

# LAMPLIGHTER

*"Prophecy is like a lamp shining in a dark place." - II Peter 1:19*

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**The Reformation  
500 Years Later**

*Estimote  
1874*



# Observations by the Editor

## Forerunners

As you will see when you read the Articles in this edition of our magazine, the Reformation was a titanic movement that changed everything.

But it did not develop in a vacuum. Although it is dated to October 31, 1517, when a Catholic monk named Martin Luther issued his challenges to Catholic doctrine, there were forerunners to Luther who paved the way for the revolution that ensued.

### Waldo and Wycliffe

There was Peter Waldo (1140-1205) in France who condemned what he considered as papal excesses and Catholic dogmas, including purgatory and transubstantiation. In 1170 he started employing men to translate the Bible into the common language of France. (This was when the Bible was available only in Latin.)

But the most important forerunner of Luther was an English theologian named John Wycliffe (c. 1324-1384). Disgusted by the immorality of the Roman Catholic priests, Wycliffe stepped forward in 1378 and launched himself as a doctrinal reformer. He condemned the teachings of indulgences, transubstantiation and papal infallibility. He was the first to label the pope as Antichrist.

He further taught that Jesus, and not the pope, is the head of the Church; that the Bible, and not the pope, is the sole authority of truth; and that the Church should be patterned after the New Testament Church.

Wycliffe's most important contribution to reform came in 1382 when he published his English New Testament which he and others had translated from the Latin Vulgate.

### John Hus

Wycliffe's teachings had a tremendous effect on a Czech priest named John Hus (1369-1415). Like Wycliffe, Hus preached against indulgences; he taught that the true Church was the universal body of believers; he argued that Christ, and not the pope, is the head of the Church; he reasoned that the Scriptures should be the final source for all truth; and he maintained that church membership did not guarantee salvation. He also



Dr. David R. Reagan

advocated that the Scriptures should be made available to the people in their own languages.

Hus was excommunicated by the pope and sent into exile. He was later burned at the stake, and John Wycliffe's writings were used as kindling for the fire. In some of his last words in 1415, he prophesied that there would arise a man whose call for reformation could not be suppressed. That prophecy was fulfilled 100 years later in 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany.

### Martin Luther

Regarding Martin Luther, I have always had mixed emotions about him. He certainly should be admired for having the courage to stand boldly against the most powerful and corrupt institution of the Middle Ages. It is a miracle of God that he did not lose his life for doing so. I also admire his love of God's Word and his desire for it to be the source of all authority for the Church.

But I am mortified by his virulent anti-Semitism and his satanic proposals for dealing with the Jews — proposals which the Nazis gleefully instituted.

### This Issue's Articles

All the articles in this issue about the Reformation were written specifically for this magazine. Some had to be edited and revised for length and for technical theological language. The goal was to make each article as readable as possible to the average person without compromising the integrity of the author's message. I am very grateful to each author. ✚

The cover painting, "Martin's 95 Theses," is by Ferdinand Pauwels (1830-1904). The image was supplied by akg-images.

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# October 31, 2017: Celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation



“Luther at the Diet of Worms” by Anton von Werner, 1877. This painting portrays the most dramatic moment in Luther’s life when he appeared before the Imperial Diet (assembly) at Worms, Germany. The representative of the Emperor and Archbishop, Johann Eck, demanded that Luther recant all his writings. Luther refused, knowing that his refusal could lead to his execution. The confrontation occurred on April 18, 1521.

## Dr. Timothy J. Demy

The Protestant Reformation swept across Europe like a theological tsunami affecting every social, political, and religious institution in existence in the West. And its effects remain a part of western culture and permeate it 500 years later. In its wake a new world was created.

No other event in the then almost 1500-year history of Christianity had been so tumultuous. And like a tsunami, there was more than a single theological wave moving over Europe and crashing against the established Catholic Church. The Reformation consisted of several movements of renewal and reform, even though we usually think of them as one big thing we call the Reformation. It was profound and generated long-lasting consequences.

From its inception, advocates, critics, observers, theologians, and historians have called the Reformation many things, among them: a revolution, a religious hurricane, a heresy, an evolutionary process, and a score of other things. Metaphors, analogies, and depictions of it abound. In a sense, many of them are correct or overlap in their description. Few people in the last 500 years have denied the Reformation’s significance and its lasting influence.

The Reformation was indeed, many things. It was social. It was political. It was economic. It was cultural. But fundamentally and at its core, it was theological.

## The Beginnings

Popular understanding of the Reformation dates to All Souls’ Eve, October 31, in the liturgical calendar of the year 1517 and to the actions of a German theologian and university professor named Martin Luther. However, the actions of this monk with a mallet, posting a call for public debate on the door of the church in Wittenberg was not the work of a single individual igniting a firestorm on his own. There had been precursors. Ideas never arise in a vacuum.

Just as a tsunami begins its powerful surge starting far out at sea and miles from the unsuspecting landmass it approaches, so too did the Reformation begin years before Luther’s posting of the infamous “95 Theses.” There long had been growing swells of discontent within Christianity in the West.

The world of medieval Catholic (Latin) Christianity, out of which the Reformation arose, was multifaceted with strengths and weaknesses. In the experiences and views of the Reformers, the latter outweighed the former. For them, Catholicism and Christianity in the West had become an impersonal and ecclesiastical bureaucracy that favored the hierarchy that controlled it at the spiritual and financial expense of the laity.

Some, desiring reform in the Church, believed that it could be accomplished best by remaining within Catholicism. Others, diametrically opposed, argued for withdrawal. And yet others

hoped to bring reformation from within, but gradually conceded the necessity of withdrawal. Reform caused multiple responses.

### Reform Efforts

For a couple of hundred years, at least, there had been a growing concern regarding papal power. For example, this concern had been addressed at the 1415 Council of Constance in which the council declared in a document called *Sacrosancta* that the authority of a general council was superior to the authority of the Pope. The Pope abrogated the document but the concern remained.

There also were some attempts for reform within individual geographic and ecclesiastical regions as well as within some monasteries, but it remained sporadic and uncoordinated. One positive development in the years before the Reformation was the rise of lay devotion communities that emphasized spirituality and holy living in daily life for everyone. Within this movement were individuals such as Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), whose devotional book, *The Imitation of Christ* (1418-1427) became and remains very popular.

A corollary to this movement was an emphasis on contemplation and prayer (often resulting in mysticism). Martin Luther owed much to the German mystic Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300-1361) and the work *Theologia Germanica* (late 1300s).

Two strong pre-Reformation movements that challenged the ecclesiastical power and hierarchy of the Catholic Church as well as fundamental doctrines of Catholicism were the Lollards in England and the Hussites in Bohemia. The former, inspired by John Wycliffe (1320-1384) and the latter by John Hus (d. 1415), gave strong criticism of the practices and theology of Catholicism, including the Mass and devotion to saints.

Further, Wycliffe maintained that Scripture interpreted in a literal sense should be normative practice and the sole criterion for belief and the Christian life. To this end, he and his associates translated the Bible into English so that it could be widely read and studied, rather than having to rely on hearing it read in Latin in church by a priest.

It was in this same spirit that English Bible translator William Tyndale would declare 100 years later (in the English of his day), “I defie the Pope and all his lawes. If God spare my life, ere many yeares I wyl cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture, than he doust.” Although Tyndale was executed in 1536 in Belgium, much of his work influenced the King James Version (1611) of the Bible.

