

# What was the protestant reformation? essay sample

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By the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church's corruption was beginning to spread. Simony, or the buying of church offices, was common along with pluralism which was the appointment of multiple bishops in multiple areas. Tithing had become mandatory to support the church's bloated clergy, yet it was the poorly paid servants who did the priest's duties. Meanwhile due to the invention of the printing press, common people were reading doctrine for themselves. All these factors sparked a major discontent with the church. With the Renaissance that proceeded and the French Revolution that followed, the Reformation completely altered the medieval way of life in Western Europe and initiated the era of modern history. Although the movement dates from the early 16th century, when Martin Luther first defied the authority of the church, the conditions that led to his revolutionary stand had existed for hundreds of years and had complex doctrinal, political, economic, and cultural elements.

A man by the name of Martin Luther became the focal point of this discontent when he published his 95 theses. One of the first issues he attacked was the selling of indulgences, or paying for one's sins in advance. He advocated that the Bible needed to be translated into common languages, namely German, and he preached an emphasis on individual belief. His writing spread so well through the printing press that by the middle of the 16th century half of the German population had adopted the Lutheran religion.

In England, another reformation took place. Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon was not producing a son, so Henry wanted a divorce. When the pope refused to grant the divorce, Henry severed all ties with him, <https://assignbuster.com/what-was-the-protestant-reformation-essay-sample/>

and made himself the Supreme Head of the Anglican Church, or simply put, the pope of England.

Meanwhile, in France yet another reformation was started by a man named John Calvin who had fled to Geneva because the French Monarchy suppressed Protestants. In Geneva, Calvin built a model protestant community where he taught of pre-ordination and outlawed such things as gambling and swearing.

In response to the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church began to see the need for change. The changes began to take place between 1545 and 1563 at the Council of Trent. At these meetings simony and pluralism were ended. The inquisition became a church wide movement.

Another group that was important in defining the Catholic Reformation was the Society of Jesus. The founder of the society, Ignatius Loyola, required that all members receive an advanced education in theology, philosophy, classical languages, literature, history, and science. This education and their dedication to the Roman Catholic Church formed a very effective group of missionaries.

The religious tensions that formed between Catholics and the Protestants grew out of control and even brought on wars, including the Thirty Years war. This war started when a Holy Roman emperor tried to force his subjects back into the Catholic Church.

Despite the diversity of revolutionary forces in the 16th century, the Reformation had largely consistent results throughout Western Europe. In

general, the power and wealth lost by the feudal nobility and the Roman Catholic hierarchy passed to the middle classes and to monarchical rulers. Various regions of Europe gained political, religious, and cultural independence. Even in countries such as France and the region now known as Belgium, where Roman Catholicism continued to prevail, a new individualism and nationalism in culture and politics developed. The Protestant emphasis on personal judgment furthered the development of democratic governments based on the collective choice of individual voters.

The destruction of the medieval system of authority removed traditional religious restrictions on trade and banking, and opened the way for the growth of modern capitalism. During the Reformation national languages and literature were greatly advanced by the wide dissemination of religious literature written in the languages of the people, rather than in Latin. Popular education was also stimulated through the new schools in England, Geneva, and Germany. Religion became less the province of a highly privileged clergy and more a direct expression of the beliefs of the people. Religious intolerance, however, raged unabated, and all the sects continued to persecute one another for at least a century.

Although the Reformation sparked mostly religious issues, it was also a political movement. Centralizing monarchs often used religious platforms to help them build stronger states and gain more authority. The Reformations also seemed to install a new work ethic in people, as if the more possessions they had only displayed God's blessing upon them. There was also more

value of ones individual self and a new view of women, as they too can go to heaven too.

### Bibliography

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