



The forms of communication employed by the Protestant Reformers and especially Luther and Calvin

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Abstract

On 31 October 2017 it was 500 years since Martin Luther had his ninety-fifth thesis nailed on a Roman Catholic Church door. What seemed to be merely issues a clergy had with regards to his displeasure within the church, had eventually reshaped the history of Christianity. Luther and the other Protestant reformers did not want to cause a breakaway from the Roman Catholic Church but to make known areas which they felt conflicted with their interpretation of the Bible. The aim of the study is to test validity of Klopper's theory of optimisation of human communication (TOHC) in comparison to how Protestant reformation communication developed in the movement phase to when they saw themselves in the organisational stage. Klopper's theory of optimisation of human communication (TOHC) is used as the theoretical framework for this study. During the movement phase of the reformation, basic forms of communication were used and as it developed into different Christian organisations, many different forms of communications were used.

Key words: forms of communication, Protestant reformers,

Introduction and background

The forms of communication used during the Protestant Reformation to separate themselves from Roman Catholicism, will be probed. Communication was used as a means to separate themselves from the Catholic populace thereby to establishing a new religion (Reddy, 2004:109). Many individuals played a vital role in the Protestant reformation, however for the purpose of the study, the focus will be on Martin Luther and John Calvin. However, though the above is mentioned, it is realised that the pre-reformers played a vital role which created a stage for what was to take place.

Aim of the study

Klopper's theory of optimisation of human communication (TOHC) validity is tested in comparison to how human forms of communication developed in the Protestant Reformation from when they perceived themselves as a movement to when they became an established organisation.

Objectives

To establish if Protestant Reformation survival depended on the cooperative communication among its members.

To establish if competitiveness amongst Protestant churches relied on competitive use of communication.

Research questions

Did the Protestant Reformation survival rely on cooperative communication?

Did the Protestant Reformation survival rely competitive communication?



Statement of the problem

Before the Protestant Reformation, many religious groups opposed the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church due to a range of issues, for example, the selling of indulgences. However, the church classified them as heretics and many of them were burnt at the stake. These leaders prepared the way for the likes of Martin Luther, Zwingli, John Calvin and so forth. Martin Luther did not agree with many of the teachings that were taking place within the church and indulgences was one of them. He and John Calvin believed that the Bible should be in the hands of all believers and not just the priest and the scholars that were in or aligned to the Roman Catholic Church.

This study seeks to establish the forms of communication the Protestant Reformation used during the movement phase and the forms of communication these religious leaders adopted after they established their break-away churches. Though some research is done of the forms of communication used by Christian organisations, the author believes more can be done to make Christian religious communication an area of study within the communication science field.

Klopper's theory of optimisation of human communication

This study was built on the framework of Klopper's theory on the optimisation of human communication (TOHC). Klopper (2002:277) states "humans optimise a variety of forms of communication within a culture, to ensure immediate direct personal survival and to maintain their culture as a long-term indirect survival strategy." The TOHC states that groups need to communicate cooperatively in order to survive. Further to this the theory highlights that groups need to become competitive in order for them to survive. This theory will be looked at in the context of the pre reformers and the reformers, especially the lives of Luther and Calvin. The study will look at how they communicated when they first were developing into a movement stage in order to survive and how they communicated when they became competitive against the Roman Catholic Church in order to attract new converts. The theory suggests that within religious groupings people optimise a variation of forms of communication. By doing this they ensure individual survival and as a long-term survival strategy preserve their culture (Klopper, 2002:277).

The Pre-Reformers

All groups that spoke out against the church were regarded as "heretical" groups. In the same light, the present-day church considers those individuals that questioned the church "doctrine" and "teachings" as heretics. McCallum (2002:n.p.) states that there were eight heretical groups of pre-reformers between the 12th and 15th centuries during the various European regions. McCallum (2002:n.p.) mentions them as follows:

- Flagellants were in 1259. They marched with only loin cloths through the streets crying out to God to show mercy on them (McCallum 2002:n.p.). In 1349 they were condemned.
- Then there was a variety of lay groups known as Beguines who had no specific set of forms (McCallum, 2002;n.p.). They were followers of Lambert le Begue who was a stammerer.
- In the 12th century Tanchelm preached in the diocese of Utrecht. He denied the authority of the pope and the church and attacked the structure of the Catholic Church (McCallum, 2002:n.p.).



- Peter of Bruys in the 12th century also rejected christening of infants. He rejected prayers for the dead, the Eucharist veneration of the cross and ecclesiastical ceremonies (McCallum, 2002:n.p.).
- In the first half of 12th century Henry of Lausanne preached in what is known as France. His followers were known as the Henricans. The clergy were condemned for the love of wealth and power by Henry of Lausanne (McCallum, 2002:n.p.).
- The Adamists engaged in behaviour that was socially unacceptable and indulged in the practice of nude worship.
- Arnold of Brescia wanted the church to follow Christian ideals (McCallum 2002:n.p.). He attacked the bishops for their dishonest gains. He was hanged in 1155 and his body was burned.
- The Pataria, in Northern Italy were in reaction to the corruption which was taking place in the church. McCallum (2002:n.p.) states that the self-indulgent practices within the Roman Catholic Church were also opposed by other smaller movements.