### Intellectual Trends and Social Changes

Within the intellectual life of the pre-Reformation world the currents were changing. For many years, an intellectual framework known as Realism (scholasticism) had prevailed as found in the work of one of its foremost proponents, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the author of the great theological treatise *Summa Theologica*. These thinkers wanted to marry Greek philosophy, logic and thought with Christian theology and the teachings of the Church.



In opposition to this view there arose the school of thought and counter-framework known as Nominalism. Nominalists led by people such as Duns Scotus (d. 1308), argued that reason and logic were insufficient for the truths of revelation. These, he argued, depended ultimately on the faith of the believer.

Debate such as this continued in the pre-Reformation years and, in part, was possible because of the rise of Christian Humanism during the Renaissance that focused on the rediscovery and growing accessibility of ancient texts of classical authors and the early Church Fathers. The desire and ability to read these authors in Greek in which they were originally written also influenced greatly the study of the New Testament in Greek by Christian Humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536).

Social changes such as the rise of schools and universities, the growth of towns and cities, and the invention of the printing press significantly helped in increasing literacy and spreading new ideas through wide dissemination of books and pamphlets.

### Political Trends

As theological protests and calls for reform increased and became widespread, the Church could only effectively eliminate dissent by relying on the growing power of secular rulers and these princes and authorities had to be persuaded that the action was necessary. The political power of the papacy and Catholicism was weakening.

Throughout the Reformation era, as the core theological ideas of the movement spread geographically, the tug-of-war political power contest between the Catholic Church and the local magistrates, princes, kings, and queens also ensued. The theological debates and struggles were accompanied by political and social struggles.

### Technological Developments

The advent of the printing press in the years before the Reformation enabled widespread dissemination of the Bible and its teachings. It also put the Bible within reach for the average man and woman and in their own language, as illustrated by Luther's translation of the Bible into German (1522 and 1534) and the work of others to create the influential Geneva Bible (1557 and 1560) that was printed in English and was a precursor to the King James Version (1611).

The ability to disseminate the biblical text widely and relatively inexpensively compared to handwritten copies of it enabled the reading and study of the Bible to flourish and spread. An example of this is the fact that in addition to the introduction of chapter and verse markers, the Geneva Bible had study notes added to the margins of the text so that readers could study the text individually or in small groups.

The foremost idea and most important outcome of the Reformation was the reaffirmation of the central idea of Christianity — the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Martin Luther portrait painted from life in 1529 by Lucas Cranach the Elder. (Wikipedia)

### The Impact of the Reformation

Corresponding to the revitalized centrality of the Gospel in Christian faith and practice was belief in the right of every individual to interpret the biblical text and the Christian faith rather than have it presented from a centralized authority. Luther's radical idea of the "priesthood of all believers" emphasized the ability, the right, and the legitimacy of individuals to engage in intimate knowledge of, communication with, and relationship with God. This had spiritual and social consequences.

Spiritually and theologically it meant that the individual Christian had the power and responsibility to nurture their own spiritual lives. This built on the earlier Renaissance shift in the understanding of humanity and individual responsibility to God as men and women created by God in His image.

One consequence of this shift in the understanding of humans and their relationship with God was a change in the medieval concept of spiritual vocation whereby those who entered the priesthood or a monastery or convent were thought to be more important spiritually than others.

Luther's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers meant that there was to be no dichotomy between the spiritual world and the world of daily life. The work of the farmer, baker, shipwright, seamstress, carpenter, or teacher had equal significance to the cleric, monk, or nun.

Indeed, English reformer William Tyndale declared that washing dishes and preaching the Word of God were both pleasing to God and without essential difference. (Out of this model and idea of the 1530s came what has been called "the Protestant work ethic." It was that but it was much more — it was a part of a comprehensive Christian worldview.)

### Five Key Doctrines

The theology of the Reformation crystallized around five central doctrines. In the nearly 1500 years since the New Testa-

ment era and founding of the Church, much had occurred in the development of the doctrine and practices of the church — some of it biblical and some of it not biblical. Out of the morass of medieval theology, spiritual practices, and ecclesiastical power, the Reformers sought to reaffirm the central theological ideas and "to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all" (Jude 3, HCSB).

In so doing, they emphasized five beliefs that were at the core of the Reformation. Called "*solas*" from the Latin word for "alone," these biblical ideas permeated the Reformation. A systematized formal list of these five ideas did not arise until after the Reformation but each of the ideas was present during it and some of the ideas such as *sola gratia* and *sola fide* were utilized together by the Reformers:

**1 *Sola Scriptura*** — This phrase means "Scripture alone," and was an idea and emphasis that was quickly applied. With respect to salvation, the Bible provides the content of salvation. The Bible was understood to be the final authority in matters of doctrine and practice rather than Cardinals, Councils, or the Church. It means also that Scripture interprets Scripture.

A central idea of the Reformation was the belief that the Bible was capable of being understood by all Christian believers and that every believer has the right to interpret the Bible for himself or herself and to have every interpretation taken seriously — a very democratic idea.

**2 *Sola Gratia*** — This phrase means "grace alone" and emphasized the biblical view that salvation is solely by grace—it is the means of salvation. Salvation does not come through works or because of the spirituality of other Christians who acquired extra grace or excess grace through their works.

This latter idea was part of the idea of a "treasury of merit" that accumulated in heaven because of the holiness of saints and from which people on earth could draw through the purchase of indulgences that would then benefit them or their living and deceased loved ones. It was the selling of such indulgences by papacy (in part to fund the building of St. Peter's basilica in Rome) that was the tipping point for Luther.

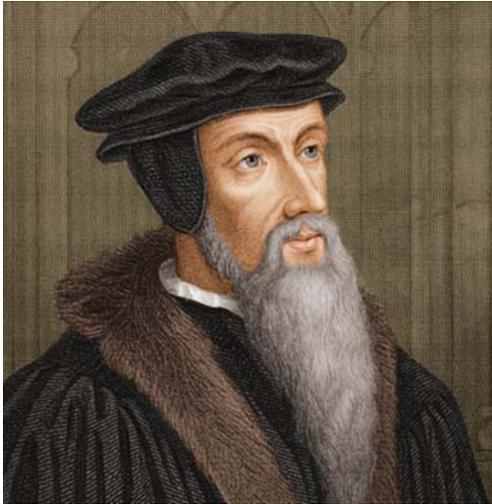
**3 *Sola Fide*** — This phrase means "faith alone" and reiterated a central teaching in the New Testament, especially the book of Romans. The appropriation of salvation comes through faith alone. Coupled with *Sola Gratia*, it affirmed that salvation comes as an act and gift of God to individuals solely because of their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Nothing is or can be added to such faith to gain eternal life.

*Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia* are affirmations of Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast."

**4 *Solus Christus*** — "Christ alone" offers access to God the Father based upon His substitutionary death on the cross. Christ alone is the basis of a person's salvation. Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and humans. Paul declared in 1 Timothy 2:5-6: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, Himself human, who gave Himself — a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time" (HCSB). The Reformers affirmed this wholeheartedly.

**5** *Soli Deo Gloria* — is a phrase meaning “glory to God alone.” With respect to salvation, glory to God alone is the reason a person strives to live a life pleasing to God.

With this phrase, the Reformers meant that all of life and every aspect of life was meant to bring glory to God. As noted above, such an idea broadened the Medieval Church’s concept of vocation (*vocatio*) such that there was no spiritual distinction between clergy and laity.



**John Calvin**  
(biography.com)

### Five Historical Traditions

The five doctrines noted above formed the core of Reformation theology, a theology that enabled every person to directly enter into a personal relationship with God through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. As the theological tsunami of the Reformation spread across Europe and the British Isles, it was shaped by the culture, people, and leaders of particular areas and in conjunction with history of Christianity to date in those areas.

