**Pope Leo X and the Reformation**

The need for reform in Europe was quite evident in the sixteenth century. An intellectual, religious and political movement aroused, also known as the Reformation, to fulfill that need. The Reformation was triggered specifically during the reign of Pope Leo X due to the contributions of the Renaissance, the then recently invented press, the abuses of Papal Power, the malpractices carried out in the Catholic Church, and the influence of famous reformers.

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  The introduction is very simple and concise, with a clear thesis statement that states their claim. The author provides a brief introduction to the topic, and outlines each of the main points they will be addressing in the body of the essay in order to support their argument. |

One of the major factors that led to the reformation was the Renaissance. As the Renaissance emphasized the importance of humanity rather than God and the Church, its occurrence resulted in increasing levels of education, the promotion of thought and learning, and the emphasis on classical books, all of which eventually made people think and question their relationship with God instead of deferring to the Church (Henderson, n.d). The increase of literacy ratesduring the Renaissance meant that people were more curious to read and interpret information such as the bible for themselves, instead of needing the clergy to do it for them. With the emergence of other important factors such as the printing press, people were able to access texts and information in unprecedented numbers. This allowed them to conduct their own analysis of the Bible and form their own personal relationship with what they believed to be God, thus reforming the way the Catholic Church operated (Zucker& Harris, 2013).

The printing technology invented by Johannes Gutenberg was employed effectively in Germany by one of the most influential reformers, Martin Luther. Luther’s 95 Theses and the printing press went hand in hand in changing the way people viewed the Catholic Church. The printing press allowed hundreds of thousands of people to read his 95 Theses and gain awareness of the corruption in the Catholic Church (Waugh, 2013). Not only did the printing press facilitate the spreading of the 95 Theses, it gave people the opportunity to fully read and understand the bible as it produced mass numbers of copies for a cheap price, whereas before each book was copied individually by hand. With the bible being translated from Latin to differentcommon languages (Gascoigne, 2001) and being accessible thanks to the printing press, people no longer had to rely on religious authorities to interpret the bible for them, which eliminated the church’s unconditional supremacy. This was vital to the Reformation and had a great impact in the period during Pope Leo X’s reign, as his power was gradually diminished. Consequently, he became the last pope to consider the position something of a temporal monarchy.

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  The preceding section begins to focus on the main points outlined in the introduction, which help to prove the thesis. The author introduces the argument at the beginning of each paragraph, provides a brief summary of its importance, and explains how it connects to the reign of Pope Leo X and the Catholic Church. Various sources are used effectively to add reliability, and they are properly cited. |

Martin Luther’s 95 Theses served as a catalyst to the flourishing of the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic Church’s malpractice of selling indulgences for salvation and the removal of all sins was heavily criticized in the 95 Theses.Luther believed that only God could forgive sins, not man, and that “the just shall live by faith”(Romans 1:17), meaning salvation comes through faith and not wealth.This directly contradicted the practice of purchasing indulgences to be granted salvation (Green, 2014).An early advocate of reform, John Wycliffe, was the first person to translate the bible from Latin to common English. He openly condemnedthe corruptions within the church, such as indulgences and pilgrimages. His translation of the bible allowed many people to read andconstrue it for themselves, therefore initiatingdiversity in terms ofideologies. This was a threat to the Catholic Church, as they had been exercising strict control over reading and interpretation of the bible (Sullivan, n.d.). John Huss, another important figure of the Reformation, translated Wycliffe’s *Trialogus*to Czechoslovakian, making it available to many who had been deprived of understanding it prior (Calvin College Website, 2005). Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, John Huss and other reformers were all seeking to banish the power abuses within the church and hoped to stimulate a reform of Catholicism. It is also their bravery that attracted more recognition and support for the movement, as standing against the Catholic Church was a very dangerous action to take.

