

What were the consequences of The protestant Reformation?

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The Protestant Reformation and Its Historical Significance

The protestant reformation was a period in the 16th century when some Christians broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. These marked the beginning of a new religious movement that laid more emphasis on the importance of the bible and that salvation could only be given to human beings by God and not through the intermediation of a priest, as the Catholics believed. This revolution caused religious, political, intellectual, and cultural upheaval all across Europe. This movement set in place new beliefs and structures that define the world in the modern era. In Europe, reformers like John Calvin and Martin Luther challenged the authority of a pope and questioned the Catholic Church on the way they viewed Christianity. This disruption caused a lot of conflict and persecution all across the continent. The counter-reformist, the Roman Catholic Church delayed but it was forced to respond to the protestant.

Martin Luther and the Origins of Reform

The reformists challenged various unbiblical practices that used to be carried out by the Catholic Church and called for a return to the sound biblical doctrine. The culminating event of the protestant reformation was when Luther posted his Ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517. (Luther, 1517/1883) As we focus on the background history of reformation and Protestantism it is important to have a clear understanding of the roman catholic church's belief in apostolic succession. This doctrine dictates that the catholic popes extend from the apostle Peter to the current pope. Due to this unbroken chain of command, they believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church and that the popes have power over all other churches. Because of their belief in apostolic succession and the position of the pope, Catholics place their church tradition and teachings equal to the scripture itself. These became one of the major differences between the protestant and the Roman Catholic Church. It later became one of the foundational issues which led to the protestant Reformation.

Earlier Challenges to Catholic Authority

Even before the protestant reformation, some groups of people would not agree to some unbiblical practices of the Roman Catholic Church. These groups of people were small and isolated. They included the Petrobrusians, Waldensians, and Lollards. Long before even Martin Luther started the Revolution, there were men who already had an understanding of the true gospel rather than that of the catholic church. These men included John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor who was later condemned as a heretic. We also had Jan Hus, who was a priest and was later to be burned for preaching a contrary gospel. We also had Girolamo Savonarola, who was an Italian and was hanged and later burned. Rather than the Catholic Church accepting to reform, they started conspiring on how they would silence the reformers. New churches had started emerging from the revolution. There were four major divisions of Protestantism, those who were followers of martin Luther formed the Lutheran church, followers of Calvin formed the reformed church, John Knox's followers formed the Presbyterian church later some protestants in England formed the Anglican church.

Five Principles of Protestant Theology

The protestant reformation wanted to explain some basic issues that pertained to Christianity. They sought to explain salvation in human beings, who have religious authority over another, what a Christian is, and how Christians can embrace a good Christian living. These issues were best explained by five biblical principles that separated Protestants and the roman catholic church. The reformers refused to put away this biblical doctrine even to the point of death. The first principle states that the bible alone has the sole authority over all matters of faith. They emphasized church at all traditions and parachurch should be based on the scripture. Secondly, the Protestants believed that salvation is by grace alone. It can further be explained as God's undeserved favor in humans, which means that we have been saved from God's wrath by his grace and mercies and not by our good works. The coming of Christ was the efficient cause of salvation. The grace of God comes to us through the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit, who introduces us to Christ by saving us from our sins, therefore raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life. Thirdly, they believed that salvation is by faith alone. They further explained that we are justified by our faith in Christ Jesus and not by any works of the law. It is by faith in Christ that human beings attain righteousness, which is the only standard required for a human being to be right with God. Moreover, they believed that salvation comes through Christ alone. They believed that no one else could save or have the power to save except Christ Jesus. They believed that the death of Jesus at the cross was what reconciled man with God. Lastly, they believed that salvation is for the glory of God alone. Salvation was brought to human beings through God's glory therefore Christians must worship and magnify him only. Christians also need to allow the presence of God to dwell in their lives. These were the reasons behind the protestant reformation.

The Catholic Counter-Reformation

The Catholic Church was forced to respond to the criticism laid down by the Protestants. They did this in very many ways during a period known as counter-reformation. The Counter-Reformation was taking place during the same period as the protestant reformation. (OpenStax, 2022) Some Roman Catholic individuals were defensive against the protestant revolution, but others called for reforms. Before the Counter-Reformation, there were a lot of critics of the policies, popes, and the clergy. The Catholic Church created new religious groups, which included the Ursulines, Capuchins, Theatines, and Jesuits, to show revival to those who criticized the church. As reforms continued to take place pope Paul three, who was the first pope during the period of counter-reformation formed the council of Trent. The council of Trent held successive sessions between 1545 to 1563 aiming to address the issues that had been raised by Protestants. This council had a lot of issues to handle. It addressed corruption in the church and some issues like the sale of indulgence, es a system where rich people used to be forgiven for sin. The council helped to demystify the origin of sin and said that forgiveness could not be bought with money. They also came up with the number of sacraments to be taken and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Roman Inquisition was also developed in 1542 to deal with heresy. The inquisition proved to be more successful is controlling doctrines and practices in places where Protestants were proving to be more powerful than the Catholic Church this inquisition also dealt with academic issues which had caused the difference in theological thoughts. In 1559 it wrote and published its books which were directed at preventing Catholics from being exposed to what they termed as heretical writings. The Inquisition also judged those people who had broken the church rules, and those who were found guilty were condemned to death. This period saw a lot more new organizations being formed. We also had the Italian-based oratory of divi,ne love, which impacted spirituality to its members and promoted good works. Members of this group ranged from clerics to lay people. Other organizations were all based on religion, and members included only priests. An example of such an organization was the Society of Jesuits, which aimed at spreading Catholic doctrines.

Political Conflict and Military Consequences

The secular world reacted by using military force against reformations, as catholic kings and princes worked hard to capture and control territories that belonged to Protestant monarchs. King Phillip of Spain, together with the king of France and the Holy Roman emperor Charles, waged a decade-long campaign against Protestants in countries like Belgium, Netherlands, and England, but still, they were unsuccessful. For example, his attempt to invade England in 1588 was defeated by the British weather and the English navy. Against the views of some catholic leaders, several wars broke out when these leaders tried to deter the spread of Protestants in their countries. In 1562 a civil war broke out in France and continued up to 1598 while another rebellion in the Netherlands started in 1566 and ended in 1648. Religious war also began between Spain and England. It started in 1585 and ended in 1604. All this civil war demonstrates how reformation was met with a lot of resistance.

References

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