

A Re-examination of the Causes and Effects of the Protestant Reformation on the Contemporary Church

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Abstract

The study re-examined the causes and effects of the Protestant Reformation in the contemporary church. The reformation in the church was championed by the fore-runner reformers- John Wycliffe and John Hus and the 16th century reformers- Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and others. The aim of the study was to find out the root cause of the Protestant Reformation which was the rejection of the authority of Pope as well as many of the principles and practices of Catholicism of the time. The Catholic Church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries faced institutional problems because of the corruption in the church and the failure of the papal authority to provide spiritual leadership. The immorality and the corruption of the clergy were the order of the day. The positive effect of the Protestant reformation to the present-day church is that it resulted in the creation of many different Protestant faiths and churches around the world while the negative effect is that it led to the disunity of the church. The researcher adopted qualitative method in the course of his research which relied on the written books and other literary genre. The researcher found out that reformation became the basis for the founding of Protestantism, one of the three major branches of Christianity. The Reformation led to the change of certain basic tenets of Christian belief and resulted in the division of Western Christendom between Roman Catholicism and Protestant traditions.

Keywords: Reformation, Protestant, Church, Causes and Effects

Introduction

The Protestant Reformation that occurred in Europe in the 16th century was caused by the overall corruption of the church and wrong use of papal power (Nwangwu, 1991,1). The reformation began in 1517 and ended in approximately 1648. Its aim was to purify the church which has been desecrated and focus on the bible rather than traditions and immoral habits. During this period, people like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and Henry VIII tested the pope's power and doubted the church's authority to define church practice. Martin Luther challenged some of the techniques that were being used to extort money off people; an example of this is the sales of indulgences. Nwangwu (1991),

speaking on the desecrated church states that the church found itself gaining worldly or temporal power, even to the point where it could dictate to kings and princes, the attitudes they uphold till this day hence they want only their members to be at the head of all offices both in Government and in corporations (p.1). Many of the popes, bishops, priests and monks became more interested in political intrigue, worldly splendor and fame and the accumulation of wealth than in the saving of souls. According to Nwangwu, young men preferred priesthood to civil service especially in France.

By the time of the late Middle Ages, the private lives of the clergy, especially of higher clergy, were in general scandalous beyond description. Nwangwu (1991) continues to analyze the lives of the clergy thus:

Priests and monks, bishops and popes, were sunk in almost unbelievable immorality. The very leaders and teachers of the church, the shepherds of the people were corrupt. Both widows and beautiful ladies were harboured by the church leaders. All the money realized in the church were lavished on food and drinks (p.1)

The worst was the abuse of spiritual authority and power by the clergy. The generally accepted view before the reformation was that the salvation was impossible except through the good offices of the priests, the bishops and the pope. The clergy were careful to promote this view, wrapping up salvation in the seven sacraments, which they alone claimed the right to administer, as a commodity to be dispensed according to terms laid down by themselves.

Immorality among the clergy and distortion of religion itself were the basic cause of the reformation. Immorality grew out of a corrupted form of Christianity and could not be corrected except by the restoration of the gospel in its purity, simplicity and wholeness. The aim of the great reformers was not merely to improve morals, important as this was, but to cleanse the very spring of conduct by restoring the true faith (Nwangwu, 1991, p.3). It should be noted that there were many good priests and lay folk in the Dark Ages preceding the reformation and true Christianity was far from dead. If this had not been so, the reformation would, of course, have been impossible.

At the course of this, the researcher came up with some questions like:

What were the situations of the church before reformation?

How did the reformation begin?

What were the causes of Protestant reformation?

How did the reformation change the church today?

The aim of the study is to find out the root cause of the Protestant reformation in the contemporary church and one of the root causes was that the reformers rejected the authority of the pope as well as many of the principles and practices of Catholicism of that time. The

essential tenets of the reformation are that the Bible is the sole authority for all matters of faith and conduct and that salvation is by grace in God and by faith in Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries faced institutional problems because of the failure of the papal authority to provide spiritual leadership. Contemporary writings unquestionably indicate a state of increasing ecclesiastical corruption and inefficiency. The church leaders showed their inability to satisfy the people's longing for personal piety. The significance of the study is that the reformation became the basis for the founding of Protestantism, one of the three major branches of Christianity. The reformation led to the reformulation of certain basic tenets of Christian beliefs and resulted in the division of Western Christendom between Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant traditions. The study will also be a reference point to the new researchers in the field of church history.

