

It is indeed a great privilege for me to present this paper in this significant event. I thank the organizers and above all to our great and merciful God.

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A Paper Presentation on Protestant Reformation: What Happened During Reformation?

Introduction

The Protestant Reformation, which undesirably brought about further schism of the Church after the schism of the Western and Eastern Churches, erupted when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the church door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg on 31 October 1517. However, it was not an overnight development but an outcome of growing antipathy against the corruption of the Church, compounded by the unwillingness of medieval church to accept the reforms suggested by various individuals and institutions, thereby making reformation an inevitable event. In this paper, we will be looking at the different reformations initiated by different individuals at different places and their impact on the Roman Catholic Church and the later Protestantism.

1. What is Reformation?

Reformation is seen and defined variedly conditioned largely by the outlook of the historian. Some Roman Catholic historians look reformation as a revolt by Protestants against the universal church. While the Protestant historians consider it as a religious reforms that brought Christianity closer to the pattern of the New Testament or the Scripture. Still the secular historian assumes of it more as a revolutionary movement. In the paper, we will look on reformation from the protestant perspective.

2. Martin Luther and the German Reformation

Martin Luther was born on Nov 10th, 1483, at Eisleben (Saxony, Germany) to Hans Luther and Margaret. In 1512, he was made professor of theology at Wittenburg. It was then that Luther arrived at his theological position of, “Justification by Faith alone”, after a long spiritual struggle. A reading of Romans 1:17 convinced him that only faith in Christ could justify one before God. Thus, *sola fide*, justification by faith alone, *sola scriptura*, the idea that the scriptures are the only authority, and *sola sacerdos*, the priesthood of all believers, became the main points in his theological system. Though the writings of Augustine and German mystics helped him to reach this position, but it was his own spiritual experience, guided by the Word of God that led him to trust in Christ alone for his salvation.

It was at that juncture (1517) Johann Tetzel (ca. 1469- 1524) a Dominican monk, an agent of Archbishop Albert, began his sale of indulgence in and around Wittenburg. Pope Leo X authorized the sale of indulgences in Albert’s region, as long as half the money collected funded to the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica, in Rome. The rest went to Albert in order to pay the debt incurred by him. Luther strongly opposed the sale of Indulgence. Therefore, Luther wrote up a list of 95 grievances and tacked them to the church door. For Luther, Divine forgiveness certainly could not be bought or sold, when God offers it freely.

Luther was tried to silence but unsuccessful. Thus, Pope asked a Dominican monk Sylvester Perierias to draft a reply to Luther. And to this reply, Luther gave his response, questioning the ‘papal infallibility, than the infallibility of the Word of God. As a result of this response to Perierias, Luther was summoned to Rome for trial. But due to the support of King Frederick, the founder of Wittenburg University, a hearing was arranged in Augsburg (in Germany). Meanwhile a debate known as “Leipzig discussion” was arranged between John Eck and Karlstadt (a colleague of Luther). During the crisis, Luther wrote few books in 1520, which came to be known as his primary works. They are “An appeal to the Christian nobility of the

German Nation,” “The Babylonian captivity of the church” and “The Freedom of a Christian Man.” In these he declared the priesthood of all believers. If the Pope and clergy were unwilling to reform the church, he said and appealed that the German princes should do it. The church was in captivity because of the denial of the cup to the laity, and because of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Only Baptism and Lord Supper can be held as Sacraments. The Christian is saved by faith not by the obligation of good works. In the same year, Pope published his bull of excommunication, (*Exsurge Domine*) which Luther burnt it publicly on December 1520. Excommunication finally came in 1521.

On 17 April 1521 Luther appeared before the Diet (council) at Worms. He acknowledged the books written by him. While asked to retract, he refused and said, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God helps me. Amen”. The emperor condemned him as a heretic and prohibited hospitality to Luther and prohibited publishing and reading of his books. However the edict of the Diet was not enforced because he was kidnapped to Wartburg by a friendly hand of King Frederick. There he translated the New Testament into German and still the Old Testament. After his excommunication from Catholic Church, Luther organized the Lutheran church in Germany. For the guidance of clergy he prepared an order of worship. Lutheran retained most of the Catholic rites and ceremonies. Only those that were opposed to the Biblical teaching were removed from the worship and liturgy. In 1530, at the Diet at Augsburg, Phillip Melancthon drew up the statement of Lutheran’s doctrines. Though this was not approved by Catholic party, it became the standard of Lutheran belief and known as Augsburg confession. Reformation was to other European countries after the Germany Reformation.