Another group not mentioned by McCallum (2002: n.p.) is the Waldensians. Reddy (2004:111) states the Waldensians “opposed self-indulgence and self-entitlement practice by ecclesiastical establishment in the Roman Catholic Church of the 12th century.” This group was founded by Peter Waldo, a French merchant. Waldo viewed the New Testament as the only rule of faith and life for Christians and only believed in the Bible and nothing relating to oral tradition or the works of the early church fathers (Kuiper 1984:141). The Waldensians as a group of believers showed a lack of written communication in documenting the history as required for the sake of continuity and as a record of faith (Reddy, 2004:112).

Latourette (1975:454) states “Europe was aflame with new religious movements reacting to such things as the struggle of the Papacy for supremacy, the corrupt practices of local clergy, and the currents of thought that were flowing into the area as a result of the Crusades.” In 1487 the Pope Innocent VIII, organised a crusade against Waldensians in Dauphine and Savoy in France (Reddy, 2004:113). During this time, Switzerland and Germany became home to many of the Waldensians, who gradually merged with the Bohemian Brethren (Reddy, 2004:113). During the reformation this group became openly Calvinistic in orientation. They are the group who paid for the publication of the first French Protestant version of the Bible in Switzerland.

The contribution of certain individuals needs to be recognised in order for one to appreciate the work of the reformation. Reddy (2004:113) mentions them briefly as follows:

In 1320 John Wycliffe was born in England. Kuiper (1982:143) states “He (Wycliffe) said that wealth and political power had so corrupted the church that a radical reform was necessary.” In Wycliffe’s view he regarded the Pope as the antichrist (Kuiper, 1982:143). John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English so the masses could read the Bible. Wycliffe’s followers were known as the *Lollards* and many died a martyr’s death. Kuiper (1982:144) states “many Lollards lingered on in secret to the time of the Reformation”.

In 1369 John Huss was born. Hodges (n.d.,n.p.) states “Wycliff’s teaching reached Bohemia after his death and was picked up by John Huss at the University of Pague, in the early 1400s. Huss translated Wycliff’s work into Czech and gave life to the reform ideals for the people. This stirred fear in the hearts of the church officialdom.” Wycliffe writings were read by Huss. Reddy (2004:114) states “Wycliffe documented his beliefs so that they could be communicated to those who read them.” These writings enabled Huss to preach with boldness against the corruption within the church (Reddy, 2004:114). Initially Huss believed



in indulgences but eventually condemned its practice and was excommunicated by Pope John (Reddy, 2004:114). He spent eight months in prison and died on 6 July 1415 without being able to defend himself. In 1350 there was a movement known as the Brethren of the Common Life. John of Wessel was one member in the group who attacked indulgences (Reddy, 2004:115). The doctrine of justification by faith alone was the teaching of John of Wessel (Kuiper, 1982:151). He rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation where it is believed when the priest pronounces the sacraments, the wine and bread turned into the real body and blood of Christ. Kuiper (1982:151) quotes the words of Luther as follows: "If I had read the works of Wessel beforehand, it might well have seemed that I derived all my ideas from him." Reddy (2004:115) states that Erasmus was another pupil of the Brethren of the Common Life. Though he never joined Luther, he played a major role (Reddy, 2004:115). Kuiper (1982:151) states that it was said that Luther hatched the egg which was laid by Erasmus. Reddy (2004:115) states "many of the individuals who protested against the Roman Catholic Church documented their beliefs."

The Reformation in Germany

The study looks to highlight the forms of communication that was used by Martin Luther. Reddy (2004:115) states "Martin Luther was as the main force behind the Protestant Reformation in Germany and the rest of Europe."

The influential role played by Martin Luther (1483-1546)

On 10 November 1483 Martin Luther was born in the province Eisleben. In 1502 he received his bachelor degree from the University of Erfurt in 1502 and in 1505 he received his master's degree. He studied law as per his father's request (Reddy, 2002:100). Reddy (2002:100) states "However, in 1505 he abandoned his legal studies and entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt." He entered a profession as a monk in autumn of 1506 and was ordained as a priest in 1507. Luther received his bachelor in theology in 1509 and in 1512 received his doctorate from Wittenberg. Luther had serious misgivings about the role of Roman Catholic dogma and the practices of other clergymen, even to the highest level in regards to ecclesiastical matters of the Roman Catholic Church (Reddy, 2004:116). Reddy (2004:116) states "His misgivings culminated on 32 October 1517 when he nailed his manifesto of 95 theses to the cathedral door (that served as the university bulletin board) in Wittenberg."

Reddy (2004:116) states that the theses which Luther nailed on the church door was an example of splendid written communication. This document ensured Luther a place in ecclesiastical history. Luther wanted to debate publically on the value of indulgences with anyone who had a doctorate in theology (Reddy, 2002:101). His disagreement with the church was much more than just the sale of indulgences (Zucker & Harris, 2017,n.p.).

Luther asserted: "At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open" (Christianity Today).

World Book Encyclopedia (1991:199) states "the theses were a series of statements that attacked the sale of indulgences (pardon from certain penalties for sins). Luther later criticized what he considered other abuses in the church." The 95 theses were nailed on the church door the day before All Saints Day, therefore many will have noticed and read the theses. Those that read them made mention of the contents to others not present. The theses were originally written in Latin and translated into different languages (Reddy, 2004:117). Dean (n.d.:146) states "in a fortnight they (theses) were in every part of Germany, and in a month they found their way to Rome. Somewhat later they were translated into Dutch and Spanish, and a traveller sold them in Jerusalem. Many were delighted with them – monks in their cells, and peasants in their cottages, rejoiced that they had heard the voice of truth." Luther's 95 theses were sent to Pope Leo X in Rome. Initially



confrontational communication was employed by the pope, then he used diplomatic channels (Reddy, 2004). Due to the intervention of the printing press, written communication played an important role. Tezel a Ramon clergyman published a set of theses with the assistance of an unknown priest who defended the sale of indulgences (Reddy 2004:117).