Reformation and Protestant towards Understanding

The term "Reformed" according to Faber (2012) first arose in the sixteenth century to define those churches which were reorganized according to theological principles that distinguished them from the Roman Catholic Church (p.1). At that time, the complete name was "Churches that are reformed on the basis of Scripture" and since then the shortened form "Reformed" has become part of the official designation of numerous churches around the world. Looking at the biblical concept of reform, the Latin verb "Reformare" from which the English word derives, occurs twice in the Latin translation of the bible (Faber, 2012:1). According to Faber, the concept of reform, however, is a biblical one and appears throughout the Old and New Testament. True reformation is an act of God whereby in His covenant love, He directs His people back to His word and to the proper worship of Him. Examples of such reformation recorded in the Bible include: The reforms of Asa based on the laws and commandments of God and consisting in a return to true worship (II Chronicles 14); the rediscovery of the Book of the law during the reign of Josiah (II Chronicles 34-35) and the proper keeping of the Passover. The reforms recorded in Nehemiah 8, where the law is read, the covenant is reaffirmed, and the Sabbath-day worship is restored. True reformation occurs then when God directs believers to His word and the right worship of Him. The reformation of the sixteenth century was a reformation of this kind. As a theological term; then, reformation means reinstatement of proper service to God that is based on scripture. Faber, (2012) continues in his concept of reformation thus:

During the Middle-Ages, the word "reformation" was used commonly in the realms of law, society, and the church. For example, amendments and applications of legal regulations were labeled "reformations". In social life, the term meant renewal, or

revival of lost values. In the church, “reformation” meant institutional change occurred following a decision of a council (p.1)

In support of Faber’s view, reformation in English usage has become a specialized historical term that denotes the development of the Protestant confession and churches in the sixteenth century. From the perspective of universal history, it is a term denoting the specific period in time from 1517 until 1600.

Following the publication of “German History” in the Age of Reformation (1839) by the influential historian Leopold Von Ranke, “Reformation” was used widely in identifying this time period. While it refers especially to the changes which occurred in the church, “Reformation is not applied to the specific reformers but to the whole series of changes which occurred throughout Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Faber, 2012, p.3). Furthermore, while “Reformation” points in the first place to religious, theological and ecclesiastical change in the centuries; it is applied now to an increasingly broader range of topics. On his own, Ayegboyin (2021) opines “Reformation” as the religious revolution that took place in the Western church in the 16th century (p.7). According to him, the reformation became the basis for the founding of Protestantism. The Protestants sought to do things on the authority of the bible and the example of the early Christian church. In the process, reformation irrevocably split Christendom, ending ecclesiastical supremacy of the papacy (Ayegboyin, 2021, p.8). Untung (2019) avers that reformation was a grand act of emancipation from spiritual tyranny and a vindication of the sacred rights of conscience in matters of religious belief (p.5). According to him, the term “Reformation” directly gives the impression that something, namely Western European Christianity, is being renewed. The fact shows that the term “reform” is generally accepted as an appropriate designation for this movement because this movement is associated with the recognition of the need for a thorough examination of institutions, practices and understandings of the Western church. According to Untung, the term really helps to show that there are social and intellectual dimensions of the movement (Untung, 2019, p. 5).

The name Protestant first appeared at the Diet of Speyer in 1529 where some Lutheran princes presented a formal protest against the biased decision of Roman Catholic Emperor Charles V. The Latin word “Protestari” means to protest, it also means to declare formally. These two connotations are relevant. Thus, Protestants claim that their movement is not merely a movement against what was considered as errors of Roman Catholicism but that positively, it is a part of Western Christianity which made a declaration for a return to a faith and order based on scriptures and on continuity from the early apostolic church (Ayegboyin, 2021, p.8).

Fore-Runners of Reformation

John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

John Wycliffe was an English reformer who denounced the worldliness of the popes and emphasized the spiritual freedom of the righteous man. He was the first man to give the English people the whole bible during the reign of James III. He was a zealot and like zealots, he despised neutrality, and he got as much as he gave. Since his day, men have either praised him to high heaven or consigned him to outer darkness (Shelley, 2008, p.225). Shelley (2008) says that the hottest issue at the time of Wycliffe was “dominion” or “lordship” over men (p.225). The pope in 1377 condemned Wycliffe’s teaching. The church might have moved against Wycliffe at that moment but influential friends in England saw to it that the condemnation never went beyond threats. The long-range significance of Wycliffe’s teaching on dominion lies in its link with the reformation. It was the Wycliffe’s way of emphasizing the spiritual freedom of the righteous man. He was a possessor of “a dominion founded on grace”. According to Wycliffe, “Everyman, therefore, priest or layman, holds an equal place in the eyes of God and God gives no lordship to His servants without first giving Himself to them”. This personal relation between a man and God is everything; character is the one basis of office (Shelley, 2008, p. 226). According to Wycliffe, the mediating priesthood and the sacrificial masses of the Medieval Church are no longer essential.

This doctrine of “dominion founded on grace” proved to be only the first way of Wycliffe’s thunderbolts. He became more radical in his assessment of the church and its need for reform. His early views of papacy were shaped by his emphasis on apostolic poverty. He insisted that those who sat in St. Peter’s Chair should be, like the apostle, without silver or gold. According to him, the “Bible papacy” consisted in a poor and humble life, spent in the service of the church, setting before God’s people an example of Christian goodness. The pope should be the shepherd of the flock and the preacher who brings men to Christ (Shelley, 2008, p. 226). Horton (2006) on his own says that Wycliffe criticized the clergy for their concern with secular affairs, especially their attempts to control magistrates and rulers (p.463). Wycliffe said “it is for the clergy to attend to spiritual things, and if they fail in their high calling, the magistrate should discipline the priest”. In 1382-84, he made English translations from Latin Vulgate against the express opposition of the hierarchy to putting the bible into the hands of the common folk, whom, it was thought, it might corrupt.