3. Reformation in Switzerland

There were three types of Reformation theology developed in Swiss territories. In the north, the German-speaking cantons followed the reforms of Zwingli, who was centered in Zurich. There were also the radicals of Reformation, known as the Anabaptists, developed as an extreme wing among those who at first worked with Zwingli. And, in the south, French-speaking cantons followed Calvin, who was in Geneva.

3.1 Ulrich Zwingli

The Reformation in Switzerland was begun by Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli was born in 1 January 1484, at Wildaus. He took Master degree from Basel University to become a full- fledged humanist. He began his carrier as parish priest at Glarus in 1506. As a humanist, he was more attracted to the Pauline ethics, than soteriology like Luther. In Glarus, he preached against the use of Swiss in mercenary by other Europeans in wars and indulgence. For doing this he was recoiled. Yet, he again became the priest of Zurich in 1519, because of his preaching reputation.

The reading from the New Testament in Greek made him conclude that Bible is the absolute authority in matters of faith and life. He began to read Luther’s writings. However it was his spiritual experience during the plague in 1519 made him a full reformer. In 1520 he preached against purgatory, tithing and intercession of saints. He defied the authority of the church by his secret marriage to Anna Reinhart Meyer in July 1522 which he made it public in 1524. The Zurich city council arranged a debate when he conflicted with the church, for which Zwingli prepared 67 articles. The result was that the city council endorsed Zwingli’s teaching. Pictures, crucifixes and images were removed, relics were buried and organs were silenced. The cup was given to the laity. Services were conducted in mother tongue with sermon as principal feature. From Zurich the reform spread to other cantons.

When reformation was spreading rapidly, from Zurich, the alarmed Catholic attacked Zurich and in this war Zwingli was slain in the battle field in 1531.

3.2 Anabaptist Movement

Anabaptist appeared first in Switzerland because of the freedom that existed in that land. Anabaptist was at first closely linked with the Zwinglian movement in northern Switzerland, which then spread to Moravia, Holland, and other lands. Conrad Grebel (1498- 1526), after his conversion in 1522, worked closely with Zwingli until he broke from him by 1525 for disagreement in infant baptism. This dissenting group objected that the Bible showed adult baptism and wanted to make it general practice. In 1525, George Blaurock was baptized by Grebel and then he baptized Grebel and several others. Later, they received the name Anabaptist meaning “rebaptizer,” from their detractors.

The Anabaptists wanted to do more than reform the church; they sought the church to return to the state they saw portrayed in the Scriptures. Instead of a powerful institution, they wanted a brotherhood, a family of faith, created by God, who worked in people’s heart. They propounded separation of church and state, because they saw the church as something distinct from society – even a ‘Christian’ society. They did not want political powers to compel the conscience of the believer in any way.

Because of their practice of polygamy and claims of bizarre revelations from God caused both Catholics and Protestants to believe that they must rid this wrongheaded group of the world. Persecutions ensued, and many Anabaptists were put to death by fire or drowning. To the world the Anabaptist gave the idea of separation of church and state. In its descendants, the Mennonites and Brethren Churches, pacifism still remains an important doctrine.

3.3 John Calvin

John Calvin, a Frenchman whose theology became the basis for Reformed tradition (Presbyterianism), led the Reformation in Switzerland, having Geneva as his headquarters. Geneva was a French speaking Switzerland city. John Calvin was born on 10 July 1509. He was educated in Paris University contemporary to Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola. He was influenced by humanism and by the writings of Erasmus and Luther.

