Years war between Catholics and Lutherans. This war was a very devastating war but had many positive outcomes like the priest no longer controlled the people. Overall, political and social Europe would not be how it is today if the Protestant revolution never took place.

Annotated Bibliography

Citations- Primary Source

Bainton Roland H. Here I stand A life of Martin Luther. Nashville Abingdon press 1976.

This book helped me understand Martin Luther's life which was very important to my paper.

Estep, William R. Renaissance and Reformation. Grand Rapids, Michigan. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

Gabriel Della Volta was important to my paper because he tried to silence Luther's teachings. He summoned Luther to appear before the German Augustinians at Heidelberg.

" Luther Posts His 95 Theses, October 31, 1517." DISCovering World History Detroit: Gale, 2003. Student Resources in Context. Web. 14 Oct, 2012.

Luther wanted Pope John Tetzel to remove any penalties imposed on a man by God, attacked sale of indulgences, and questioned the existence of

purgatory. The reason why this was important to my paper is because these were the reason why Luther wrote the 95 theses.

MacCulloch Diarmaid. Christianity The First Three Thousand Years. New York: Penguin Group, 2010. (1)

The Thirty Years War was one of the severe consequences of the turning point. The war was between Catholics and Lutherans in the German states. The impact of the war was there are now religious boundaries in Europe that are still in place today. The thirty years war is important to my paper because the war in Europe because it demonstrated the religious rivalry in Europe during this time.

MacCulloch Diarmaid. The Reformation A History. New York: Penguin Group, 2003. (2)

This book talked about how Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation was an Accidental Revolution. This was important to my paper because it showed me that Martin Luther was not trying to start this.

" Martin Luther." DISCovering Biography. Detroit: Gale, 2003. Student Resources in Context. Web. 14 Oct. 8 2012. <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CEJ212101143&V=2.1&v=browardcpsit&it=r=&p=GPS&SW=W7>

Martin Luther was born in a world of great turmoil with the Catholic Church. Martin Luther shaped the " Age of Faith" of his day. The " Age of Faith" influenced the Protestant Reformation which is what my paper is about.

<https://assignbuster.com/protestant-reformation-martin-luthers-95-theses-essay-sample/>

" Martin Luther: Ninety- Five Theses (1517)." The Library of Original Sources, Vol 5. Milwaukee, Wisconsin; University Research Extension CO., 1907 World Book Advanced Web. 5 Oct, 2012.

This article from World Book Advanced helped me understand Martin Luther's 95 theses. The article showed me the importance of each one and their impact to his society.

McKay, Hill, Buckler, Crowston, Wiesner-Hanks, Perry. A History of Western Society. Boston, New York. Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2011.

My AP European History book helped me realize the importance of Martin Luther's work. The biggest impact was the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were a major topic of the 95 theses.

Quere, Ralph W. " Lutherans." World Book Advanced. World Book, 2012. Web. 14 Oct. 2012.

Lutherans is the largest Protestant denomination in the world and has 75 million members. Lutherans were the positive outcome of Martin Luther's teachings.

Thompson, Stephan P. The Reformation Turning Points in World History . San Diego Greenhaven Press, 1999.

Luther's teaching went straight to the hearts of those trying to win salvation by good works. Luther taught them that salvation was my faith alone not by good works. This is very important to my paper because Catholics taught the

people that salvation was by faith and good works but Luther said its faith alone.

Williston Walker, Norris A. Richard, Lotz W. David, Handy T. Robert. A History of the Christian Church . New York, New York. Scribner 1985

A Histoy of the Christian Church taught me the importance of the Protestant reformation and the consequences; that is how it helped my paper.

Zieglar, Philp G. " Protestantism" World Book Advanced. World Book, 2012. Web. 14 Oct, 2012

Protestantism was started by Martin Luther. Today hundreds of Christian denominations differ slightly from one another.

Citations- Secondary Source

" 95 Theses" 8, October 2012. http://www.theopedia.com/95_Theses

Martin Luther posted the 95 these on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517. The castle doors were used as church bulletin boards this started the Protestant Reformation.

" Wittenberg Martin Luther and the 95 theses." 8, October 2012. <http://www.uncommon-travel-germany.com/wittenberg.html>

Wittenberg Germany is the city were Martin Luther lived and preached. Victors still come from all over the world to see this historic city.

Ganss, Henry. "Johann Tetzel." The Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 14. New York : Robert Appleton Company, 1912. 14 Oct. 2012 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14539a.htm>.

Johann Tetzel was one of the first priests to advertise the sale of indulgences saying they would bring full forgiveness for one's sins or release from purgatory for a loved one. His teachings urged Martin Luther to write the 95 theses.