There was turmoil, conflict and dissent. The historical traditions developed against the backdrop of political power plays between princes and cardinals, emperors and popes, and persistent greater threats such as the military and religious presence of the Ottoman Empire pushing inwardly in Europe. And yet, the Reformation spread rapidly.

Out of the unity of the five doctrines there arose diversity of expression leading to five major historical traditions within the Reformation. If one asks today “why are there so many denominations in Protestantism,” the answer rests in part on the five historical traditions of the Reformation.

Why are there Lutherans?— the Reformation. Why are there Presbyterians?— the Reformation. Why are there Baptists?— the Reformation. Why are there Anglicans and Episcopalians?— the Reformation. Why are there Mennonites and Quakers?— the Reformation. Today within each of the five strands or traditions there are many groups, each with its own history and theological emphases, but all of them are rooted in the Reformation.

### The Lutherans

Apart from precursors of the Reformation such as John Wycliffe, John Hus, and others leading up to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the

first major tradition of the Reformation is that of the Lutheranism that arose from Luther’s historic call for reform. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the undisputed leader of it and was assisted and succeeded by Philip Melancthon (1497-1560).

It was a German movement and was firmly rooted and established within twenty years of Luther’s death. Like other traditions of the Reformation, one byproduct of the movement was an increased appreciation for and development of access to education for many people, regardless of their social status.

### The Calvinists

The second major tradition was that of the Swiss Reformation and the ensuing Reformed Tradition. In Switzerland the leading reformer was the German-Swiss leader Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). In the French regions of Switzerland (and in France) the Reformation leaders were John Calvin (1509-1564) and Theodore Beza (1519-1605).

The ideas of these reformers, collectively termed Calvinism, spread throughout France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and into England and Scotland. Interacting with the currents of reform locally in these regions, there was enormous dissemination and growth in what would emerge as Presbyterianism and the larger Reformed Tradition. This is especially true of the work of John Knox (c. 1505-1572), known as the “Reformer of Scotland.”

### The Anglicans

The third Reformation tradition was that of the English Reformation and the Anglican tradition. Though it began under the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his desire for a divorce that the papacy would not sanction, the break with Rome became in time a distinct strand of the Protestant Reformation. Henry VIII essentially made the Church *in* England, the Church *of* England but ideas of reform soon followed.

For more than 100 years there was a religious tug-of-war and a military civil war in England as Catholic and Anglican monarchs acceded to the throne, but in the end Anglicanism prevailed and spread throughout the world as the British empire came to dominate global activity.

When the American colonies broke with the British and gained independence, the Anglican Church in the new United States became the Episcopal Church.

### The Baptists

The fourth tradition was the Baptist tradition. Some historians see it arising on the European continent and as an offshoot of people who had disagreement with the work of the German-Swiss leader Ulrich Zwingli and some of his theology.

Other historians acknowledge the continental influence but believe today’s Baptists are more the product of the English Puritan movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century that gave rise to English Baptists rather than the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mennonite tradition. Origins aside, no one disputes the emphasis on believers’ baptism by immersion and the spread of Baptists, especially in the English-speaking world.

### The Free Churches

The fifth and final tradition is what is sometimes termed the “Radical Reformation.” Whereas the Reformed, Lutheran and Anglican traditions sought to maintain much of the social-

political world of their day and saw some unity between the Church and the State (and is thus termed the “Magisterial Reformation”), the Radical Reformation sought a full break between the realms of the Church and the State (thus the term “Free Churches” is often used).

Notable within the Radical Reformation are the Anabaptists (a name given by opponents) such as Menno Simons (1496-1561), the Society of Friends (Quakers) founded by George Fox (1624-1691), and the more violent and extreme Thomas Müntzer (c. 1490-1525). Eventually dissenters within the Anglican tradition would combine with some Baptists and Anabaptists and there would emerge the Congregational churches that were part of much of the American Puritan experience.

### Summary

There was complexity in these five traditions but more important, there was unity in the overarching belief that reform was necessary. The Protestant Reformers differed on aspects of theology, church government, and the relationship of the Church to the State but they did not differ on the need to change the existing church. They had social and cultural differences but shared a common theological desire.

### A Comprehensive Worldview

The significance of the Reformation rests not only in what it accomplished theologically, but in what it accomplished in the broader western culture as well. It provided a biblical framework for many of the ideas of the next 500 years, enabling Christians to develop a comprehensive worldview.

Whether one looks at science, education, economics, art, political philosophy or music, there is the imprint of the Protestant Reformation. Because the Bible was being read and interpreted in a new way the biblical text was understood to be foundational to every discipline and every area of life.

- Thus, the medieval prohibitions against usury (lending money) gave way to fuller understandings of the biblical passages dealing with that subject and the rise of capitalism emerged. There is a direct link between Calvinism and economic entrepreneurialism.
- Hymns and music were written for congregations to sing in their own language just as they read the Bible in their own language.
- The idea of kings and queens ruling by divine right gave way to the rise of democratic ideas of government.
- The Reformation idea of “power to the people” with respect to reading and interpreting the Bible had many consequences — diversity of interpretations, increase in and support of literacy, education and Bible translation.

The theological tsunami of the Protestant Reformation changed the world. What began in the hearts of individual women and men 500 years ago was soon applied with their hands as they literally carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the globe and applied it to daily life. It was theological at its core, with ideological ramifications affecting every area of culture and society.

In the 62nd of Luther’s 95 theses, he declared: “The true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and

grace of God.” In making this declaration Martin Luther was reaffirming the words of the Apostle Paul written in his letter to the Romans (1:16-17): “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” (ESV).

This passage of Scripture had been instrumental in Luther’s spiritual awakening, his “reformatory breakthrough” as he called it, and it remained so throughout his life.

### Conclusion

The Protestant reformers were bold. They challenged more than a thousand years of history and tradition. They believed the Bible and the truths contained in it, and they demonstrated daily the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truths of the Bible to change lives and history.

The Protestant Reformers gave us a legacy, and they challenge us to believe and act daily upon the truths we read in the Bible and to apply those truths in every area of our lives — private and public. Ideas have consequences! ✚

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### Recommended Reading:

Two great books that provide excellent overviews of the Reformation and its importance are:

- 1) John D. Hannah, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Church History Volume 4— The Reformation of the Church (The Early Modern Period) A.D. 1500-1650* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009).
- 2) Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

