

# Reformation: sustainable women's clothing and accessories

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



For 1, 500 years, Western Christianity ran as a unified body. Although there were principalities, much of the power belonged to the church in the Holy Roman Empire. The popes at the time sold papal indulgences convincing purchasers that in exchange for money, a letter from the pope would grant them into heaven. Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote against these indulgences as well as other practices performed by the catholic church. He and his follower were reformers and believed that christianity should have less to do with a pope and more to do with the direct words from God in the bible. He pushed for the bible to be translated and mass-printed so that everybody could have a copy at their own homes for themselves to interpret. The reformers used hymns, paintings, pamphlets, and books to spread their beliefs. Using anti-pope and anti-church, equality, and God above all themes, they appealed to the population that was unhappy with the current system of governance. Two other men had attempted to spread the same message one hundred years before Martin Luther: John Hus (1369?-1415) and John Wyclif (1328-1384), though did have a following base, were not as successful as Martin Luther. The social, political, and economic conditions during Luther's time set up an audience that wanted change; change that Luther was offering. The peasants yearned for the rights they had enjoyed in previous times and objected the new taxes their landlords urged on them. They felt that the clergy was more focused on taking their money than providing spiritual leadership. The landowning nobles also felt the economic pressure as they were unable to keep up with inflating prices. The population grew opposed to the church taxes and tithes, and lost respect for the pope. Another stressor that added to the general feeling of instability was the

incoming military of the Ottoman Turks. The decentralized Holy Roman Empire left each territory vulnerable to military threats. The citizens of the Holy Roman Empire therefore were more inclined to follow the teachings of somebody who seemed to know what he was doing and provided stability. The territories of Germany were fighting for power and opposed to allowing the emperor any strong centralized authority, therefore there was no constant among laws or rule. This allowed a law that had once put an end to Luther's beliefs to be discontinued. The English rulers had ordered anybody participating in such beliefs to be burned, which is what inevitably killed Hus. With this law being abandoned, Martin Luther was able to succeed his mentors and proceed with his teachings.

All these reasons coupled with the growing presence of the printing press as well as the increasing literacy rates equalled to people being able to gain access to protestant propaganda, read it, and spread it. Martin Luther believed that the church practiced too many rituals that were irrelevant to Christianity. He saw the church as a scheme set up to take people's money "the papal dominion treats us altogether differently. It makes rules about fasting, praying, and butter-eating, so that whoever keeps the commandments if the pope will be saved and whoever does not keep them belongs to the devil". He believed true Christianity should rely more on the direct teachings of God and Jesus Christ: "In order to find a foundation, one man builds churches, another goes on a pilgrimage to St. James or St. Peter's; a third fasts or prays, wears a cowl, goes barefoot, or does something else of the kind. Such works are nothing whatever and must be completely destroyed. Mark these words: none of our works have any power

whatsoever. For God has chosen a man, the Lord Christ Jesus, to crush death, destroy sin, and shatter hell, since there was no one before he came who did not inevitably belong to the devil". Martin Luther believed that christianity had been misconstrued through the practices of the church and that the true meaning of the Lord's word was to be understood: " we might be saved by his works, which are alien to us, and not by our works". Lord, keep us steadfast in thy Word, And curb the pope's and Turk's vile sword". Here, Luther invokes fear in his audience by linking the pope in the same dangerous category as the Turkish invaders that struck fear in the people.

The reformers used seriously anti-pope and anti-church themes in their propaganda, often depicting the pope and clergy as the devil or demons, such as in a woodcut from a pamphlet that shows the pope and cardinals as devilish creatures in the pits of hell, handing out indulgences. Whereas above in what can be understood to be heaven are people practicing the two rituals protestants kept: baptism and communion. Further examples of the reformers discrediting the pope and clergymen include a picture from a pamphlet in Augsburg which depicts the pope and cardinals as wolves. This is a significant image because it is being displayed to those who are religious and are taking the bible more seriously now that they are able to read it for themselves. Wolves in the bible and through religious stories represent the devil and his doings. Martin Luther also devalued the power of the church at the same time as empowering the power of his followers. He believed that monks and priests believed they were godlike and wanted to make known that they were not: " you become a priest or monk in order to pray your

seven canonical hours and say mass, and you think you want to be godly. Alas, you're a fine fellow! It will fail you". The reformers wanted to strip the church of its power so that everybody was at an equal level, able to interpret the bible themselves and not follow any rituals that would feed the pockets of the clergy. Above all, the reformers wanted to bring the attention back to God. They felt the true meaning of christianity had been lost and that only by obeying the Lord and Jesus Christ could one be on the right path: " Salvation unto us has come by God's free grace and favor; Good works cannot avert our doom, They help and save us never. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone". The tactics that the reformers used in order to spread their messages were well thought out. By using hymns, they were able to have tunes cling to the memories of those who hummed them.

This way they would be repeated and spread. Literacy rates were increasing and so short readings in the languages of the audience were obviously useful in spreading the messages. However for those who could not yet read, the paintings and pictures depicted strong messages that completely undermined the church's authority over the people. It was a perfect storm that enabled Martin Luther to succeed so well in this reformation. The economic, social, and political situations at the time paved the path to the people. In wanting stability and structure, the population grasped at the teachings of Luther. Peasants and nobles wanting more and the instability of the Holy Roman Empire let the protestant revolution take place.