

Friends of the Center

How Does the Protestant Reformation Influence Us Today?

The assigned topic is, by itself, a great challenge. Countless articles, books, sermons, plays, films, paintings, and other resources have been created about the Protestant Reformation. This highlights the importance of this historical event, which has had—and continues to have—a profound impact, as a process that still inspires deep reflection.

Trying to answer the question posed here with absolute clarity and certainty would be overly ambitious. Therefore, the purpose of this writing is not to provide a definitive answer, but rather to share a pastoral perspective—since I am a pastor—on what I observe and feel compelled to reflect on when I consider the Reformation as a living process.

“Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda”—the Church reformed, always reforming—is a theological expression that developed over time, affirming the Church's ongoing need for review and renewal. This phrase suggests that, if we wish to remain faithful and relevant in our current context, we must engage continuously with our reality.

I am convinced that the early Reformers, with all their human fragility, offered what they were and, in the midst of intense debates, fought to promote serious, profound, and necessary reflection. This, in my view, is the main thread we must uphold as we look back at the 500+ years of the Reformation's history. To study it without considering how it has evolved would be to reduce it to a set of historical facts that may lose relevance for contemporary generations.

If ever there was a need for wide and updated dialogue about the meaning of the Reformation, it is now—in the 21st century. We live in times of such rapid change that we often don't even have time to process what's happening, let alone respond with clarity or discernment. This is one of the greatest challenges we face as direct heirs of the Reformation.

Today, our historical denominations—also known as mainline churches—are experiencing significant decline. Some studies even predict the end of denominationalism as we know it. Faced with this reality, rather than justifying or rationalizing our situation, we must return to one of the foundational ideas of the Reformation: the courage to provoke change.

While the Reformation was broader than one person, it is undeniable that Martin Luther was a central figure in its beginning. Luther embodied a deep dissatisfaction with how the Church was living out its mission in history, and



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he courageously called others to join him in initiating a transformation that has endured through time.

This is the core idea that, today more than ever, we should consider seriously—both within our immediate contexts and in broader Protestant circles. Luther looked at reality from his own perspective, yes—but he did so with courage, with the transparency that his humanity allowed him, and with the conviction that it was necessary to act. Today, our present time demands the same of us. We are called to respond without fear or hesitation.

Moreover, we now have access to new technological tools that, if used wisely, can help us broaden our horizon of reflection and carry out a deeper review of the challenges we face. Remaining static in what we've done, without seeking a continual renewal that preserves the essence of who we are—the body of Christ—cannot be an option.

To ignore the impact that these rapid changes are having on our ecclesial structures, especially on emerging generations, is to continue down a path of confusion—and worse, toward disappearance. Among the many things the Reformation still speaks to us about in different areas, I believe that this is one of the clearest: the need for a constant desire for reform, and a deep commitment to seeing reality as it truly is—not as we wish it to be.

If the forebears of the Reformation had not accepted the cost and commitment of provoking a change in their time, history today would look very different. Likewise, the future path of our successors will change if we fail to respond to the call that the present moment is placing upon us.

We do not know what that future history will be. But I would dare to say this: if we do not embrace the process of renewal to which the Spirit is calling us, we will no longer be “salt and light in this world.”

May the Lord help us in this reflective process, so that—rooted in the essence of the gospel—we might be able to provoke the transformation that we so deeply need, and must not avoid.

– Rvd. Esteban González Doble