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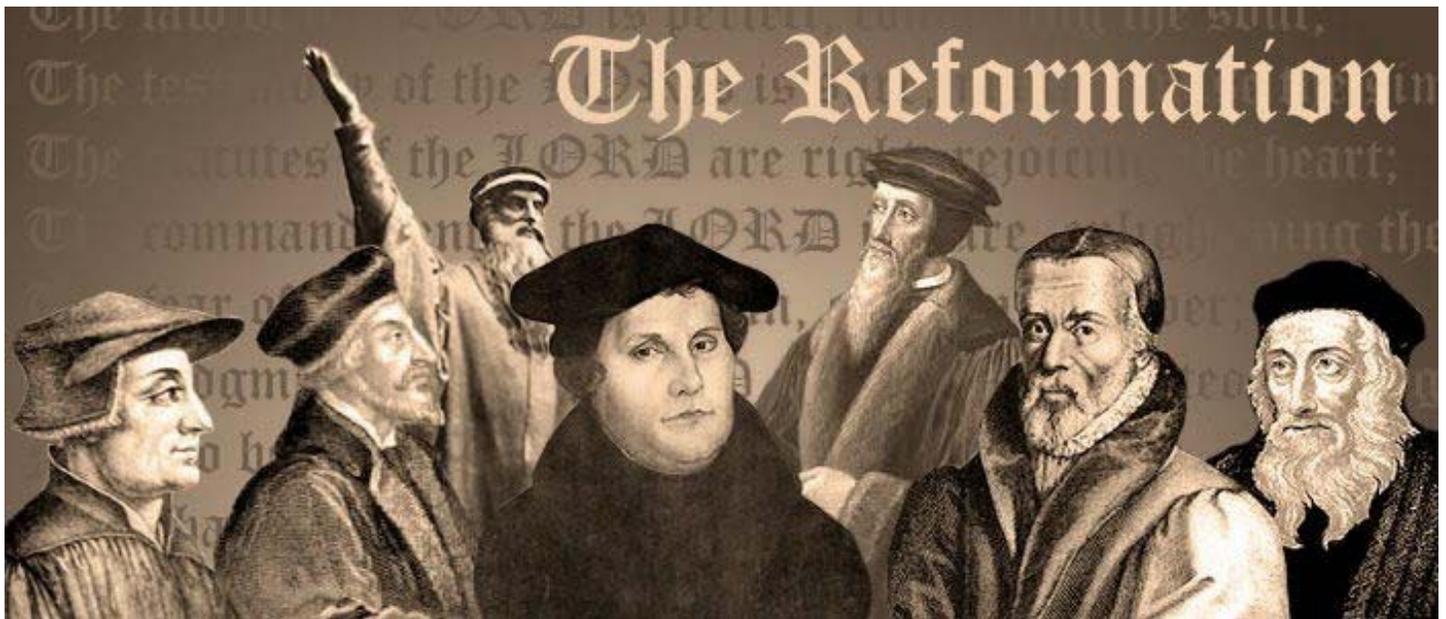
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Dr. Timothy J. Demy



## A Failure of the Reformation

Dr. Andy Woods

When the story of the Protestant Reformation is told, the subject must be approached with candor and intellectual honesty. The great contributions of the Protestant Reformers to the Christian faith notwithstanding, the Protestant Reformation really represented a mixed bag. As much as the Reformers are idolized today, their revolution can only be described as partial, at best.

One of the greatest contributions of the Protestant Reformation to Christianity involves the restoration of a lost method of biblical interpretation. While the Protestant Reformers selectively applied this method to some of the Bible, the complete revolution would have to await subsequent generations, who took the Reformers' method of interpretation and applied it to the totality of God's Word. The purpose of this article is to tell this other side of the story.

### Scriptural Interpretation in the Early Church

Concerning Old Testament prophecy, even a casual perusal of the New Testament demonstrates that its biblical characters and writers interpreted these prophecies in a literal sense (Matthew 1:18-25; 21:12-13; John 12:12-15; Romans 11:25-27, etc.). Thus, it is not surprising to discover that Christianity's second generation after the apostolic age also followed a literal approach when interpreting Bible prophecy.

In fact, what rose to prominence in early church history was the school at Syrian Antioch, which interpreted prophetic subjects in a literal manner. Accordingly, they taught that the kingdom of God would not materialize upon the earth until the King, Jesus Christ, first returns physically.

While this perspective is called Premillennialism today, it was known as *Chiliasm* then. This word, *Chiliasm*, comes from

the Greek word, *chilia*, meaning "thousand" and is taken from the thousand year duration of Christ's kingdom (usually referred to as the Millennium) which is referred to six times in Revelation 20:1-10.

The school at Antioch exercised such great influence over early Christianity, that virtually all of its most influential leaders were noted *Chiliasm*. In fact, in that day, one's embracement of *Chiliasm* was viewed as a test to determine one's orthodoxy.

Note the words of respected Church Father Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-160) in his *Dialogue with Trypho*: "But I and every other completely orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished and enlarged city of Jerusalem as was announced by the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the others."

With such a well-entrenched belief within earliest Christianity concerning a literal interpretation of prophecy and a yet future earthly kingdom of Christ, when did the Christian world begin to shift on this vital issue of interpretation?

### The Triumph of Spiritualization

The dominance of the Antioch school was soon eclipsed by the influence of a competing school located in North Africa in the city of Alexandria, Egypt.

The Alexandrian school introduced allegorization as a method for interpreting Scripture, especially Bible prophecy. Allegorization (or spiritualization) involves using the literal meaning of the biblical text only as a vehicle for introducing a higher spiritual meaning, which is only clear to the one doing the allegorizing.

For example, Philo (25 B.C.-A.D. 50), an influential allegorizer, who lived during the time of Christ, saw the four rivers depicted in Genesis 2:10-14 (the Pishon, Gihon, Euphrates and Tigris) as not just four literal rivers in the Garden of Eden but also representing four parts of the human soul!

What caused the Christian Church to progressively reject the traditional, literal approach as espoused by Antioch and instead embrace the allegorical method as outlined by Alexandria? At

the risk of oversimplification, there were likely a multiplicity of factors involved.

First, the allegorical approach met the need for immediate relevance and application in Christian preaching and teaching. When the text is allegorized, it can be used to meet virtually any emotional, spiritual or psychological need in the listener or reader.

Second, the allegorical method became increasingly more tenable as Bible interpreters became susceptible to merging human philosophy into the process of biblical interpretation.

Third, a related influence was that Alexandria, Egypt was a hotbed for Gnostic dualism, which taught that while the spiritual world was inherently good, the physical world was evil. And since they believed that the physical world is inherently evil, Gnostic philosophers reasoned that the various biblical prophecies relating to a physical kingdom on earth were obviously not meant to be taken literally and that they therefore must be spiritualized.

A fourth factor leading the Church to embrace the allegorical method of interpretation was the decline in Jewish believers within the Church's ranks. By the time Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, the Gentile Christians were in such numerical ascendancy over their Jewish counterparts that Paul had to instruct these Gentile believers not to be arrogant on account of Israel's apparent spiritual hardening (Romans 11:13,17-21).

Given the Jewish familiarity with not only the content but also with a proper understanding of Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, it is doubtful that the Church would have ever embraced the allegorical method of interpretation espoused by the Alexandrian school had the Jews retained their majority status within the Church. However, the Gentile Christians, coming out of pagan backgrounds, were not so similarly educated. Thus, they were vulnerable to the suggestion that the Old Testament could be spiritualized, allegorized and consequently marginalized.

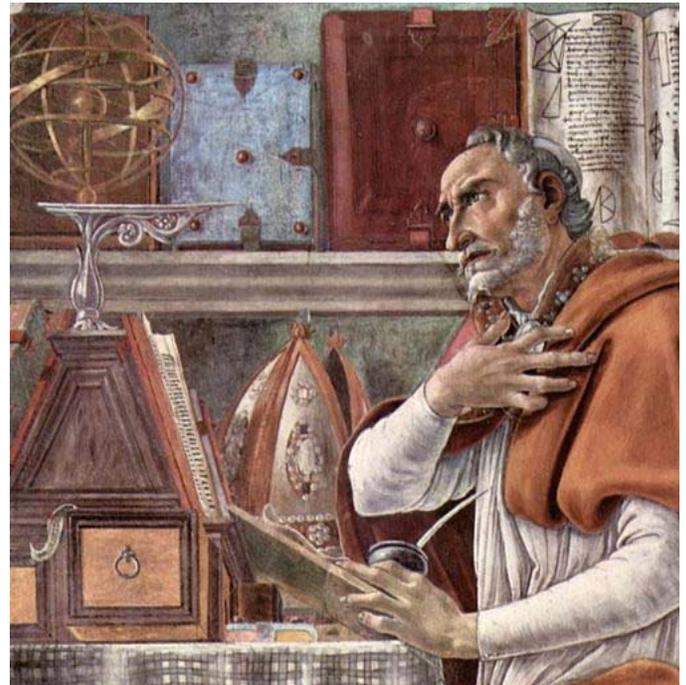
Fifth, Constantine's *Edict of Milan* (A.D. 313), which granted religious toleration to Christianity within the Roman Empire, also played a significant role in the Church's embracement of the allegorical method of interpretation. With the stroke of a pen, Christianity went from a persecuted status within Rome to a protected and even elevated status.