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  The author continues to address factors that help support their argument outlined in the introduction of the paper. They include a discussion of key players to show how each of their actions interacted and contributed to eventual change. |

The power that the papacy attained was built up over many centuries and led to the corruption of the Catholic Church through the sales of indulgences and relics, compulsory payments for church services, and the sale of high positions in the church, which were usually bought by rich families for their sons. Money was the basis of people’s relationship with the church which eventually caused people to start questioning the morals of the papacy.Peasants and commoners could not afford to pay for services like christening and matrimonies and the construction of churches but the church had the capability to convince people that the only way they will go to heaven is by paying these expenses (Trueman, 2015). In Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, he implied that Pope Leo X was taking advantage of the poor by accepting money from them to fund the construction of St Peter’s Basilica in #86: “Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?” (Pettinger, 2014). This caused the public to become restless during Leo’s reign and reconsider their beliefs and values, demanding for reform in which papacy power was limited.

The event of the Black Death was another factor that indicated the selfish nature of the leaders in the church. Clergy charging high prices for last rites to be performed to the patients of the disease proved that their concerns was not about religion, but about self-gain. Some even decided to flee to escape the epidemic. This advanced to people seeking hope in God outside the organization of the church, which was unusual as people would always refer to the Church when in need (Patton, 2012). It became evident that the idea of people having a direct relationship with God was much more convenient, and it helped to promote the ideals of the Reformation.

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  This section considers the abuses of Papal power and malpractice within the Catholic Church, as well as the short and long-term effects of these issues as they relate to the thesis. |

Various historical factors and influences played a part in provoking the Reformation, most of them closely intertwined with one another. Martin Luther would not have influenced many people if the printing press was not invented, and the translations of the bible would have been useless if the literacy rates remained low, for example. The Renaissance sparked a rise in education and individualism, which, combined with the corruptness of the Catholic Church and the contributions of determined individuals, created the perfect environment for major change. Unrest had been accumulating for many years prior, and finally revolution emerged under the ideal conditions that existed during the reign of Pope Leo X.

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  The conclusion brings the paper to an effective close, re-considering and reiterating each of the elements used to argue the thesis in a way that shows the thesis has indeed been proven. No new topics are introduced, and the reader is left with a sense of finality. |

**Works Cited**

Calvin College Website. “John Huss of Bohemia.” *Christian Classics Ethereal Library,* 2005. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc6.iii.vi.vii.html

Gascoigne, Bamber. "History of Bible Translations." *HistoryWorld*. From 2001, ongoing. http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac66

Green, John. “Luther and the Protestant Reformation.”*Crash Course World History,* 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o8oIELbNxE

Henderson. "Renaissance." *History Haven*, n.d. http://www.historyhaven.com/AP Prep WH/Renaissance\_and\_Reformation.htm

Patton, C. Michael. "Seven Historical Events That Prepared the Way for the Reformation." *Credo House,* 2012. http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2012/11/why-the-reformation-happened-when-it-did/

Pettinger, Tejvan. "Martin Luther Biography." *Biography Online,* 2014. http://www.biographyonline.net/spiritual/martin-luther.html

Sullivan, Nate. "John Wycliffe: Biography, Facts & Quotes."*Study.com*,n.d. http://study.com/academy/lesson/john-wycliffe-biography-facts-quotes.html

Trueman, C. N. "Roman Catholic Church in 1500." *The History Learning Site*, 2015. http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-reformation/roman-catholic-church-in-1500/

Waugh, Barry. "The Importance of the Printing Press for the Protestant Reformation, Part One." *Reformation21*, 2013. http://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-importance-of-the-printing.php

Waugh, Barry. "The Importance of the Printing Press for the Protestant Reformation, Part Two." *Reformation21*, 2013. http://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-importance-of-the-printing-press-for-the-protestant-reformation-part-two.php

Zucker, Steven, and Beth Harris. "An Introduction to the Protestant Reformation." *Khan Academy,* n.d.<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/renaissance-and-reformation/protestant-reformation/a/an-introduction-to-the-protestant-reformation>

|  |
| --- |
| **Exemplar notes:**  The author provides a sources cited page in proper Chicago form at the end of their paper, making sure to use alphabetical order and a first line indent. You may not always be required to use all elements of a certain citation style, but you must always be consistent. Always pay attention to any instruction regarding sources, as this can vary based on the course and the instructor (this assignment requires that you use Chicago style). |