In 1532, Guillaume Farel tried to bring Reformation in Geneva which the city council favoured. But a strong group of opposition arose and the result was internal strife and confusion. At the juncture, Calvin came to Geneva in response to the earnest request of Farel. The former was made official preacher of the city council in 1536. Then, he introduced congregational singing and also taught that unworthy people should not be allowed to take part in the Lord Supper. People were asked to adapt the catechism and confession of faith prepared by him in co-operation with Farel. However, after a year of struggle, Calvin and Farel were defeated and ordered out of Geneva. Calvin wrote his famous book called “*Institutes of Christian Religion*,” a systematic theology that clearly defended the Reformation teachings when he was teaching and pastoring in Strausbourg.

Calvin’s central belief was the ‘absolute sovereignty of God’. For him, “God asserts his possession of omnipotence,” “God is the Governor of all things.” He hated the way the Catholic Church had fallen into a salvation-by-works theology. In the third part of his book *the Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin argued the doctrine of predestination. This received much attention. He held to a double predestination – to salvation and to condemnation – based on the will of God, and rejected any idea of merit on the part of the elect or foreknowledge on the part of God in the sense that God elected to salvation those whom He foreknew would believe. In book IV of *the Institutes of the Christians Religions*, Calvin created a church order based upon what he saw in the Scriptures. The congregation was to elect moral men-elders- who would guide them. The doctrines and reformed policy he created would spread to Scotland, Poland, Holland and America.

4. Reformation in England

The Reformation in England began as a purely political movement, which only became religious movement later. The Anglican Church that emerged as the result of Reformation in

England developed to be the National Church for England.

The desire of Henry VIII to divorce his wife Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn, with whom he had fallen in love, brought Reformation in England. Henry VIII was a well educated prince, who knew Latin, French, Spanish and English. Originally he dedicated himself for priesthood. But because of his brother's death he became king. His father, Henry VII, persuaded the Pope to grant a dispensation, so that Catherine, wife of his brother, would be married to Henry VIII. When married to Catherine, it became apparent that, Henry VIII would not have a son through her and feared for his successor. Thus, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn and ordered his advisor (chancellor) Cardinal Wolsey (Arch bishop of York), to negotiate with Pope Clement VII for a divorce. Pope was unable to grant this request, because he was under the control of Catherine's nephew, Charles V, the emperor. Wolsey was ordered to be executed for failing to get the dispensation.

Thomas Cranmer was made the Archbishop of Canterbury and he granted the king a divorce. Henry quickly married Anne in 1533, and in the same year, she gave birth to a child, named Elizabeth. In 1534 the English parliament passed the Act of supremacy, in this, the king was declared "the supreme head of the Church of England," "*Anglican Ecclesia*." Thus the church in England severed its connections with the papacy.

Though Henry VIII separated the church in England, he retained the Roman Catholic doctrine. He persuaded the parliament to pass "Six articles" in 1539. These articles reaffirmed transubstantiation, communion in one kind, clerical celibacy and auricular confession. Bible was authorized to be translated. In the interest of promoting English Nationalism, Henry ordered an English Bible to be installed in all churches. Though Henry did not do so for scrupulous reasons, he had created a church that was no longer Roman Catholic. In the years to come, Henry's daughter Mary would seek to return England into Catholicism, but it did not last.

5. Counter Reformation

Seeing the rapid spread of Protestantism, the Catholics began to react, to check the progress of Protestantism and to win back parts of Europe it had lost. This Catholic reaction was called Counter Reformation. It aimed at three things; first, to bring about certain reforms in life and discipline of the Catholic Church; secondly, to arrange the teachings of the Catholic Church into a compact, authoritative system as over against Protestantism; thirdly, to reorganize the whole political and institutional machinery of the church to meet the new situation.

5.1 Internal Reform in Papacy

Catholics did not have the same conception of reform as the Protestants. Several organizations were formed within the Catholic Church for the purpose of stimulating a zeal for their spiritual life, the "Oratory of divine Love" was founded in Rome ca. 1517. This informal organization of churchmen and laymen was interested in deepening spiritual life, by spiritual exercises that helped to stop the spread of Protestantism. Many orders were organized in this period and they have served the Roman Church well since that time. The most effective weapon of positive propaganda for the Church of Rome was provided by the Jesuit order, which emphasized preaching by well-educated monks as a means to win men back from Protestantism. The founder of the order was Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), who was a Spanish nobleman, and had prepared himself for a military career. A severe wound received at the battle in 1521, made further military service impossible. During his slow recovery in hospital, his reading of religious literature resulted in a spiritual experience in 1522 that led him to dedicate his life to the service of God and the church.