The conclusion of Luther's theses was criticized by a Dominican monk called Mazzolini, who also wrote a book defending the sale of indulgences. John Eck who was a theological professor replied to Luther in a pamphlet. Luther replied also using a pamphlet as a means of written communication. Luther wrote to all his opponents when he returned from the Augustinian order. Kuiper (1982:166) states, "the Roman Catholic Church held that only the priest could administer the sacraments, and without the sacrament of penance, without absolution and indulgences, there was no salvation." By questioning the sale of indulgences, Luther was basically questioning the functioning of the church (Reddy 2004:117).

The leaders of the reformation movements held fast to four fundamental teachings, which are as follows:

Firstly, they wanted to go back to the teachings of the New Testament church. They wanted to rediscover the spirit and practice which operated in the New Testament church. The writings of Jerome, Cyprian, Athanasius and Origen who were the early church fathers were republished. To the reformers their writings were of immense benefit (Reddy, 2002:102). The writings of St Augustine who was the 5th century church father was also favoured. Through St. Augustine's writings they were able to learn about the early church and their simple character. The Gospel of salvation which the reformers preached was by grace alone (Reddy, 2002:102).

Secondly, the reformers highlighted that the priesthood included all believers (Reddy, 2004). Thus there was no need for believers to have a mediator between them and God.

Thirdly, they highlighted the church is not a hierarchy but a community of believers which consisted of a living body, where everyone belonged.

Fourthly, they stressed that everyone should have access to the Holy Bible and not just the priest.

Portions of the Vulgate was translated into English by Wycliffe. The Roman Catholic Church rejected all these translations which they considered as unofficial documents. Reddy (2004:118) states "the Bible was regarded as the final authority pertaining to the question of faith and morals." Luther had the whole Bible translated. Both Lefevre and John Calvin translated the New Testament into French. Ordinary Christians were able to study the scriptures for themselves. *Luther's Table Talk* was a publication of Luther's conversation which he had with students during his meals.

In Rome heresy was regarded as a death sentence. Kuiper (1982:170) stated "a heretic deserved death by fire." The elector Frederick who was Luther's friend, forbade Tetzel to practice when it came to indulgences in Saxony. Luther was called to appear before Cajetan who was empowered by the pope via a letter. At these appearances he was to allow Luther to speak then demand the recant. In the event Cajetan was unable to arrest Luther, he was also ordered by the pope to put Luther and his followers under ban. At first Luther was guilty of heresy but now the pope regarded him as a notorious heretic. Due to the safe travelling which was issued by emperor Maximilian which was at the request of the elector Frederick, Luther's safe return to Augsburg was possible. In October 1518 Luther met Cajetan and had three interviews. Luther refused to recant even though his friends asked him to give in and settle things peacefully. Luther's discussions with Cajetan were unpleasant at times. This led to the Counter-Reformation as the church viewed Luther as a threat.

The Pope issued a "bull" which declared that indulgences were heretical because Cajetan failed to handle the situation with Luther (Reddy, 2002:103). Reddy (2004:119) states: "as a



result, Luther could no longer claim those questions, had not been officially decided by the church.” Luther could not be arrested by Pope Leo because of his friend the elector Frederick’s power. The Pope needed someone who could be most acceptable to Frederick and turned to Charles Von Miltitz, an emissary. Besides being elector private secretary he was also Frederick’s agent at Rome papal court. Before presenting his credentials to Frederick, Van Miltitz spoke to Luther. Luther agreed not to speak about indulgences anymore and to even write a submissive letter to the Pope. On 29 March 1519 the Pope replied to Luther in a pleasant letter. Luther was offered a trip to Rome with all expenses paid to make his confession. This resulted in Von Miltitz being regarded as more successful when compared to Cajetan. Reddy (2004:119) states “if Von Miltitz had received support from the Pope and if both sides had remained quiet subsequently, there is no telling how far the reconciliation between Luther and the Roman church might have gone.” In January 1519, the Pope was preoccupied after the death of Emperor Maximilian because he was focusing on the election campaign. His heresy charges against Luther were dormant for 14 months.

Andreas Carlstadt who was Luther’s fellow professor in theology wrote a set of theses which were against Eck. Reddy (2004:119) states “his (Andreas Carlstadt) theses were written to counter Eck’s written pamphlet against Luther’s ninety-five theses.” During the reformation written communication played a vital role for everyone to make known their values and beliefs. In trying to advance the view of papal supremacy, Eck retaliated with a counter thesis. This resulted in Luther publishing 12 theses which declared that “the claim of the Roman church to supremacy rested only on weak papal decrees of the last four hundred years” (Reddy, 2004:120). This was viewed as a serious attack on the Roman Catholic Church by Martin Luther. Debate was another form of communication which was employed during the time of the reformation and Eck challenged Luther to a debate surrounding the supremacy of the Pope. Before the debate which was to take in July 1519, Luther spent nine months of intense study. Luther spent time on canon law and church history. The decisions and *decretals* of general councils and popes make up the Canon Law and Luther discovered forgeries among many *decretals*.

