



**Revolution, Rebellion,
Reformation: 500
Years after Martin
Luther**

Quayle Bible Collection
Open Saturdays & Sundays
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The Protestant Reformation

In Wittenburg, Germany on October 31, 1517, a professor named Martin Luther stood at the entrance of the local church door and nailed a list of 95 complaints to it. The complaints ranged from corruption in the Church to the selling of indulgences to pay for the building of St. Peter's Basilica. However, like any college professor would, Luther primarily complained about the lack of access to knowledge and primary sources. Although this was not the Vatican, it was a symbolic gesture that one church belonged to a bigger whole.

The movement did not necessarily start with Luther. Instead, Luther existed in a time frame in which there was a culmination of movements that had begun a hundred years before. The rise of education and socioeconomic stability in Europe lead to people having access to read the Bible in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, as well as Greek and Roman philosophy. As soon as Luther sparked the fire, the movement spread throughout most of Europe. The Church attempted to quell the fire by reforming theology and increasing art projects, yet the damage had been done.

The movement ends over a hundred years later with the Thirty Years War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The Protestant Movement did not only extend to religion, but it encompassed all European life. It helped spawn ideas of Nationalism, Secularism, the Enlightenment, Scientific Innovation, and the concept of University. It is the movement that would help create modernity in Europe.

Special thanks to those who helped guide and assemble this exhibit:

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Major Reformers and Other Movements

The figures on the North wall either had a major impact or led significant movements protesting the Church. Even today, many of the “mainline” Protestant churches only uplift Luther and Calvin. Many other movements and reformers are not as well known or their roles impacted other realms of Western civilization, such as science. The other fact is that the women of the Protestant movement are not frequently discussed by historians, with the exception of Elizabeth I. These posters are meant to represent those figures of the Reformation.

Case 1. Martin Luther

When Martin Luther opposed the Church, he challenged the very authority of Pope Leo X and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. This led to his excommunication and his exile at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Luther’s theology developed because he had the access to study original texts. During this time, Europe was rediscovering many different religious and philosophical texts and reading them in original languages. Luther’s reading of the Bible came at a time where many scholars were also reading Plato and shaping the field of Philosophy. Luther believed that the Bible alone held the authority of God and that Papal decree was not divinely inspired. As a result, most of his complaints against the Church were formed in areas where the Church’s rulings were not biblically based. A primary theological concept that was debated was salvation, which Luther saw as something that came only through God. Many cite the selling of indulgences, or forgiveness for sins, by Johann Tetzel as the spark for Luther’s action. He also took issue with the office of the Priesthood, an office in which he was a member. Luther believed that all Christians should have access to the

knowledge of the holy priesthood. He also believed that priests and nuns should have the right to marry.

Case 2. Luther and Erasmus

It has been said that Erasmus was Luther's greatest opponent, and it was not unprovoked. Luther wrote an entire work, *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525), protesting Erasmus' *On the Free Will* (1524). In this, Luther put forth his ideas of *Sola Fide*, which means that through faith of God alone is how people reach salvation. This idea will lead to the concept of predestination that nothing a person does determines their fate, but only the grace of God. Yet Erasmus and Catholic Doctrine state that humans choose to do good or bad. Even though the two vehemently disagreed, Erasmus was known for his brilliance and kindness among Protestants. In a letter from Zwingli (depicted on the North wall), he stated about Erasmus, "When I think of writing to you, Erasmus, best of men, I am frightened by the brilliance of your learning, which demands a more spacious world than that 'which all around we see,' but I am encouraged at the same time by the charming kindness you showed me when I came to see you." Erasmus was not completely blameless in the Protestant Reformation and actually translated versions of the Bible from the original languages. He was also concerned with having access to primary texts for personal interpretation.