Such an abrupt transition from persecution to tolerance and even elevation convinced many within the Church that the kingdom of God had now come. This newfound belief caused them to allegorize many of the terrestrial kingdom promises related to national Israel into present spiritual kingdom realities.

This convergence of factors led to the ascendancy of the Alexandrian method of interpretation within Christendom.

### Prominent Allegorizers

Several prominent allegorical interpreters arose out of the Alexandrian school. One such interpreter was Origen (A.D. 185-254). But the most influential allegorizer was Augustine (A.D. 354-430). His book, *The City of God*, was the first major written systematization and exposition of Amillennialism in church history, and it is perhaps also the most influential book in church history. This work, more than any other, cast an allegorical spell



“Augustine of Hippo” by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510).

over the Church which, as will be explained later, took Christendom well over a millennium to crawl out from under.

*The City of God* wildly allegorized the biblical passages dealing with the future earthly reign of Christ. For example, the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-6) was reinterpreted to refer to spiritual regeneration rather than a future, physical, bodily resurrection. He also taught that the binding of Satan merely “means his being more unable to seduce the Church.”

Concerning the future thousand year reign of Christ along with His saints (Revelation 20:4), Augustine asserted that “the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now His saints reign with Him.”

By 450 A.D. the Alexandrian method of interpretation had become so entrenched that the Church began to view the earlier *Chiliasm* as the product of the less enlightened and less intelligent. In fact, *Chiliasm* itself began to be viewed as a mere fable rather than the product of a careful study of the biblical text.

### The Dark Ages

The ascendancy of the Alexandrian school plummeted the Church into a time often referred to as the Middle Ages or even “The Dark Ages.” During this era, the study of end time prophecy was rendered all but obsolete. This era dominated church history for well over a millennium. It lasted all the way from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

During this era, only one church existed within Christendom, which was the Roman Catholic Church. Because of the dominance of the allegorical method of interpretation, only the clergy were deemed as qualified to read and allegorically interpret Scripture. Such a sharp clergy-laity distinction had the net effect of removing the Bible from the common man.

This problem was further compounded by the widespread illiteracy among the population, which made the Bible all the more inaccessible to the masses. To make matters worse, even up to the time of Luther, the Roman Catholic Mass continued to be

read and conducted in Latin, although Latin was an unknown language to most people in Luther's time. Thus, although many regularly went to Mass, they were unable to understand what was being communicated.

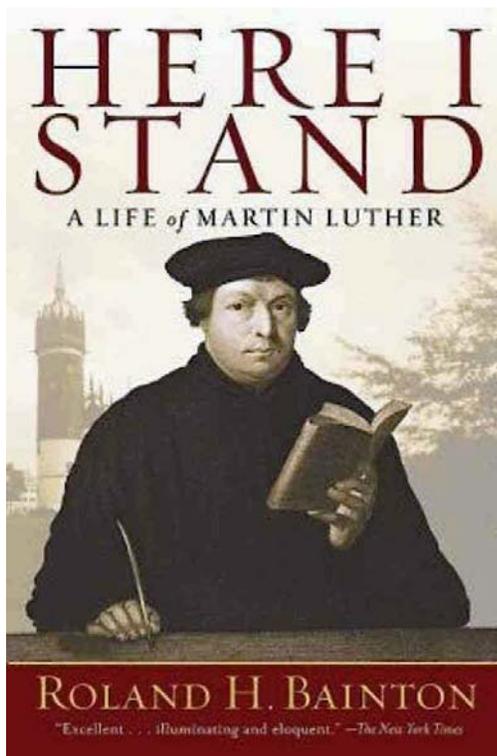
Such biblical illiteracy made the people vulnerable to spiritual deception and manipulation. The sale of indulgences was common throughout the era. The people did not have access to the Scripture to ascertain if Purgatory was even a biblical concept. Thus, the Church authorities routinely told them that they could purchase deceased relatives out of Purgatory by paying the right monetary sum to the Church. In fact, Johann Tetzel, a friar during the time of Martin Luther, infamously quipped, "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from Purgatory springs."

The practice of the sale of indulgences was condoned by both the Church, as well as the existing political authorities, since they served as a convenient source of fund raising necessary to subsidize the Church's various building projects, such as the refurbishment of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

In addition, due to the inaccessibility to the Scripture, God's future promises to the Jewish people were not available to serve as a natural defense or bulwark against the anti-Semitism of the day. Thus, rampant hatred of the Jews continued unabated and unchallenged. Due to these pitiful conditions, the Church was in dire need of theological rescue.

### The Return to Literal Interpretation

The Protestant Reformation became the tool that God used to redirect the Church back to the solid foundation of His eternal Word. The Protestant Reformers rescued the Church from the Alexandrian allegorical method of interpretation through an application of a literal method of interpretation to selective areas of Scripture.



For example, William Tyndale (A.D. 1494-1536) asserted, "The Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense." Luther also wrote that the Scriptures "are to be retained in their simplest meaning ever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids." Calvin wrote in the preface of his commentary on Romans, "It is the first business of an interpreter to let the author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say."

Because of their adherence to literal interpretation, both Calvin and Luther condemned the allegorical method of interpretation. Luther denounced the allegorical approach to Scripture in strong words. He said: "Allegories are empty speculations and as it were the scum of Holy Scripture." "Origen's allegories are not worth so much dirt." "To allegorize is to juggle the Scripture." "Allegorizing may degenerate into a mere monkey game." "Allegories are awkward, absurd, inventive, obsolete, loose rags."

Calvin similarly rejected allegorical interpretations. He called them "frivolous games" and accused Origen and other allegorists of "torturing Scripture, in every possible sense, from the true sense."

The Reformers also did not want to see the biblical ignorance of the common man exploited for financial purposes, as had been the case with the sale of indulgences. Consequently, the Reformers laid stress on the idea that the people no longer had to go through an intermediary, such as a priest in order to receive and understand God's Word. They need not do so since they were already priests themselves (Revelation 1:6).

This notion, often called "the priesthood of all believers" also meant that the Scripture had to be both accessible and understandable to the clergy and laity alike. This new theological emphasis explains why prominent Reformers, like Tyndale and Luther, set out to translate the Scriptures into languages beyond simply Latin (as Jerome had accomplished in the 4th Century with his Latin Vulgate) and into the languages of the common man of their own day.

The privilege inherent in "the priesthood of all believers" theological construct also meant that literacy was necessary so that the common man could both read and understand the Bible. Thus, the Reformation introduced great advances in public education for the purpose of erasing illiteracy.

### The Reformers' Selective Literalness

Although the Reformers were literal in their approach to Protology (the doctrine of Beginnings), Christology (the doctrine of Christ), Soteriology (the doctrine of Salvation), and Bibliology (the doctrine of the Scripture), other doctrines, such as Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the Church) and Eschatology (the doctrine of the End) were treated in an entirely different matter. Despite their emphasis upon literally interpreting some aspects of Scripture, Luther and Calvin did not go far enough in applying a literal interpretation to all areas of divine truth.