On 4 July 1519 the debate was about to die, however Eck outmanoeuvred Luther by getting him to state that the teaching of Huss was condemned at the Council of Constance. By Luther standing on the side of a man officially condemned a heretic by the church, Eck was able to achieve his purpose. The Eastern Greek Orthodox church never acknowledged the bishop of Rome’s supremacy yet they are part of the church of Christ; Luther was basing his arguments on this perspective. Luther’s cause among his followers was strengthened after the Leipzig debate. Martin Bucer was a new follower who became an important leader of the reformation and who played a vital role in shaping the views of John Calvin. Persuasive communication played a vital role for one to indoctrinate another (Reddy, 2004:121).

The debate resulted in giving much greater clarity to Luther about his ideas and proved to be an important stage in the reformation movement. It became evident that reconciliation between the Roman Catholic Church and Luther was not possible. By Luther rejecting the supremacy of the Pope and the infallibility of councils, his break with Roman hierarchical system was highlighted (Reddy, 2004:121). Eck requested that Pope Leo issue a “bull” excommunicating Luther soon after the debate. Luther published an account of the Leipzig incident. Barnes (1993:50) states: “While it is true that Luther excelled in the area of oral communication, it is also true that he accomplished even more as a writer.” During the reformation there was a great abundance of letters and pamphlets, including a May 1520 Luther pamphlet entitled *On Good Works*. In this small book Luther stressed that man is saved by faith alone. For Protestant Christianity this became one of the most distinctive traits. Barnes (1991:51) further states “Besides the use of oral and written communication to educate the masses, Luther also invested time and energy in the use of institutions and schools, to complete his mission.” Persuasive communication is when a writer documents their values and beliefs in pamphlets, letters, books, or any other documented forms (Reddy, 2004:121). The reader could agree or disagree with the contents of such documents. Pope Leo signed the “bull” on 15 June 1520 and consequently excommunicated Luther. The “bull”



condemned as “heretical or scandalous or false or offensive to pious ears, or seducing to simple minds, and standing in the way of the Catholic Faith” (Kuiper, 1982:174). The papal “bull” forbade Luther to preach and wanted him and his followers to recant before 60 days passed, and called upon the faithful people to burn Luther’s books (Reddy, 2004:122). The pope wanted the literature to be burnt because he realised the impact and influence it would have on the people as it was propagating the values and beliefs of Martin Luther. It called for the burning of Luther’s literature, for the Pope realised the influence this literature had in propagating Luther’s values and beliefs. The Pope forbade Luther from also verbally communicating his values and beliefs. They were given a period of time to recant or face excommunication. Reddy (2004:122) states “if Luther and his followers complied, then it would indirectly have made null and void what Luther communicated to his followers, verbally as well as in writing.”

“Luther did not translate directly from the Latin Vulgate, and for some, this amounted to heresy. Luther had learned Greek the usual way, at Latin school at Magdeburg, so he could translate Greek works into Latin. There are tales, probably true, that Luther made forays into nearby towns and villages just to listen to people speak so that his translation, particularly of the New Testament, would be as close to ordinary contemporary usage as possible. This was not to be a Bible of and for the elite. Philip Schaff, the great church historian, opined: “The richest fruit of Luther’s leisure in the Wartburg [castle], and the most important and useful work of his whole life, is the translation of the New Testament, by which he brought the teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles to the mind and hearts of the Germans in life-like reproduction. ... He made the Bible the people’s book in church, school, and house” (Christianity Today).

The press was used by Luther as a means to mould public opinion, values and beliefs. Luther published many pamphlets and booklets because there were no newspapers during his time, such as magazine articles and newspaper editorials which we have presently. Barnes (1991:54) states “it is extremely doubtful that anyone could have matched him in terms of communicating theological truths. As for his production of pamphlets, Bagchi suggest that Luther was responsible for 94 percent of all pamphlets expounding Reformation theology published between 1518 and 1520.”

“Luther and William Tyndale deserve equal billing as the real pioneers of producing translations of the Bible from the original languages into the language of ordinary people, so they might read it, study it, learn it, and be moved and shaped by it. The Bible of the people, by the people, and especially for the people did not really exist before Luther and Tyndale” (Christianity Today).

People throughout Germany bought Luther’s books which circulated everywhere. Through the printing press Luther was able to gain large numbers of followers. In the later part of 1520 Luther published three works called, “*To the Christian Nobility of Germany, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church and The Liberty of a Christian Man*” (Kuiper, 1982:175). They are referred to as *The Three Great Reformation Treatises* (Reddy, 2002:108). Luther vowed to burn the Pope’s writings since the Pope ordered his documents to be burned. Luther made a bonfire which consisted of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical writings on 10 December 1520 outside the city of Wittenberg. On top of the pile of writings he placed a copy of the “bul” against him. He uttered the words, “as thou hast wasted the Holy One of God, so may the external flames waste thee” (Kuiper 1982:176). Hundreds of students remained behind and sang funeral dirges in honour of the burnt papal decretals and “bull” (Reddy, 2004:123). Reddy (2004:123) further states “the burning of the ecclesiastical documents and the papal “bull” was an act of communication on par with speaking or writing, because with that Luther symbolically declared Roman Catholicism dead.”