The storms against him occasioned by these teachings, however, whereas nothing to the gale loosed when he tampered with the doctrine of transubstantiation, which made every mass a miracle. The power to change the consecrated bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper into the very body and blood of Christ was a central point of the medieval exaltation of the office of priest. He asserts that the early church held that the consecrated elements of bread

and wine were efficacious symbols of Christ's body and blood. Hence, Christ is present in the elements sacramental, not materially. The end of the sacrament is the presence of Christ in the soul (Shelley, 2008, p.229). Wycliffe's denial of transubstantiation gave his enemies their opportunities. His support dwindled to a small minority at Oxford. First, the chancellor and a council condemned his doctrines and forbade him to lecture. Then, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Courtenay followed with another council that condemned ten of Wycliffe's doctrines as heretical. By 1382, the reformer was effectively silenced at Oxford. He died in 1384.

John Hus (1360-1415)

This is another fore-runner of reformation. He was a well-known Bohemian, preacher in Bohemian language at "Bethlehem Chapel" in Prague. He had a genuine experience of conversion and proclaimed the Gospel with fiery zeal, condemning fearlessly the common vices. When the writings of John Wycliffe became known in Bohemia, Hus was attracted by his political doctrine and was sympathetic to his teaching on "predestination" and the church of the elect. Shelley (2008) states that Bethlehem Chapel gave Hus an unrivaled opportunity to circulate Wycliffe's teachings, including his criticisms of the abuses of power in the papacy (p.231). On the walls were paintings contrasting the behavior of the popes and Christ. The pope rode a horse, Christ walked barefoot. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, the pope preferred to have his kissed. (Shelley, 2008, p. 231). The Archbishop of Prague grew restless and complained to the pope about the spread of Wycliffe's doctrines. In 1411, Hus was excommunicated by Pope Gregory XII. As a result of this, a great popular tumult erupted. Hus made matters worse when he openly attacked the Pope's sale of indulgences for support of his war against Naples. This move, cost Hus the support of King Wenceslas, and when Prague fell under a papal interdict because of Hus, the reformer left for exile in Southern Bohemia. During this period of retirement, Hus, drawing heavily upon Wycliffe, wrote his major work "On the Church".

Nwangwu (1991) says that Hus filed an appeal to the General Council of Constance through the papal curia against his excommunication (p.8). The council was to sit at Constance and Hus was to attend with a grant of safe conduct from the Emperor Sigismund, the German King and Emperor elect. During the council meeting, Hus was charged with heresy and thrown into prison. The Emperor gave an order for his immediate release but was terrified into canceling it by the pope and cardinals. For eight months, he lay in prison in Constance. His defense was drowned with shouts of, "Recant! Recant!" He declared he would retract nothing unless it was contrary to God's word.

Finally, 6 July 1415, the day for his burning came. On the way to the place of execution, he passed through a churchyard and saw a bonfire of his books; he laughed and told the bystanders not to believe the lies circulated about him. On arriving at the execution ground,

familiarly known as “the Devil’s Place”, Hus knelt down and prayed. For the last time the marshal of the empire asked him if he would recant and save his life. Hus said, “God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought nor preached except with the one intention of winning men, if possible, from their sins. In the truth of the Gospel, I have written, taught and preached, today I will gladly die”. He was burnt at their request outside Constance by the civil authorities (Shelley, 2008, 232).

The 16th Century Reformation

Reformation in Germany

Reformation in Germany was championed by Martin Luther. Born in 1483, the son of a Saxon miner, Luther had every intention of becoming a lawyer until, one day in 1505; he was caught in thunderstorm while walking towards the village of Stotternheim. A bolt of lightning knocked him to the ground, and Luther, terrified, called out to Catholicism’s patroness of miners, “St. Anne, save me! And I will become a monk”. (Shelley, 2008, p. 238). After studying law for a while, Luther decided without consent of his father, to change to Theology. He entered the House of the Augustinian Eremites at Erfurt on 17th July, 1505 and worked very hard and was ordained Priest in 1507 (Abiom, 1988, p. 13). Luther was depressed with the state of the church. According to Abiom, Luther was dissatisfied with the way the pope was acquiring wealth. He felt that the general practice of Christianity in Rome was unsatisfactory. When Luther returned to Germany in 1511, he joined the staff of the University of Wittenberg newly established by the Elector Saxony, Fredrick the Wise, as Professor of Theology. Luther studied Greek to enable him read the Bible in the original Greek.