Case 3. John Calvin

Inspired by the works of Luther, a lawyer and preacher from France decided to participate in the Reformation. In 1536, he began writing his famous apology for reformation religion, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin was well known for

his work in Geneva, in which he transforms the city into a theocracy. He was also known for his theology of predestination, the idea that God ordained people's fates long before they were born. Calvin believed that "All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation." Many contemporary Protestant denominations, such as Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, consider Calvin as a founding thinker.

Case 4. The Counter Reformation

Spanning from 1545-1563 and through the reign of five popes, the Council of Trent started the Counter Reformation or Catholic Reformation. The Counter Reformation was the attempt of the Church to slow the Protestant Reformation and to maintain public trust in the Church. The Counter Reformation also contained strategies to reconvert Protestant regions back to Catholicism. Like the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Reformation stopped with the Thirty Years' War in 1648. However, the impact of the Counter Reformation was especially known through attempts to spread Catholicism through colonization. The other major theological impact of the Counter Reformation was to shift Catholic theology to a personal relationship with God, which they believed was a major appeal of the Protestant movements.

Case 5. Reformers Before Luther

Although he gains most of the credit, Luther was not the first reformer, and many of the theologians that preceded him argued for similar issues. Like Luther, John Wycliffe (1300s CE) wanted access to the biblical text and did not agree with the hierarchy of the clergy over other Christians.

Although he died before he could be condemned, the Church burned many of his texts, exhumed his body, burned it, and threw the rest of his remains in a river.

In Bohemia, Jan Hus (or Huss) began a movement in the early 1400s that would eventually lead to the Hussite Wars of Bohemia. Hus followed the works of Wycliffe and questioned the morality and status of the clergy. He was condemned and burned at the stake. According to legend, an old woman put a small amount of wood on the fire, and a burning Hus stated, “Sancta Simplicitas!” (Holy Simplicity!)

Case 6. Early English Reformation

William Tyndale is the perfect example of someone influenced by the Reformation that came before him. Although he was an English scholar and a linguist, he drew on the theological works of Wycliffe, Luther, and even Erasmus. Tyndale believed that there should be an English translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek; however, at the time, the penalty of having translated scripture was death. Tyndale was exiled for his ideas, and while in exile, even wrote tracts opposing Henry VIII’s annulment. In 1536, he received the death penalty; however, his work would lead to the Reformation spreading through England. In fact, the King James Bible would draw the most on his translations.

While Tyndale was in exile, he worked with Myles Coverdale on the translations of the Bible. Tyndale never completely translated the entire text, and Coverdale did not know Hebrew. After Tyndale died, Coverdale wanted to finish the text and used the Greek and Latin texts to fill in the gaps left by Tyndale. He even translated some of Luther and Zwingli for his translation. He used Tyndale’s Pentateuch (first five

books of the Bible) and his Jonah, but the remainder he took from other translations. In 1534, he petitioned the king to allow him to publish the complete English Bible. Some believe that Coverdale truly represents the spread of Protestantism in England considering he goes from an Augustinian Friar to an Anglican and finally to a Puritan.

Case 7. The Authorized Bibles

Henry VIII was Catholic, and he opposed the works of Luther. He even wrote a defense of Church doctrine; however, he believed in Divine Right, which for him was not compatible with the Apostolic Tradition. He did not believe that there was any man between him and God. Thus, when he was denied a divorce from the Pope, he split from the Church. The Great Bible represents the final split considering English translations carried a death sentence before he authorized one.

Like her father, Elizabeth was invested in the politics of the Church. She came to power in the wake of her sister, Mary, who sent many Protestants to death. Under Elizabeth, the Church of England was allowed to evolve even further. While Henry VIII did not want to change much of his Catholic theology, Elizabeth allowed the Protestant movement to develop. Although the Bishop's Bible was never dedicated to her, it contains her image in the front cover, solidifying her role in the development of the Church of England.