Pope Leo was unable to get Luther to recant and thus he turned to the emperor for help, who is the highest secular authority. During the Leipzig debate Charles, also known as



Charles V, king of Spain was elected emperor. He ruled over a large part of Italy and over the Netherlands and parts of America. He was known as Charles V in history.

He was elected emperor over Germany, therefore making him ruler over a larger region than Charlemagne. Since Charles V was a Catholic, Pope Leo appealed to him to have Luther appear before the Diet of Worms, which was the Council of German Rulers. On 2 April 1521 under safe conduct of the emperor, Luther started for the Worms Diet. Luther believed he was going to die from the conversation he had with Melancthon who was one of his colleagues. His words to his friends were, "My dear brother, if I do not come back, if my enemies put me to death, you will go on teaching and standing fast in the truth; if you live, my death will matter little" (Kuiper, 1982:177). The crowds wanted to see who was brave enough to stand against the Pope for Germany. They also believed he was going to die because of his values, beliefs and faith. It was on 17 April 1521 that Luther and Charles V met each other for the first time at the Diet of Worms.

After a short consultation the emperor granted Luther 24 hours to answer the questions posed to him by a member of the council since he requested more time to reply. The papacy suffered defeats when it came to secular powers during the preceding 200 years. The Pope was trying to use this situation to kill two birds with one stone. He was using this situation so that spiritual (papal) authority becomes superior to secular authority. By suppressing the heresy at the Diet, the papal authority would be elevated above imperial authority, should Luther be condemned and punished as a heretic. However, Pope Leo never got his way because the emperor gave Luther an opportunity to recant and time to think about it (Kuiper, 1982:179). On 18 April 1521 Luther appeared before the Diet for the second time. There are only summaries of Luther's actual address (Reddy, 2004:124). Luther was asked whether he would recant and was asked to answer plainly and he said, "If the emperor desires a plain answer, I will give it to him. It is impossible for me to recant unless I am proved to be wrong by the testimony of Scripture. My conscience is bound to the Word of God. It is neither safe nor honest to act against one's conscience. Here I stand. God help me. I cannot do otherwise" (Kuiper, 1982:179). He also asserted "Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds of reasoning ... then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience."

It was impossible for a decision to be made even though several conferences were held with Luther over the next few days. The emperor ordered him to leave the Diet and forbade him to preach anymore. Luther would be killed as a pestilent heretic because his safe conduct had expired. Many believed that the outcome of the Diet would be Luther's disappearance from the public scene. There was rejoicing at the Diet of Worms as speculation was high that Luther had been slain by the priest and the pope.

Luther reached Hersfeld on 1 May and preached even though he was banned. On every one of his journeys he preached with passion. On 4 May he was abducted by five masked men after he preached in an open-air meeting. This shows that even though he was banned he employed public communication to share his values and beliefs. The abduction was organised by Frederick the Wise to ensure Luther's safety. Had Frederick the Wise not protected Luther, he would have been burned at the stake like the many suspected "heretics" of the past (Kuiper, 1982:179). While at Frederick castle Luther wrote most of his writings during these 10 months (from 4 May 1521 to 3 March 1522). Luther caused a "volcanic eruption" from 1517 to 1521 which caused major quakes that convulsed the church in Germany and in many other countries in Western Europe (Kuiper, 1982:181).

The above information mentioned paved the way for the reformation. It consisted of changes which would be better for the church. The changes consisted of aspects of church doctrine, church government, life and worship. Changes were brought to the church both on the inside and outside. Changes in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the nations was brought about due to the reformation. This can be seen from the vast differences between Catholic and Protestant nations at the present time. Luther was regarded as radical yet



being very conservative at the same time (Kuiper, 1982:182). His great wisdom is seen in the mere fact that he only wanted to make a few changes to the reorganisation of the church (Reddy, 2004:127). However, some of his followers made many radical changes which led to confusion, conflict and disorder in Wittenberg. Luther against the advice of Frederick, went to preach for eight consecutive days and was able to restore order. Luther declared that all believers were “priests”. The very heart of the Roman system was attacked by Luther by breaking the yoke of Rome under which the Christians had groaned for many years (Kuiper, 1982:182).

Luther did away with the following: “prayer to the saints and Mary, worship of images, the veneration of relics, pilgrimages, religious processions, holy water, outward asceticism, monasticism, and prayers for the dead and belief in purgatory” (Reddy, 2004:127). However, his conservative nature led him to adopt principles from the old church which was allowed by the Bible. The Lutheran church kept the main altar with the candles and the picture of Christ, though the other altars and images were removed (Reddy, 2004:127). The Roman Catholic church taught the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice and a priest is required when this is conducted. They also taught the miraculously effected change of the bread and wine into actual body and blood of Christ, known as doctrine of transubstantiation. The laity were only allowed to partake of the bread and not the blood because in case they spilled some of the wine thereby shedding Christ’s blood anew. Luther taught Christ on the cross was offered as a sacrifice for all. Therefore, there is no need for a priest in the church. Since the time of the Protestant churches they had ministers or the Word (bible) and everyone partook in the communion (bread and wine). Luther still believed that Christ is present everywhere because He is part of the Godhead.