The Sale of Indulgences

Luther began to criticize the theology of indulgences in his sermon. The pope had directed that indulgences be sold so that money could be found for the rebuilding of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome and for finding money for a crusade against the Turks. (Abiom, 1988, p.14). Archbishop of Mainz drew a table of rates showing that the more indulgences you buy the more your sins are forgiven. In return for money payment, the buyer was promised full and complete absolution from all sins. If you bought for your dead relatives, their souls would immediately be released from purgatory and they would go to heaven. The Archbishop’s representative, the Dominican Friar, John Tetzel used every means at his disposal to raise the funds.

The Ninety-Five Theses

The theses were posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on 31st October 1517, declaring that the sale of indulgences led to such abuses that they ought to be condemned. Luther declared “those who assert that a soul straightway flies out of purgatory

as the coin tinkles in the collection box are preaching the invention of man”. Pope Leo X was disturbed about the Theses. He directed Cardinal Cajetan to meet and discuss the issue with Luther. The discussions were fruitless as Luther pointed out that the pope could sin. “The pope is fallible”. His authority cannot prevail over the Holy Scriptures. The pope realized that the battle with Luther was delicate because the Elector of Saxony and a great majority of the German princes supported Luther. The pope dispatched another learned theologian John Eck to meet Luther and persuade him to withdraw the theses. Abiom (1988) says that Eck appeared with a team of the theologians but once again the discussions were fruitless as Luther refused to withdraw the Theses (p.14).

The Bull of Excommunication

With the failure of Leipzig meeting, the Pope Leo X decided not to brook any more nonsense from Luther, so on 2nd June, 1520, Leo issued the Bull of Excommunication against Luther. In January 1521, the pope declared Luther a heretic and expelled him from the “one holy, catholic and apostolic church”. (Shelley, 2008, p. 242).

The Diet of Worms

The German problems now fell into the hands of the young emperor, Charles V, who was under oath to defend the church and remove heresy from the empire. He summoned the disputants (papal delegates and Luther) to a meeting in the city of Worms on 17th April 1521. The meeting (Diet) lasted for two days. On the first day, the papal delegates Girolamo Alexander addressed the Diet for two hours (Abiom, 1988, p.14). He pointed out that Luther was a heretic and should be burnt. After his address, the Diet invited Luther to state his case. Luther addressed the Diet on 17th April and ended up on 18th April, at the end of which he refused to recant, unless I am proved to be in the wrong by the testimony of the scriptures any evident reasoning”. The Diet of Worms ended without resolving the issues, because after Luther’s address there was a split among the members. Luther left Worms on 20th April, 1521, eight days after the meeting had ended. The Elector of Saxony, Fredrick the Wise, was impressed with the performance of Luther at the Diet. When he returned to Germany, he made his feelings known to his people. “Our Father, Dr. Martin spoke extremely well before the Emperor” he declared.

The Imperial Bull of Excommunication

The Emperor, Charles V was not impressed with Dr. Luther’s theology, even though Luther was a powerful speaker. According to Charles V, “this man will never be a Lutheran”. On 26th May, 1521, one month after Luther had left the city of Worms, the Emperor placed a ban on him. The imperial Edict put Luther to the Imperial Authorities. The die was cast but the Elector of Saxony defied both the papal and imperial bulls, continued to give Luther the necessary protection.

The Diet of Augsburg in 1518

An Imperial Diet took place at Augsburg from July to October, 1518, during the reign of Maximilian I, who died a few months later. The Elector Fredrick persuaded the pope Leo X to have Luther examined at Augsburg, instead of being called to Rome, where the Imperial Diet was held (Britannica, 2023). Between 12 and 14 October, 1518, Luther defended himself under questioning by papal legate Cardinal Cajetan. The pope's right to issue indulgences was at the center of the dispute between the two men. The hearings degenerated into a shouting match. More than writing his theses, Luther's confrontation with the church cast him as an enemy of the pope, "His holiness abuses scriptures", retorted Luther. Cajetan's original instructions had been to arrest Luther if he failed to recant, but the legate desisted from doing so. Emperor Charles V could not bring himself openly to discuss the matters of religious dispute and cause for division throughout Europe so he often stayed away from the sessions of the Diet. Instead, he sent his younger brother Ferdinand I to have authority over the discussions (Britannica, 2023).

The Diet was organized into three separate colleges, Prince-Electors, Ecclesiastical and Secular Sovereigns and Imperial cities. However, the Diet did not possess fixed rules or methods to conduct. Tradition for the Diet of Augsburg began to emerge in the 1530s and the sessions were to be conducted under these guidelines. Either the Emperor or the estates organized day-to-day business of the Diet and the proposition functioned as the agenda for the Diet but could be easily altered by the convention. The business of the Diet was conducted on three levels, the committees, the colleges and the plenary session. The Plenary sessions or colleges created the committees; this level was staffed by members of the Diet. The committees would prepare material that would be discussed by the colleges and once acted upon, the issue entered the plenary session stage, however, this was only ceremonial during the Diet of Augsburg (Britannica, 2023).