In fact, Calvin seems to have ignored much of God's prophetic Word. Despite having written commentaries on almost every book of the New Testament, Calvin failed to write a commentary on the Book of Revelation. When Calvin did pay attention to prophetic texts, he seemed preoccupied with

employing the Alexandrian and Augustinian method of interpretation, and he held in contempt those who rejected his allegorical approach.

The Reformers' retention of the allegorical method of interpretation in the area of biblical Eschatology is also evident in the way they took the prophecies aimed at a future Babylon and the Antichrist and redirected them so as to make it seem as if these prophecies were instead speaking of the Roman Catholic Church. Such an interpretation was advanced at the expense of the literal sense of these passages.

Because the Reformers spiritualized prophecy, they rejected Premillennialism as being "Jewish opinions." They maintained the Amillennial view which the Roman Catholic Church had adopted from Augustine.

### The Reformers Selective Reforms

Despite the Reformers' doctrinal progress in select areas, it is simply a matter of historical naïveté to assume that they made a clean break with Roman Catholicism back in the 16th Century. On the contrary, as Roman Catholics themselves who had even initially sought to remain within the Catholic Church, they dragged many vestiges of Roman Catholicism with them into their infant and newly developing Reformed Theology.

In addition to the retention of Augustinian Amillennialism, there were other Roman Catholic holdovers as well. One was the practice of infant baptism. Luther considered infant baptism a sacrament and therefore a means of grace. Still another holdover related to the doctrine of Consubstantiation, which appears to be only a slight modification of the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Yet another carryover related to the Roman Catholic Church's view that it was the sole representative of the kingdom of God upon the earth. This Romanist failure to distinguish between the Church and God's earthly kingdom program for Israel carried over into Calvin's Geneva. There, Calvin sought to reconstruct a society through the imposition of the Mosaic Law. This social experiment resulted in dire societal consequences.

Finally, it must be pointed out that some of the vitriolic anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages also found its way into the Reformation movement. After all, it was the respected and revered church reformer Martin Luther who, late in his life and frustrated at the Jews' unwillingness to receive Christ on the basis of faith alone, wrote a scathing tract against the Jewish people entitled, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. This tract contains numerous anti-Semitic rants.

Although some claim that Luther's level of anti-Semitic vitriol is not found in the work of John Calvin, such a claim is without merit. For example, note how Calvin's correction of distinguished Jewish scholar Rabbi Barbinel in Calvin's commentary on Daniel 2:44 laid bare the true intentions of the Reformer's heart toward the Jewish people: "But here he [the rabbi] not only betrays his ignorance, but his utter stupidity, since God so blinded the whole people that they were like restive dogs . . . I have never found common sense in any Jew."

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"Dispensationalists should be credited for completing the interpretive revolution begun by the Protestant Reformers. Dispensationalism remains unique in its insistence in *consistently* applying the literal method of interpretation to the totality of biblical revelation."

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### Reasons for the Reformers' Inconsistency

With these aforementioned Catholic hangovers remaining, we might ask why did the Protestant Reformers not also reform the Church in these other areas as well?

Several possibilities can be given. Perhaps they were fatigued. They had already sacrificed greatly, and in some cases ultimately, in order to achieve

what they did. To require them to take on any more beyond their monumental achievements would have been unrealistic, to say the least.

Also, these other doctrinal areas involving such things as Bible prophecy were not their focus. Their primary battle with the Roman Catholic hierarchy was over the issue of salvation. Any other theological subject matter was simply outside their narrow purview.

### Consistent Literal Interpretation

Dispensationalists should be credited for completing the interpretive revolution begun by the Protestant Reformers. The Reformers deserve credit through the employment of the right methodology, a literal interpretation, to some of the Bible. Yet, as has been demonstrated, Reformed Theology continued to allow much allegorization of the Scripture, especially as it related to Ecclesiology and Eschatology.

Dispensationalism, on the other hand, as it came into its own roughly two centuries after the Reformation, took the Reformation method of interpretation and applied this same method to the totality of Scripture.

When such a consistent application of literalism is followed (taking into account figures of speech when they are textually conspicuous), what rapidly re-merges is Premillennialism, or the very *Chiliasm* initially espoused by the Antioch school of interpretation that dominated the life of the Church for its first two centuries.

Just as the Reformers demonstrated that literalism was the essential prerequisite necessary to restore the five "*solas*" to Christendom, Dispensationalists demonstrated that literalism was also an essential prerequisite necessary to restore to Christendom both Premillennialism and pre-Tribulationism (the belief that the rapture will occur before the future Tribulation).

What makes Dispensationalism unique as a theological system is not merely its emphasis upon a literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation. Many theological systems, such as Reformed Theology, selectively incorporate this method. Rather, Dispensationalism remains unique in its insistence in *consistently* applying the literal method of interpretation to the totality of biblical revelation. This approach causes the interpreter to recognize that Israel and the Church are unique.

### Literalism's Restoration of Important Doctrines

When it is understood that God has separate programs for Israel and the Church, such theology acts as a natural deterrent against the Church from claiming Israel's earthly promises through the allegorical method of interpretation. Such a belief

# Reformation Quotes

prevents the Church from seeing itself as the reigning New Israel. And it keeps the Church from misapplying Israel's Law of Moses to itself, as was done in Calvin's Geneva.

The Israel-Church distinction also helps the Church to see that God is not finished with Israel but rather has a special end time plan for her that will play out nationally. Comprehending this future for Israel acts as a restraint necessary to curb Anti-Semitic impulses among the Gentile-dominated Church in the present. The Israel-Church distinction also assists the Church in understanding that she will not be in Israel's Tribulation period. Thus, the Israel-Church distinction furnishes the proper foundation for embracing a Pre-Tribulation rapture.

Although none of these concepts were retrieved by the Protestant Reformers and although none are found in today's Reformed Theology, we still owe the Reformers a debt of gratitude since they introduced the correct literal interpretive methodology.

## Giving Thanks

As we celebrate the five-hundred-year anniversary of Martin Luther nailing the ninety-five theses to the cathedral door in Wittenberg, Germany, let us rejoice in the fact that this event was used by God to trigger what is now known as the Protestant Reformation. However, at the same time, let us not idolize the Reformers based upon the faulty assumption that the Reformation instantaneously cured all the ecclesiastical ills introduced by the Alexandrian, Augustinian allegorical method of interpretation of the 4th Century.

The Reformation did introduce doctrinal progress. But perhaps more importantly, it also furnished the seed of literal interpretation that would be used by subsequent generations to restore doctrinal wholeness and health to Christ's Church. ✚



Dr. Andy Woods

Dr. Andy Woods is a native of California where he attended college and earned a law degree. In 1998 he shifted gears and started making the transition from law to theology when he decided to enter seminary.

He ultimately earned a doctorate degree in biblical exposition from Dallas Theological Seminary. He currently serves as pastor of Sugar Land Bible Church in the Houston area while serving as president of Chafer Theological Seminary in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is a prolific writer and a

much sought after conference speaker.

**“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”** — Martin Luther.

“Salvation, Luther discovered, lies outside ourselves; we are justified by God's legal proclamation made in heaven; we remain sinners but are wholly accepted by God on the basis of the merit of Christ; hence, we are simultaneously *saints* and *sinners*.” — Erwin Lutzer, pastor emeritus of The Moody Church in Chicago.