For Luther the forms of church organisation was not a major concern. The forms of church government were thus not based on scriptures which Luther adopted. He developed forms to meet the “step-up” of the church at that specific time. Luther discovered, after a systematic appraisal of church visitors, that there was an urgent need for reformation; Roman clergy neglected their duties, and both the clergy and laity were ignorant of religious truth (Reddy, 2004:127). This resulted in drafting new plans for guidance for church life as a set of regulations. The Lutheran church has superintendents but does not have Bishops, however they carry out the same function. The congregation is the basic unit in the Lutheran church and the pastor and number of elected officers make up church council. The Lutheran church government adopted the belief that the church should fall under the state. Luther was impacted by the experiences of his day and owed his personal safety to the elector of Saxony, so this stance is to an extent understandable.

Protestant churches were established in areas of Germany where the princes were accepted. Due to this aspect, a great deal of power was given to the protestant princes in regard to the affairs of the church. In the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway there was a reformed church by the 16th century. In various ways they adopted the Lutheran type of reformation. Luther translated the Bible into German for his people while he was in his 10 months of hiding. Luther believed that everyone should be able to read the Bible and not just the Roman Catholic priests. Latin was replaced by German during church services. Luther was also greatly involved in establishing schools everywhere so that children could be grounded in evangelical doctrine by effective means of communication. One of Luther’s most important works was his Shorter Catechism. Generations of Lutheran churches were reared by this Shorter Catechism. Luther made contributions to the hymnal and he also wrote poetry and this was done in the midst of a period of warfare in Rome. The poem entitled “*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*”, translated “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” will live on forever (Kuiper, 1982:184).

The Diet of Augsburg in 1530 received an official statement declaring the faith of the Lutheran church. This statement did not replace the creeds of the ancient churches but was rather unique and known as the Augsburg Confession. It expanded on the doctrines of the ancient church which were formulated in the Apostles Creed (Reddy 2004:129). It also included Creeds of Chalcedon and Nicaea.



World Book Encyclopaedia (1991:531) states “Luther’s role in the composing of music is almost as significant as his contributions to German literature and the German language.” Luther’s hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* was Luther’s best known hymn and he opened a new era of music in the church. Phillip Melanchthon who was a Greek professor published the first systematic presentation known as *Loci Communes*. Melanchthon played an influence on late Lutheranism. The Elector of Saxony was Spalatin who was a valuable assistant to Luther. Spalatin played a vital role as he played an intermediary role between the Elector of Saxony, Prince Frederick and Luther. Many monks and nuns got married after Luther married a former nun named Catherine von Borg. This resulted in another attack on the Roman Catholic church because priests and nuns were not allowed to marry as they had to follow the path of celibacy. Since Luther emerged from medievalism this greatly influenced his theological education.

“Luther’s legacy is immense and cannot be adequately summarized. Every Protestant Reformer –like Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and Cranmer – and every Protestant stream – Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist were inspired by Luther in one way or another. On a larger canvas, his reform unleashed forces that ended the Middle Ages and ushered in the modern era. It has been said that in most libraries, books by and about Martin Luther occupy more shelves than those concerned with any other figure except Jesus of Nazareth” (Christianity Today).

The Protestant Reformation in Switzerland

Although this section focuses on the forms of communication employed by John Calvin, it also looks at how Calvin was challenged by Guillaume Farel and how it led to him becoming more effective in propagating the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland

John Calvin (1509-1546)

John Calvin was the most prominent reformer in continental Europe and in Switzerland. Green (1975:166) states “Calvinism crystallised the reformation.” Calvin was Chaplain at the age of 11 due to his father’s influence. It was normal for boys to be appointed into church office. He had refined manners of the aristocracy because he grew up in the household of a nobleman.

For many years the Roman Catholic Church was in turmoil. Professor Lefevre published commentaries of Apostle Paul’s Epistles and a Latin translation, and this before the work by Luther was done in 1512. “God saves by grace alone” was what Lefevre believed in and this was not based on the so-called good deeds done by the living on behalf of those who are dead in order to save them from purgatory. Guillaume Farel who was a pupil of Lefevre began propagating the beliefs of his teacher. The King of France’s sister whose name was Margaret, was one of the converts of the Protestant message. By 1525 the Roman Catholic Church condemned the little book by Margaret and the writings of Luther and Lefevre because this new faith raised fierce opposition to the church. In 1523 this was the situation that prevailed in France when John Calvin appeared. Overall Calvin mastered his studies, from the classical languages to the writings of the church Fathers, logic and law. He made influential friends in every French city he visited, like Nicolas Cop in Paris, Theodore Beza in Bourges, and so forth. It is rumoured that Cop’s All Saints Day which was in 1533 sounded like the ideas of Luther and Erasmus, therefore, they had to flee for the lives as their lives were in danger.

Calvin’s Greek teacher Wolmar, his family and many others shaped his ideas. Calvin assumed names such as Charlse of Esperville or Martianus Lucanius, while he was on the run (Reddy 2004:131). He taught small groups wherever he went, however this was done secretly. Highlighting small group communication was employed by Calvin to make known his values and beliefs. In France Protestants were not safe. Since Zwingli’s death in 1531, the Protestants in the regions he impacted were moving more towards Calvin’s teachings. During 1535 Calvin’s wanderings stopped and he started formulating his understanding of



the Protestant Reformation. In spring of 1536 Calvin published the Institutes of the Christian Religion which was initially a Catechism. This was an exposition of evangelical truth produced during the Protestant Reformation; initially written in classical Latin but translated into elegant French. It was known as the leading statement of evangelical faith. The World Book Encyclopaedia (1956:200) states “this book (Institutes of the Christian Religion) achieved immediate recognition for Calvin and he expanded it throughout his life.” The Institutes is even recognised today as a widely acknowledged exposition of teaching of Scripture (Reddy, 2004:132).