The Course of Reformation

Luther's stay in the castle was an advantage of the Germans. He gave them the Holy Bible-New Testament in their own language. The New Testament whose translation was completed in 1534, with Luther's hymn, became the pillars of reformation. According to Nwangwu (1991), the actual things reformed in Germany were as follows: The power of the pope must be destroyed and it was destroyed. Monks and Nuns must be freed from the burdensome vows. Financial system of selling church offices and sacraments must be stopped. The endowments diverted to pastoral care or for the poor. The priests should be placed on salary. The people are to be educated and taught the Holy Scripture. The priests are to be turned into teachers and preachers.

The mass was simplified and rendered intelligible. Recent doctrines which were not found in the Holy Bible should be removed (p.40). The guiding principle was based on the doctrine of justification by faith. Some states in Germany went faster and further in their reforming activities thus: The Holy Bible should be placed on every pulpit. Priests were allowed to marry and Luther also married. Worship should be conducted in German language though Luther in his own opinion said that German language be used where congregation is illiterate and use of Latin was permitted in places where educated people worshipped. Holy Communion be delivered in both kinds i.e bread and wine as against the Roman practice of giving only bread to the congregation. The doctrines and teachings of the reformers were canonized in the confession of faith which Melancthon presented to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, popularly known as the Augsburg Confession and since then became the doctrinal standard of the Lutheran church.

Reformation in France and Geneva

Reformation in France and Geneva was championed by John Calvin. Called “the greatest theologian and disciplinarian of the greatest age of the reformers”, John Calvin was born at Noyon, France, son of the secretary of the bishopric of Noyon. Calvin, a brilliant scholar, trained first for law and studied at Paris, Orleans and Bourges (Horton, 2006, p. 476). John Calvin was known for his influential Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536), which was the first systematic theological treatise of the reform movement. He stressed the doctrine of predestination, and his interpretations of Christian teachings, known as Calvinism, are characteristic of reformed churches.

John Calvin declared in the course of his reformation that God had a game and he was convinced of the game. He called it God’s Sovereign Will. Just like Luther’s central doctrine was justification by faith, so Calvin’s was the Sovereignty of God. Both reformers had an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God, but Luther’s served to point out the miracle of forgiveness, while Calvin gave the assurance of the impregnability of God’s purpose (Shelley, 2008, p.257). Calvin’s central belief is in the absolute sovereignty of God. According to him, God is the “Governor of all things”. In His own wisdom, from the remotest eternity, He decreed what He would do, and by His own power, He executes what He has decreed. If Luther’s ultimate text was “the just shall live by faith”, Calvin’s was “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Shelley, 2008, p. 261). Calvin saw the old doctrine of predestination- taught by Paul, Augustine and Luther as a source of religious devotion. More than a problem of the mind, Calvin considered divine election to eternal life the deepest source of confidence, humility and moral power.

While Calvin did not profess to know absolutely who was God’s chosen-the elect- he believed that three tests constituted a good yardstick by which to judge who might be saved:

participation in the two sacraments- Baptism and the Lord's Supper; an upright moral life; and a public profession of the faith. These were adequate for a disciplined church on earth. According to Calvin, man is not justified by works, yet no justified man is without works. No one can be a true Christian without aspiring to holiness in his life. This rigorous pursuit of moral righteousness was one of the primary features of Calvinism. Calvin taught that no man whether pope or king- has any claim to absolute power (Shelley, 2008, p.261). The Church is not subject to secular government except in obviously secular matters according to Calvin. On the other hand, the church has the obligation under the sovereign God, to guide the secular authorities in spiritual matters. Calvinism rapidly assumed international dimensions from Geneva to France, to the Netherlands and even Spain and Scotland.

Reformation in Zurich Switzerland

Parallel to events in Germany, a reform movement began in Zurich, Switzerland led by Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), a milder man yet a more radical reformer than Luther. Born in Wildhaus, Switzerland, Zwingli began to reform when appointed minister of Zurich Minster. He launched the reformation not by posting theses on the church door but by preaching biblical sermons from the pulpit. Dowley (2007) states that Zwingli, like Luther, taught that salvation came solely by God's initiative (p.108). Luther and Zwingli also agreed on many other issues, with the recently introduced printing press shuttling ideas rapidly between the two centers of reform. However, the two had a major falling out over their views of the Eucharist. Martin Luther broke with the Roman church on this as on many other issues, demanding that believers should be offered both bread and wine- not just bread, as in the Catholic Church. Luther likewise rejected the Catholic idea that the bread and wine became Christ's body and blood, he believed that these elements benefitted those who accepted them in faith, but the act of taking them in itself conveyed no automatic blessing. On the side of Zwingli, the Lord's Supper was solely a sign or metaphor, "this is my body" meant "this stands for my body". He believed that a vital part of the Eucharistic meal was the bringing together of Christians in communion. This tradition was followed by many other Protestant denominations (Dowley, 2007, p. 108).

In one important respect Zwingli followed the Bible even more stringently than Luther did. The Wittenberg would allow whatever the Bible did not prohibit; Zwingli rejected whatever the Bible did not prescribe. For this reason, the reformation in Zurich tended to strip away more traditional symbols of the Roman Church like candles, statues, music, and pictures. Later in England, men called this spirit "Puritanism". (Shelley, 2008, p.250).

