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## A Propaganda Campaign

A key to any revolution, in any time period, is spreading the keypoints within the ideology of the revolution in an efficient and effective manner. The Protestant Reformation, which is accredited chiefly to the efforts of the German monk Martin Luther, involved a very large group of people splitting from the Catholic church, an institution present for 1500 years before the reformation. A task as large as this split cries out for a method of spreading ideals rapidly, also present was the need to grab the emotions of the intended targets of the message. In the following the ideals the leaders of the Protestant used to attract converts, the use of the innovative printing press in allow for mass distribution of pamphlets, and the effects the reformation had on all will be looked at. From early middle ages to the Sixteenth Century, the Catholic Church evolved to dominate all sectors of European life, as the church grew, so to did the power of the hierarchy within the institution. With this power surge, many church leaders went away from the teachings of humility, charity, and faithfulness that Jesus prescribed, and slowly began to give way to an unbridled lust for money. One method the church used to appropriate funds was the paying of indulgences. Indulgences were pieces of paper issued by the church, that people purchased in exchange for forgiveness. Many in European society felt alienated by this practice. Especially the poor and merchant class. These classes saw a church collecting large sums of money, while inflation and other economic factors hurt their own cause.<sup>1</sup> By the time Martin Luther undertook his effort to reform the church, there was enough seeds planted in these classes to facilitate a major change. Besides indulgences, there were many theological points that the leaders of the Reformation sought to reiterate into the Church. In a sermon Luther gave in 1521, he states that the Church overstepped its Biblical authority by claiming the right to atone sins, Luther indicates that Jesus, and only Jesus has such authority, he states "God has chosen a man, the Lord Jesus Christ, to crush death, destroy sin, and shatter hell...But the papal dominion treats us altogether differently. It makes rules about fasting praying and butter eating, that whosoever keeps the commandments of the pope will be saved" (290), Luther goes on to add that Christians should rely on faith in Christ, not a Church that is not doing what the Bible prescribes. Luther also criticized the priests within the Church, he believed the priest had succumbed to the teachings of pagan philosophers, and had fell in line with a corrupted, money hungry papacy. Luther sought to return the focus of the Church, to the teachings of faith, charitable works, and humility as Jesus had originally taught to his disciples. The ideals indicated by Luther appealed to broad spectrum of people. The liftin of the financial burden encompassed in indulgences appealed to the poor, the return to original Biblical doctrine spurred the interests of educated and rich. But the question of how to go about spreading these ideas remained. The leaders of the reformation took two distinct approaches. First the ideals of the Reformation were recorded in the simplest written forms, so that all could understand. Secondly, a series of wood cuts depicted the church as doomed, and showed the holiness of

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the originally biblical intent for the church. Both of these approaches, coupled with the ability to reproduce in large quantity, thanks to the innovative printing press, allowed the leaders of the Reformation to spread their message in a efficient manner that was never before possible. The simplified ideals of the church were often put in poetic verse, and then applied to music, so that the ideals the leaders wanted to convey were present in hymn form. This approach allowed the uneducated, who couldn't read the printed versions of Luther's sermons, a chance to have the themes of the Reformation imprinted in their mind's. As we see in the opening lines of Luther's hymn, Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word, Luther did not go lightly in his approach, he wrote "Lord, keep us steadfast in thy word, and curb the Turks vile sword, Who seek to topple from the Throne, Jesus Christ thine only son." In one verse, Luther takes a blatant attack at the Church, when this is set music, this verse would remain in an individual's mind, and keep that person motivated to keep fighting for the cause.(296) Other hymn's ,while not as powerful as the preceding, incorporated the ideals of the reform, in a similar fashion The formentioned pamphlets that depicted the evil doings of the Church, the Devil like qualities of the pope, and Jesus allowing faithful servants to remain in heaven took the simplification of ideals and their presentation even farther. The first print observed shows the Cardinal's and the Pope, depicted as devils, taking part in issuing indulgences These church leaders are consumed by hellfire, while heavenly figures participated in baptism and communion. Another woodcut uses contrast to show the fallacies within the church. One image shows the disciples bowed around Jesus feet. Directly next to this picture is the pope, with the cardinals bowed in similar manner. The bottom half depicts Jesus chasing the money changes from the temple, while the pope accepts indulgences. Both of these cuts show Luther's perceived wrongs of the church. The contrast in particular showed the pope trying to emulate Jesus, a sin itself, and the church bowing to money, while Jesus rids the temple of those, who exploit the poor for the sake of money.(299-300) These images were widely dispersed. They were highly effective in showing the exact message of the reformation, in simple fashion. This campaign by the Protestants created two distinct reactions. In the lower class a series of rebellions by the poor against the ruling class took place, against the wishes of Martin Luther. The higher classes assimilated these ideas in their lives, and eventually founded a separate branch of Christianity. The Protestant Reformation is possibly one of the best propaganda campaigns ever. The leaders of this effort used simple ideas, catchy jingles, and visual appeal to transform the whole religious landscape of the European continent. A Propaganda Campaign of Godly Proportion A key to any revolution, in any time period, is spreading the keypoints within the ideology of the revolution in an efficient and effective manner. The Protestant Reformation, which is accredited chiefly to the efforts of the German monk Martin Luther, involved a very large group of people splitting from the Catholic church, an institution present for 1500 years before the reformation. A task as large as this split cries out for a method of spreading ideals rapidly, also present was the need to grab the emotions of the intended targets of the message. In the following the ideals the leaders of the Protestant used to attract converts, the use of the innovative printing press in allow for mass distribution of pamphlets, and the effects the reformation had on all will be looked

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