Calvin tried explaining to the King of France in a letter that the people who were being persecuted were not radicals but believers in the Bible, and therefore they were worthy of better treatment than what they were experiencing. However, Calvin was unable to convince the king and had to flee. Reddy (2004:129) states “in spite of the hardships that followed Calvin was soon portrayed as a voice of religious dissent, and not recognised as a religious and social reformer in France.”

Calvin and Guillaume Farel continue the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland

Guillaume Farel was an evangelical preacher who in October 1532 visited Geneva. Due to his visit to the Synod of Waldenses, a large number of people accepted the principles of the Reformation. Farel’s dynamic preaching turned the tide of followers from Catholicism to Protestantism. In 1535 he served in the *Cathedral of St Peter and Church of LA Madeleine*. Throughout the city of Geneva, destruction swept with a new impetus as people were destroying images within the churches, nuns and monks were driven out and mass was no longer practiced. Protestantism became the official religion in Geneva because the citizens of the General Assembly were ardently in favour of the Reformation. In 1536 Calvin settled in Geneva in Switzerland after he fled France. It was here that Farel the Protestant theologian sought his help in setting up in Geneva the continuing Reformation. At that time in Geneva, religious and political turmoil was increasing. Calvin was amazed by Farel approaching him and also unaware of the unrest in the city. Calvin’s teachings made him widely known among all types of scholars, those in favour of the Reformation and those against the Reformation, including Farel. Calvin tried denying Farel’s requests because he felt he was ill-experienced for such a task as requested. Farel response was thought provoking and caused terror in Calvin’s mind when he said “may God curse your studies if now in her time of need you refuse to lend your aid to His church” (Kuiper, 1982:193-194). This tirade ultimately resulted in Calvin accepting Farel’s request.

The above incident is an example of confrontational communication which was between the co-workers of the Reformation (Reddy 2004). Reddy (2004:133) states “there also is an interesting parallel between Paul’s enlistment by Barnabas (Acts 9:27-28) and Calvin’s enlistment by Farel.”

Green (1975:166) states “Calvin could at least rest secure in the knowledge that he had created one of the most significant religious and political movements in world history.” Initially Calvin was one of Farel’s preachers and they included both small group and public communication practices. Calvin formulated three proposals which he and Farel presented to the city council, which were as follows:

- The Lord’s Supper should be administered once a month. Believers who don’t live a good Christian life should be disciplined. If need be, such individuals should be excommunicated.
- Calvin’s Catechism should be adopted.
- The people should subscribe to a suggested creed possibly drawn up by Farel.

Due to Calvin’s ascetic discipline in regards to the moral life, many expected him to be driven out because of the bitter opposition that arose. Calvin’s second in charge was Theodore Beza who became the first rector of the Academy. He pastored the Geneva Reformed Church from the time Calvin died, for a period of 40 years. In 1559 the third and



final editions of the Institutes were published. In comparison to the first edition, it was five times larger. Through his writing, Calvin impacted Italy, Poland, Hungary and Western Germany. His writings included the Bible commentaries, Institutes and his correspondence with individuals from various European countries (Reddy, 2004:134). Though Calvin suffered due to having a combination of painful diseases, he overcame many challenges to fulfil his Christian commission as a servant of Christ. Due to his difficulties and extensive labours, on 24 May 1564 John Calvin died a mighty propagator of the Reformation. Kuiper (1982:200) states "His (Calvin's) motto was: '*Cor meum tibi offerre Domine prompte sincere*' " when "Freely translated this means: 'My heart for thy cause I offer thee, Lord, promptly and sincerely."

The differences and similarities between Martin Luther and John Calvin

When one does an introspection into the work carried out by Luther in Germany and Calvin in Switzerland, one will discover many amazing differences and similarities. A major difference between these two reformers was the role they foresaw between the state and the church (Reddy, 2004:134). Luther gave the German territorial princes a lot of power when it came to the affairs of the church. While Calvin wanted to create a model community in Geneva, in which the restored freedom of the church from the state and Geneva will be a *city of God*. Calvin wanted the church to be free from the state. Luther retained much of the Roman Catholic Church form of worship, while Calvin strayed from that part of worship where it was possible. Beckford (2017:n.p.) states that due to Lutheranism spreading, many anticipated that there would be a tolerance for all forms of worship.

At Wittenberg University, Luther was first a professor and later became a preacher of the gospel. Calvin was first a preacher and minister and then became a professor at the University of Geneva. When it came to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Calvin differed from both Luther and Zwingli. He taught that during communion Christ is actually present in the bread and wine. He believed that it is by faith partaken of by the communicant spiritually and not bodily. Calvin believed in predestination while Luther believed in salvation by faith alone. The city of Geneva became known as the city of Calvin similar to how Wittenberg was referred to as the city of Luther. Only the contents of the Bible were permitted by Calvin. The sermon was the main aspect of liturgy during the church services by both reformers. Luther leaned towards hymns while Calvin preferred Psalms as they provided for congregational singing. Calvin thus preferred Psalms while Luther preferred hymns. They believed that everyone should read the Bible for themselves. Both translated the Bible into their respective languages, Luther translated into German and Calvin into French. During the time of Luther, German as a language was not standard, therefore by standardising the Bible he became a linguist of note (Reddy, 2004:135). This was also the case with French. There were a dozen feuding regional leaders in Germany and they didn't want to accept the dialect of another when it came to the medium of translation. By accommodating Germany on the whole Luther decided to combine the different dialects when it came to translating the Bible into German. In 1559 Calvin's final edition of Institutes was published which was five times larger than the initial copy of 1536. Calvin impacted Italy, Western Germany, Hungary and Poland through his various writings. World Book Encyclopaedia (1991:200) states "Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541) established the structure of a *Presbyterian* form of church government in which a council of elders rules each church." During the final years of his life he established the Geneva Academy which was regarded as one of his greatest achievements.