Reformation in England

Reformation in England was carried out directly under Henry VIII who copied from neither Luther nor Calvin for model (Nwangwu, 1991, p. 43). England had two reformations; a constitutional one under King Henry VIII (1509-1547) and a theological one under the Puritans. The sole religious issue in England's initial reformation was papal supremacy. Henry intended no break with the old faith. He considered himself, a guardian of Catholic dogma. In 1521, in answer to Luther's attack upon the seven sacraments, the King had written a Defense of the Seven Sacraments. In it he had castigated Luther as a "poisonous serpent" and a "wolf of hell". In gratitude, the pope bestowed on Henry the title, "Defender of the Faith", a title, ironically, still boasted by the British monarch (Shelley, 2008, p.266).

After the break with Rome, England's orthodoxy remained intact. Henry continued to insist upon Catholic dogma within the realm. His goal was an English Catholic Church instead of a Roman Catholic one. The statute of Six Articles in 1539 upheld such Catholic articles as clerical celibacy, the private mass and confession to a priest. Only two serious changes marked the new way within the Church of England. The first was the suppression of the monasteries and the second was the publication of the English Bible for use in the churches. The translation of the English Bible was done by William Tyndale. Zeal to place the English scripture into the hands of common man burned in Tyndale's soul. After receiving his Ordination, Tyndale once expressed his frank amazement at the ignorance of the clergy. When a fellow priest resented this observation, Tyndale hotly replied "If God spares my life, before many years pass, I will make it possible for a boy behind the plow to know more scripture than you do", Tyndale translated portions of the Old Testament and brought an improved edition of the New. Church officials continue to hound him, however, in 1536, he fell into their hands. After seventeen months in prison, Tyndale went to his death- at the stake. His dying prayer was, "Lord, open the King of England eyes" (Shelley, 2008, p. 268). A year after Tyndale's death, the Matthew Bible appeared. It was the work of another English reformer name John Rogers, who thought it wise to send forth his translation without his name attached. The Matthew Bible was virtually a well-edited compilation of Tyndale and Coverdale's work. At Thomas Cranmer's request, however, Henry VIII authorized that this bible, revised by Coverdale and called the "Great Bible", be bought and read throughout the realm. Tyndale's dying prayer was answered- at least in part.

The trouble that broke out between Henry VIII and the pope arose from Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon (Nwangwu, 1991, p.43). The fact is that Catherine of Aragon was the widow of Henry's late brother, Arthur. Henry lived with Catherine for twenty-four years and got Mary as their only child but Henry wanted a son to carry on the Tudor line and Henry with others regarded it as a judgment for marrying his brother's widow. By the late 1520s, however, Henry wanted to divorce his wife Catherine as she had failed to produce a

male heir who survived to reproduce. When the pope refused to annul Henry's marriage, the king decided to get his way by breaking politically with the papacy. According to Dowley (2007), in 1533, Henry appointed Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The following year, his new primate granted Henry a divorce, thus freeing the king to marry his lover, Anne Boleyn, who was already pregnant with Henry's child, Elizabeth. (P.115). They had a boy called Edward VI. Anne was accused of adultery and was beheaded.

In 1534, an act of the so-called "Reformation Parliament" made Henry "supreme head" of the Church of England, so separating the Church of England from the Church of Rome. Nwangwu states that the separation was possible because for centuries, many English people have resented the intervention of the pope in their internal affairs. They regarded the pope as a foreign potentate and this was reflected in the legislation of the country (Nwangwu, 1991, p. 44). Secondly, the separation was possible because many people had read the scriptures in one way or the other and were openly critical of the Roman Church. When Henry died in 1547, he was succeeded by his nine-year-old protestant son Edward VI, who, through his advisers, unequivocally established Protestantism. Thomas Cranmer Book of Common Prayer was introduced in 1549, and a second more radical, edition placed it in 1552. Stained glass, holy shrines, statues of saints and other catholic practices were abolished in church buildings, and other requirements that clergy be celibate was lifted. Edward's protestant reforms were soon under threat when he died childless in 1553.

Reformation was reversed under Henry's daughter, Mary I (reigned 1553-1558). According to Dowley, the reforming legislation was repealed and England once more became officially Roman Catholic. Mary married the Catholic Philip II of Spain and did all she could do to reintroduce Roman Catholicism but never became pregnant. She had Thomas Cranmer burnt at the stake and appointed the Roman Catholic Cardinal Reginald Pole Archbishop of Canterbury in his place. In all, 283 Protestants are believed to have been burnt for heresy during Mary's reign (many of them commemorated in John Foxe's bestselling book of Martyrs, first published in 1563). He succeeded in giving Mary the name by which history still remembers her, "Bloody Mary" (Dowley, 2007, p.117). When Mary died, Anne Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth (reigned 1558-1603) inherited the throne and set about attempting to restore a moderate reformation and religious peace. In 1559, an Act of Supremacy made Elizabeth the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England. An Act of Uniformity (1559) forced people to attend Sunday worship in an Anglican Church and the Thirty-Nine Articles established Anglican doctrine. Cranmer's sonorous Book of Common Prayer also helped define the national church.