“In 1517, Martin Luther staked his soul on two revolutionary ideas: *sola fide*, that justification is dependent on faith alone; and *sola scriptura*, that Scripture is the only ultimate authority for Christian belief and practice and does not need oversight from church leaders or tradition to be read and understood.” — Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, senior writer for The Gospel Coalition.

**“The true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.”** — Martin Luther, his 62<sup>nd</sup> thesis.

“Those who led the Reformation Movement did not intend to create new churches separate from the Roman Catholic Church, but rather intended to reform the one true Church, the whole of Christianity. Within the first generation, however, many reformers concluded that the only hope for reform was to create a separate church . . .” E. L. Skip Knox, professor of medieval history at Boise State University.

When asked at the Diet of Worms to recant his writings, Luther replied, **“I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the council, because it is as clear as noontday that they have fallen into error and even into glaring inconsistency with themselves. If, then, I am not convinced by proof from Holy Scripture, or by cogent reasons, if I am not satisfied by the very text I have cited, and if my judgment is not in this way brought into subjection to God's word, I neither can nor will retract anything; for it cannot be either safe or honest for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me! Amen.”**

“One man, Martin Luther, took a stand that literally shredded the fabric of Europe. It changed theology, it changed politics, it changed society and it changed political boundaries. It gave us a revolution in education, in literacy. There are many, many manifestations of the Reformation.” — Tom Rassiour, curator of the Luther Exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

**“Christ is everywhere, but He does not wish that you grope for Him everywhere. Grope rather where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of Him in the right way.”** — Martin Luther.

“At every turn, Luther was supported by a battalion of printers and graphic artists . . . he was the first media star of the printing age . . . Without the printing press, Luther never would have achieved notoriety — and indeed, it's unlikely he would have survived . . . Luther had a canny understanding of print culture and knew how to use it to his distinct advantage . . . Luther's prodigious writing talent and his commercial acumen ensured that print and public communication would never be the same again.” — Bruce Gordon, Yale Divinity School. ✚

# Martin Luther

## A Captive to God's Word

Dennis Pollock

If one were to read the book of Acts, which describes the phenomenal power and growth of the early Church, without knowing the future history of the Church, he would have to assume that within a few centuries Christianity would surely conquer the whole world. Sadly, the opposite proved true.

Within a few generations the power and the life of the early believers had been reduced to formal ceremony and dead liturgy. Biblical knowledge perished, and ignorance and superstition flourished.

As the centuries rolled by, the Church of Jesus Christ became increasingly impotent, corrupt and irrelevant. Even the knowledge of the most foundational of all Biblical questions — “How do we obtain peace with God?” — was lost.

### Luther's Early Years



**Martin Luther**  
(www.biography.com)

Such was the state of the Church when a baby boy named Martin Luther was born on a November day in 1483. Martin's strict, no-nonsense father soon realized his son was brilliant and began making plans for him to study to become a lawyer. Martin dutifully followed in the path his father had laid out for him, earning a bachelor's degree in a single year and a master's degree after that. His sharp mind enabled him to do well in his studies, but he had far more interest in religion and philosophy than he did in law.

Death in the Middle Ages was a reality impossible to ignore. Plagues would sweep through Europe and decimate entire towns. One fourth of children died before the age of five. Disease was rampant.

Luther, always sensitive and often moody, wondered where he stood with God. One day as he was returning to the university after a visit home, a thunderstorm arose. As the lightning and thunder crashed all around him, he feared for his life and called out in desperation to Saint Anna, vowing to become a monk if she would spare his life. When he survived the storm, he was as good as his word and entered a monastery, fully intending to spend the rest of his days there.



**Luther as an Augustinian friar. Posthumous portrait by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553).**

### A Zealous Monk

Luther went to the monastery not only to fulfill his vow to Saint Anna, but also to save his soul. Like the rest of his generation — including the priests and bishops — he knew nothing of salvation by grace or the nature of the new birth. But to his thinking, the monks, with their austere lifestyles, vows of poverty and chastity, and constant prayers and church services, represented the apex of holiness. If anyone would be allowed to enter heaven, surely the monks would make it.

Luther entered his new vocation with a passion, and determined to be the monk of monks. He practiced self-denial by frequent fasting and sleeping outdoors in the winter without a blanket. He prayed constantly and beat himself with a whip to show God how sincere he was in his desire for holiness and salvation. Luther went to confession as all good monks did, but his confessions were far from ordinary. While the average monk would go over a few basic sins and get it over with, Luther would dredge up everything he could think of from the years past to the present day. He would repeat confessions of sins he had already confessed, thinking perhaps he hadn't been sincere enough in the previous confession. Sometimes confessing four times a day, his confessions lasted for hours, until his confessors dreaded the approach of their guilt-ridden brother.

Luther later wrote, “I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I.” But his conscience was never satisfied. He began to see God as a cosmic reflection of his earthly father: stern, cold, and utterly impossible to please. He was growing to hate this God whose condemnation he could never escape.

It took a trip to Rome to begin the process of disillusionment. In the Catholic Church, Rome was the holy city, the essence of all that was pristine and godly. When his orders sent him there on a brief assignment, Martin was thrilled beyond words. If ever there should be a suitable place for him to obtain the peace he sought, it would surely be here.

### The End of the Beginning

Upon arrival, he indulged in all the city had to offer, running from one shrine to another, attending masses, and racking up all kinds of spiritual points by visiting the tombs and viewing the bones of dead saints.



**Pope Leo X by Raphael (1483-1520). This was the pope when Luther posted his 95 theses.**

But soon his bubble burst as he began to see the prevailing carnality of the priests and church leaders he had assumed would be shining examples of holiness and purity. Sexual immorality was rampant among the priests. Some claimed virtue due to the fact that they only had sex with women. Masses were said hurriedly and without passion or meaning.

When Luther had the chance to say a mass, he was told by the impatient priests to hurry up — “Just get on with it!” Nobody seemed to take God seriously. A terrible, disconcerting thought began to form in Luther’s mind about the entire Catholic approach to God: “Who knows whether it is so?”

### **An Academic Challenge**

In 1511 Luther was transferred to a small monastery in Wittenberg, Germany. Here he would serve under a wise priest named Johann von Staupitz. This man seemed to understand something about grace, and Martin’s quest for peace with God.

Discerning that the young monk needed to get his eyes off himself and onto the Scriptures, he assigned Martin the task of serving as professor of the Bible at the University of Wittenberg. Luther became a Bible teacher, which meant he must first become a student of the Scriptures. As he immersed himself in the Bible, his razor-sharp mind quickly began to see the vast disparity between what he had been taught and what the early Church believed. Martin Luther was on his way to becoming an evangelical.

### **A Life-Changing Discovery**

In time Luther discovered the simple truth that would forever change history and shake the mighty Catholic Church to its foundations: “The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38). He began to see that salvation was not a prize to be earned by long prayers and self-abuse; it is a free gift provided through the Cross and resurrection of Jesus and received by faith.

Of course, the doctrine of justification by faith is not some hidden esoteric teaching requiring genius to see it; it is plainly spelled out in the Scriptures. But because the Church in those dark days was so neglectful of the Bible, they had simply gone on century after century believing and preaching the exact opposite of what the Bible actually teaches, insisting upon a complicated formula of salvation through sacraments and various church ordinances. As Luther gained popularity they attempted to prove him wrong by asking how he could possibly suggest that all the leaders of the Church had been in error for the last thousand years, and he, a solitary little monk, was right! Somehow it never occurred to them to check the Scriptures.