Calvin realised the huge need for education. Through the sacrificial giving of the common people, the university was built (Reddy, 2004:136). Both reformers wrote catechisms to equip church members so that they could be effectively grounded in church doctrine. Both reformers were men of faith. Luther started the Reformation due to his bold stance against the Roman Catholic Church. However, it was the pre-reformers who set the stage for him. Reddy (2004:136) states "nevertheless Protestantism praised him on the one hand but he received the condemnation of Catholicism for his leadership of the reforming movement on the other." As stated Calvin's leadership and work differed much from Luther. He was



building on the foundation laid by Luther as a second generation reformer. He was able to relook at the interpretation of his writings and so forth. When it came to explaining the scriptures, Calvin was exceptionally brilliant. His work is first rank, even after 500 years.

The reformers did not intend to cause a spilt in the church organisation. They wanted to return to the apostolic teachings and sought purification and not revolution and dissension as believed by their counterparts. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and the other reformers stood against the Roman Catholic Church and led a reform which took the Christian church back to the basic teachings of faith (Reddy, 2004:136-137). One offshoot group was the Anabaptists who were a small group of believers who spread their teachings after the reformation in various countries of Europe.

Other significant divergences

There is a significant disagreement between Luther and Calvin concerning the relationship between the church and the state. This was clearly based upon their unique socio-political settings. Luther lived in Mediaeval Germany where each state was under the sole power of a prince. Luther was quite content to permit the government to supervise the administration of all church matters. Calvin, on the other hand opposed any meddling from the state. He maintained the church should control itself.

In terms of Baptism both Luther and Calvin believed in infant baptism, but their considerations regarding its usefulness were different. Luther saw baptism as a sacrament, which saves the one baptized whether an adult or an infant. The Holy Spirit is given to one baptised so that they hold onto true faith in Christ and all sin is pardoned. Calvin, on the other hand, considered baptism to be a mere external sign via which one is attached to the visible church as a gift of God's grace, therefore baptism serves no purpose.

Luther and Calvin both believed in the public, instructive and ethical use of the Law. Luther stressed upon the Law as a means of unhappiness, censure and a "ministry of death" from which humankind required Gospel driven liberation. Calvin was more eager to underscore the positive features of the Law when it came to a believer's sanctification. The Law is a faultless expression of God's blessed resolve to help humanity attain salvation.

An overview of the forms of communication employed by the reformation leaders

The 95 theses which Luther nailed on the Cathedral of Wittenberg was the first major stance of communication. Luther's first major act of communication is viewed as a *public written confrontational communication*. It was through this form of communication that Luther challenged the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church of his day. From this incident the news of Luther's theses spread by *word of mouth* among people along the "grapevine" (Reddy, 2004:137).

Debate was another form of communication employed by the Protestant reformers. *Printed media* played a vital role during the reformation. Luther and Calvin maximised the use of *written communication* so that they could reach the masses. They employed *public communication* and *small group interpersonal communication* to maintain and propagate their values and beliefs and views of Protestant Reformation. Calvin's Institutes made him renowned throughout Europe. Luther was one of the first professors to teach in German instead of Latin. The New Testament was translated from the original Greek while he was in Wartburg in hiding. He used the original Hebrew when he translated the Old Testament into German. Reddy (2004:138) states "*translations* of the Bible were among the most powerful agencies for the promotion of the Reformation."

Discussion

Reddy (2004:137-138) highlights that the early church had a movement phase and a subsequent phase as the early church leaders reconfigured it into an organisation. During



the movement phase they spread over Asia Minor and as far as Rome. It was during the organisation stage of the early Christian church that their leaders documented their values and beliefs and established Christian as a separate religion from Judaism. It was the writing of the epistles and letters which encouraged the Christians to hold fast to the faith and to resolve issues within the congregations. The same pattern of an initial emerging movement later becoming an organisation is true of the Protestant Reformation. As in the case of the early Christians spreading the gospel while they were fleeing for their lives, Luther and Calvin did the same under similar circumstances. And finally just as *written communication* marked the establishment of the early Christian church as an organisation, the extensive bodies of *writing* of Luther and Calvin did the same for the Protestant Reformation.

Conclusion

The above information presented confirms the validity of Klopper's Theory of Optimisation of Human Communication regarding the establishment of the Protestant church. During the movement phase the Protestant Reformation employed verbal communication, small group interpersonal communication, written communication to propagate and maintain themselves. While they were differentiating themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, the leaders of the Reformation were documenting their values and beliefs as they became into the organisational phase. Luther established his churches where he used written communication intensively to make known his teachings. He even translated the Bible into German; while on the other hand John Calvin translated the Bible into French and had many writings which gave his followers guidance into the operation of the church.

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