The Puritans

Elizabeth's reign saw to the emergence of Puritanism. Elizabethan Puritans were Protestants who, while agreeing that there should be a single national church, felt that the church had yet only been partly reformed. They wanted the Church of England to resemble more closely the Protestant Churches of Europe and especially Geneva. Some Puritans objected to "Catholic" passages of the Prayer Book, Church ceremonies and vestments, while others wanted church governance radically reformed and purified- hence the name "Puritan". Reforming Puritanism, and the Puritan mindset, however, survived and went on to influence the English Civil War- and English American life generally (Dowley, 2007, p.117). The Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible, translated under the sponsorship of Elizabeth's successor, James I and first published 1611, helped unite Protestantism and the English nation by providing what was to become the accepted Bible translation for the next 300 years, written in dignified, resonant yet accessible language (Dowley, 2007, p.117).

The Decline of the Powers of the Popes

After the Roman Empire had declined, the powers of the Popes began to decline too. The wealth being amassed by the church and the ostentatious living of the popes attracted the criticisms of many people. Writers like William of Ockham put up theories detestable to the popes. William argued that religious truths must be subjected to reason. Any so-called religious truths sponsored by the popes that could not stand the test of reason should be rejected. In this way, the power of the popes started to decline and so the Roman Church was losing its hold on the people. Another factor that led to the decline of the power of the popes was the declining importance of Latin. Latin no longer remained the language of diplomacy as many writers expressed their thoughts in their vernacular tongues.

The Struggle among the Popes

The struggle among the popes quickly led to the decline of the influence of the Roman Church in the Middle Ages (Abiom, 1988,12). As non-Romans ascended the papacy, Rome started losing its importance. When the ambitious Boniface VIII died in 1303, the cardinals abandoned Rome and went to Avignon in France, where they elected new pope in 1305.

The popes remained in Avignon for seventy-one years. It was Gregory XI who returned the papacy to Rome in 1376. When he died in 1378, the Roman population insisted on having a Roman as pope. Consequently, Urban VI was elected. When this pope became ruthless, passionate and vindictive, the cardinals declared him de-stooled. They elected another cardinal as pope Clement VII, not Clement VII of the Renaissance period (1523-1534). The

two popes struggled for supremacy. They divided the Roman Church into two warring groups. An attempt to reconcile them in 1409 failed. Some angry cardinals elected a third pope (Pope John) (Abiom, 1988, p.12). The matter was finally settled in the Council of Constance (1410-1418) which deposed all the three popes and elected Pope Martin V. These thirty years of struggle greatly reduced the influence of the popes and thus, of the Roman Church.

The Counter Reformation

It had been felt everywhere in Europe for at least a century, outside the Roman Church, that a reform of abuses in the Roman Church was of urgent necessity. In 1545, the Emperor Charles V of Spain constantly disturbed by the religious difficulties in Germany, persuaded Pope Paul III to call the Council of Trent. According to Nwangwu, the council met not less than twenty-five times from 1545-1563. The Emperor looked for reforms and reconciliation with the German Lutherans but nothing issued forth because the council was predominantly Italians and under the control of the pope. So, the Emperor could do nothing (Nwangwu, 1991, p.65). A reactionary party emerged under the leadership of Caraffa (later Pope Paul IV) gained a complete victory and dragged the council into fanaticism. This further inaugurated the Roman Church and restored its prestige which was shattered by the Protestant reformation movement. The Protestants maintained that every decision of the council must have its root in the scriptures. This horrified the papal legate. The Council took the following decisions: That the Latin Vulgate is the only authoritative version of the Bible; that they received with an equal feeling of piety and reverence the traditions; that the validity of the seven sacraments in bestowing grace meant on the believer and the necessity of some of them for salvation. The traditions have equal authority with the scriptures. They accepted the canonicity of the Apocrypha books of the Old Testament

They believe in the existence of purgatory, the value of invocation of saints, veneration images, relics and indulgences for pardons; that every Roman Catholic must accept the interpretation of scriptures given by the church. The Council issued a statement of faith by which a true Catholic could determine his orthodoxy. It was also enacted that all clergy must swear “I acknowledge the Holy Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church for the mother and mistress of all churches and I promise and swear true obedience to the Bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter, the Prince of Apostles and Vicar of Jesus Christ”.

At Trent, a number of abuses were corrected. The education of the clergy must be improved. Discipline was tightened and, in these ways, the Roman Church became more compact and effective instrument for the fight against Protestants. According to Nwangwu, another instrument the Roman Church used to suppress the Protestant was the “Inquisition”. This was a special ecclesiastical court with judicial powers to prosecute those they called

heretics. Pope Gregory IX claimed the office for the church and appointed Inquisitors. They were largely chosen from the Dominicans and Franciscans. If those accused of heresy refused to confess, they were tried before the Inquisitors assisted by a jury of clerics and laymen. The punishments include, in grave cases, confiscation of the person's goods, imprisonment, or firing at the stake by the secular arm (Nwangwu, 1991, p. 66).