Spiritual Exercises, the devotional manual Loyola wrote during his illness, not only encouraged his readers in faith, it also stressed obedience to the church. Those were to be key points in his Society of Jesus – or Jesuits. The Jesuits became powerful and successful in its

entire endeavour, especially in its educational propaganda. Colleges, Universities and Seminaries were established in Europe. These schools did much to roll back the tide of Protestantism.

5.2 The Council of Trent (1545- 1563)

The second great agency of the Counter Reformation was, the Council of Trent which was called by Pope Paul III. During its three separate sessions, it decided to close the door of the Roman Catholic Church firmly against all forms of Protestantism. The council of Trent synchronized scripture and tradition as joint rules of faith. Tradition was inspired as truly as the Scriptures, and should therefore enjoy equal authority. The church alone had the right of interpretation. The doctrine of Justification left room for work merit. Sanction was given to seven sacraments.

The Reform-decrees of the council provided for a stricter Church discipline, a better education for the clergy and more pastoral care of the laity. Clerical celibacy was made binding. The liturgy was revised and arrangement was made for a new edition of the Latin Bible. The prime significance of the council was the transformation of medieval Thomistic theology into an authoritative dogma binding on all faithful. It rendered any chance of reconciliation with Protestantism impossible because of its enforcing equal authority of tradition and Scripture.

5.3 The inquisition

Another counter to Protestantism was the 'Holy office' usually called the inquisition, instituted by the Roman Church. This was a church Tribunal whose objective was to discover and eradicate heresy. Those suspected of heresy or spiritual offences against the Roman Church were brought before this court. Confessors were usually condemned heretic and subjected to torture and cruelty. Penalty usually consisted of confiscation of property, imprisonment, punishment or death.

This dreadful institution, which had prevented Protestantism from getting any foothold in Spain, was set up in Italy in 1542 on recommendation of Carraffa, and under the supervision of Pope Paul II. The inquisition courts were so successful in the suppression of Protestantism in Italy that the Pope decided to use them in other nations. Shortly the inquisition became a worldwide institution.

5.4 Thirty Years War

A surge of Roman Catholic revival and favour not only curbed the growth of Protestantism but also stirred up conflicts that led to the 'Thirty Years War' between Protestant and Catholic forces from 1618-1648. The thirty years war ended in 1648 with the 'peace of Westphalia'. By the terms of the treaty Lutherans, Catholics and Calvinists were all granted equal religious status and rights.

7. A Critique

There have been advantageous and disadvantageous impacts of the Reformation. From the Protestantism point of view, religious reform was inevitable in the medieval church. However, when, as Protestants, holding the absolute authority of the Scripture, could there had been bigger room for unity rather than rigid dogmatic stands in the light of Jesus' assertion that his followers be one. There have been so many differences among the reformers like the disagreement on the Lord Supper between Luther and Zwingli. The undesirable further schism of the church had only multiplied division in the Protestantism.

The rigid from the Roman Church in its counter to Protestantism and the Protestants in their understanding of the absolute authority of the Scripture rather than the tradition indeed brought much unfortunate bloodshed. Killing among the so-called Christians in the name and for Jesus and his Kingdom has to be looked critically through the Scripture. The means undertaken by the Roman Church to curb the heretics (as they painted) or the reformers were

extremely undesirable. However, it raised the morality among the faithful of the Roman church.

Conclusion

The Reformation of the 16th Century CE was indispensably wrought about by different factors. For the Protestants, drawing back the Christians nearer to the New Testament in particular and the Scriptures in general has been the greatest impact of the Reformation. However, in trying to achieve this central goal, detrimental outcome of schism and bloodshed accompanied when the warring parties choose not to negotiate or considerate of others. Today, it is still very central to us to look at the Reformation and its impact to steer and echo us in our everyday Christian life.

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