Case 8. Formation of the Church of England

Thomas Cranmer is known for producing the Book of Common Prayer; however, he also was put in power as the Archbishop of Canterbury to grant Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon illegal in the eyes of God. His election to his post was even aided by the family of Anne Boleyn. He

was included in the excommunication handed down by Pope Clement VII, and he baptized Elizabeth when she was born. When Henry imprisoned Anne, Cranmer heard her confession and pronounced the marriage null and void. In fact, Cranmer had a hand in much of the King's religious activities, including officiating his marriage to Anne of Cleves. Cranmer attempted to bring more Protestant values to the Church, but found resistance from Henry. When Henry died, he was allowed to influence the Church more substantially, and wrote the Book of Common Prayer. He even attempted to bring Calvin and the reformer Melancton (featured on the North wall) to England, but the meeting never happened.

Cranmer was imprisoned by Henry's Catholic daughter Mary, who wanted to make an example of him. He recanted from being a Protestant several times, but she was not pleased and sentenced him anyway. Before his death, he took back his statements and declared that the Pope was the Anti-Christ. He was immediately burned at the stake. When Elizabeth came to power shortly after his death, she adopted much of his prayer book and reestablished the Church to resemble how he shaped it. The apology written by Jewell represents this time when the Church was reestablished in the shadows of Cranmer.

Case 9. The Geneva Bible

The Puritans were much more influenced by continental movements than the rest of the Church of England. They rejected the idea of a formal power structure that stood between the people and the text, which the Church saw as anarchical. Instead, like Luther and Calvin, they believed that the people should be able to study the text. The extensive notes of the Geneva Bible represent that breakdown of the priesthood that the Church of England represented. In fact,

their rebellion from the Church was almost a microcosm of Luther's rebellion against Rome. The narrative told to so many school children in the U.S. is that the Pilgrims / Puritans escaped religious persecution and fled to the Americas, proof that their story is even engrained in the American subconscious.

Case 10. The King James Bible

There is not enough space to discuss the significant impact of the King James Bible upon English and American Protestantism. It is the culmination of the long history of the movement. Drawing on the works of Wycliffe, Tyndale, the Great Bible, Bishop's Bible, and Geneva Bible, it would become the symbol of English translations. So much so, that many Protestant's today do not know about the other English translations that existed before it. The Quayle Collection has a correspondence from Harry S. Truman where he suggests that very idea. During the reign of James I, James attempted to appease Puritans and Anglicans, yet fell short in many ways. He removed much of the Geneva Bible's commentary, but translated the text as much from the original as possible (47 translators worked on the project). He was not without opposition, with a Catholic plot against his life as well as Puritans not being pleased with some of the translation, especially the Psalms. When it was finalized in 1611, the King James Bible became the standard text for many Protestants, even today. However, much like the rest of Europe, England erupted into civil war in 1642 under the reign of James I's son Charles. At the heart of this war was a dispute between Catholics and Protestants, and whether the Queen was Catholic. Yet like the rest of Europe, the war brings the English Reformation to an end but helps usher in a modern England.

For Further Reading

The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction, by Peter Marshall. (2009)

Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648, Mark Greengrass. (2014)

Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation, by Andrew Pettegree. (2016)

October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day that Changed the World, by Martin E. Marty and James Martin, S.J. (2016)

Calvinism: A History, by D. G. Hart. (2013)

The Huguenots, by Geoffrey Treasure. (2013)

Women and the Reformation by Kirsi Stjerna. Calvin. (2008)

The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church, by G.W. Bernard. (2005)

Heretic Queen: Queen Elizabeth I and the Wars of Religion, by Susan Ronald (2012)

Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible, by Julian Reid and Helen Moore. (2011)

To Visit:

Drop in for a visit between 1:00 and 4:00 any Saturday or Sunday. To arrange for a visit at another time or for a group tour, please call.

You may want to consider visiting other sites in Baldwin City such as the Osborne Chapel, the Holt-Russell Gallery, the Old Castle Museum, or the Lumberyard Arts Center.

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