The Society of Jesus (Jesuit Order)

The Society of Jesus was founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1534 and was approved by Pope Paul III in 1540. It has two-fold aims. To foster reform within the Roman Church especially in the face of problems posed by the Protestant reformation and to undertake missionary work among the heathens especially in the recently discovered parts of the world. The Jesuits decided to fight against the teachings of the reformers. To further the interest of the Roman Church, Loyola taught the Order that, "It is permissible to do evil that good may come", a principle which led to unspeakable wickedness. They proclaim the infallibility and the omnipotence of the Roman Pontiff; they often refused obedience to heretical rulers and even preached the duty of the ordinary Catholic to get rid of Protestant tyrants.

Reasons why the Counter Reformation Succeeded

- The Counter Reformation launched by the Roman Church succeeded for several reasons:
- The Protestants lost their early evangelical enthusiasm
- The controversial spirit grew among Protestants
- The papacy had the advantage of a thoroughly organized system
- The papacy was supported by Roman people among whom there was little or no reformation.
- The Roman Church profited much by the Reformation because it kept them at alert and she set her house in order.

The Effects of the Reformation

- It left the Roman Church, the same institution and above all, perpetuated the fundamental errors
- It sanctified abuses rather than abolish them
- In as much as the errors and failures which were necessary conditions for reform remained, she stuck to the doctrine of infallibility of the papacy in matters of faith and morals. So that the pope as it were, did the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

- It did not admit the Protestant criticism that the Roman Church gives false answer to the question, “*What shall I do to be saved?*”
- Above all, the blind followership advocated by Ignatius Loyola was backed by censorship of all reading materials by all Roman Catholic members and restriction on individual development of the mind. They were and are still denied the chance of individual expression and development in religious matters.

The Positive Effects of Reformation to the Present Day Church

There can be no doubt, however, that the Reformation has many afterlives. Above all, it has resulted in the creation of many different Protestant faiths and churches around the world. Today, Protestantism and other movements are expanding in Africa, Asia and Latin America, while continuing to have a strong presence in Europe and North America. As we can see, the Reformation had an impact on education as a whole and on history as a specific discipline. The reformation was a religious, social, economic and political revolution that was sparked when a catholic monk- Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of his local church. Ultimately the Protestant Reformation led to modern democracy, skepticism, capitalism, individualism, civil rights and many of the modern values we cherish today. The centerpiece of worship now became the sermon. All clergy and pastors had henceforward to preach, and all laypeople had to attend church. Protestant denominations wanted people to be able to read the Bible for themselves rather than have a priest tell them what was contained within its pages. The rights of women grew as a result of the reformation as well.

The Negative Effects of the Reformation on the Contemporary Church

While the effects of the Reformation on the contemporary church, education, politics and economic development seem to point to a largely positive picture, yet its negative effects cannot be overemphasized. One of the negative effects of the Protestant Reformation is the disunity of the church. When the church was one, the fellowship was one. Now, in our contemporary, all of the churches have their little groups and condemn other churches for not being the same. According to Hundu (2023), another negative effect of the Protestant Reformation was the “Thirty Years War” which lasted from 1618 to 1648 (p.9). He narrated the incident thus:

The Protestant Reformation led to the “Thirty Years” war of Germany which, to this day, Germans cite as the most devastating war in their history (even worse than World War I and II), the war in France between the Roman Catholics and the Huguenots; for Spain, Internal Separation from Europe through the destruction or exile of its Erasmian humanists and Protestants, for Italy, the religious expulsion of its religious non-conformists as well as their state police and inquisitions stifling

the inner life, and England distanced itself from the rest of Europe and broke away from all others with the Anglican Church. The reformation continued to set Western Europe against the Eastern Church, Russia and even to some extent against its own people, the underground of the masses. (p. 9).

Another negative effect of the Protestant reformation on the contemporary church is the immorality in the reformed churches today. What the Protestant reformers fought against is what is happening now in the so-called Protestant churches. The rate of immorality in the reformed churches today cannot be overemphasized. Also, materialism in the so-called Protestant churches cannot be overemphasized. Sowing of seeds and donations are one of the ways the Protestant churches extort their members.

From the above citation, one can see that reformation has both positive and negative effects on the church today.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that what happened during reformation about 500 years ago was the biggest upheaval in Western Church history. At its core, the reformation provided the break with the status quo needed to reorient the church to the gospel and its God. The results were remarkable, warts and all. Not all events during the reformation are praiseworthy, nor were its leaders always models of Christian character. Nonetheless, the Reformation's core ideas were potent and fueled the spiritual renewal of consequent generations. The conclusion of the whole matter was the Protestant emphasis on salvation by faith alone, (*sola fides*), scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) and the priesthood of all believers. Because they believed these teachings stemmed from the Bible, they encouraged publication of the Bible in the common language and universal education.

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