### **The Protest**

Luther’s historic break from the Catholic Church came as a result of a campaign of the pope to raise revenue for the Church through the sale of indulgences. Current church thought was that even the best of Christians must suffer in purgatory after death for perhaps thousands of years while their sins were burned out of them.

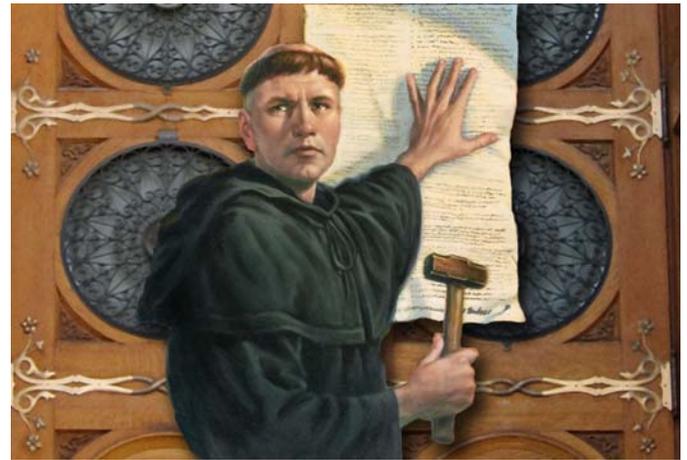
However, it was thought that the pope had the authority to somehow dispense with centuries or even millennia of such terrible anguish with a simple letter of indulgence. “Time off” was granted for the viewing of sacred relics, such as a dead saint’s bones or even a tooth, but especially popular with the

Vatican were the indulgences granted for financial donations given toward favorite projects.

Johann Tetzel, appointed by the pope as seller of indulgences to Germany had even come up with a jingle to remind the peasants of the power of the indulgence: “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from Purgatory springs.”

In 1517, Tetzel came near Wittenberg and began to sell indulgences. In this latest sale, the pope outdid himself, promising not only the “plenary and perfect remission of all sins” for the buyers, but also the ability to purchase complete forgiveness for their dead loved ones. When his own parishioners began to grab up these spiritual bargains, Luther exploded.

By now he saw clearly that forgiveness was a matter between the individual and Christ. The Church could proclaim forgiveness through Jesus but could not make it happen and certainly could not sell it!



“Luther’s 95 Theses” by an unknown artist.  
(<http://wrf500wittenberg.org/#event>)

Luther responded by writing a blistering article with 95 bullet points, or theses, attacking the sale of indulgences and the Church’s motives behind this practice. He posted the article, written in Latin, on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, which was a common practice for those wanting scholarly debate over religious points of controversy. Luther had no idea what a storm that little article would unleash.

Preeminent among Martin Luther’s vast array of gifts was his ability to write. He wrote with deep insight, humor, sarcasm, and by now, a solid grasp of the Scriptures. His keen mind and ready pen poured forth a torrent of eloquence, exposing the greed and folly of the Church.

The article was so radioactive that it was soon published and spread all over Germany. Much like the tale of *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, Luther exposed the spiritual nakedness of the Church, and Germans by the thousands, who had always resented the Church’s autocratic ways and financial demands, began nodding in assent. What historians now call The Reformation was on!

It didn’t take long for the Vatican to hear about this new heresy. They responded by a combination of threats and attempts to defend the indefensible. But the proverbial genie was out of the bottle, and there was no way the Pope and all his cohorts could stuff it back. Luther was eventually excommunicated.

But by the time the spiritual death-certificate arrived, Luther was completely unimpressed, throwing it in the fire. In a written response to being severed from the Church he had once loved and served, Luther wrote caustically:

This condemns me from its own word without any proof from Scripture, whereas I back up all my assertions from the Bible. I ask thee, ignorant Antichrist, does thou think that with thy naked words thou canst prevail against the armor of Scripture? . . . and as they excommunicated me for the sacrilege of heresy, so I excommunicate them in the name of the sacred truth of God. Christ will judge whose excommunication will stand. Amen.

### A Man of Courage

It took incredible courage for Luther to take the stand he did. The Catholic Church had the power to put heretics to death, and it was more than willing to use that power. In the first years of his protest Luther lived with the thought that he probably would soon be burned at the stake. Somehow this didn't slow him down in the least from writing scathing articles and books denouncing the teachings and hypocrisy of the Church. Amazingly, by the providence of God, he was not martyred.

Luther lived out his days and finally passed away at the age of 62 from a heart attack. Within ten years of his public attack upon the Church, the vast majority of northern Germany had left Catholicism for some form of Protestantism.

Luther left behind two great treasures for the believers. For the body of Christ at large he restored to them the truth Paul had asserted so long ago: “. . . *having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1). And to his fellow Germans he gave them another priceless gift — he translated the entire Bible into the language of the people. Until then only the Latin scholars could read the Scriptures, but now farmers and bakers and bankers and housewives could read the doctrines of grace for themselves.

### A Man of Excesses

Without question Martin Luther was a mighty instrument in the hands of God. He certainly had his flaws, and he wore them on his sleeve. He could be harsh, crude, sarcastic, extremist, impatient, and often grumpy. He was also guilty of pressing the doctrines of grace to extremes until they became nearly heretical. For instance, in his determination to show that salvation is “all of grace” he wrote:

Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let

your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides . . . No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day . . .

This is a far cry from the apostle Paul's attitude about Christians who sin, when he asked, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1, 2). John declares, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). Paul warns that adulterers “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” So it is hard to see how someone who committed adultery thousands of times each day (if that were possible) would have any right to enter heaven at the conclusion of his lecherous life.

### An Anti-Semite

One of the most disgusting of Luther's many excesses and errors was his attacks on the Jews. In his early days, he was tolerant of the Jews and reminded his followers that Jesus was a Jew. He encouraged Christians to treat the Jews kindly in the hope that some might come to Christ.

But in his later years Luther became disillusioned about the prospect of Jews turning to Jesus. Despite the phenomenal success of the Reformation, few

Jews had embraced Christianity, either the Catholic version or his Reformation version. As an older man, Martin Luther concluded that the Jews were simply too hard-hearted to be saved by Christ, and that they had thus been eternally rejected by God.

Once convinced of this, Luther's attitude toward the Jews changed dramatically. He unleashed his anger at the Jewish people in a booklet entitled, *On the Jews and Their Lies*. It was horrible. In it Luther roundly condemned the Jews for not converting to Christ and called them a “base, whoring people, that is, no people of God . . . full of the devil's feces . . . which they wallow in

like swine.”

Worse still he advised Christians to persecute them vigorously. They were urged to burn all Jewish schools and synagogues, confiscate all Jewish literature, prohibit rabbis to teach on pain of death, deny Jews safe conduct on the roads, and appropriate their money to be used to support Christianity.

Luther's encouragement of violence toward the Jews is so horrific it can hardly be believed. How in the world could a man so powerfully used of God to wake the Church from her slumber be so filled with hatred?



Luther before the Emperor at the Diet of Worms by Paul Thumann (1834-1908).



Luther at Wartburg Castle translating the Bible into German by Paul Thumann (1834-1908).

The truth is, Martin Luther did not improve with age. As he became older his success, fame, and popularity seemed to exacerbate his tendencies toward grumpiness, crudeness and anger. He became the proverbial grumpy old curmudgeon. When ordinary, unknown men grow into curmudgeons nobody pays too much attention, save for perhaps their children. But when a world-famous theologian allows anger, frustration and irritability to saturate his writings, it becomes a big deal.



Luther's virulently anti-Semitic pamphlet, "On the Jews and Their Lies," published in 1543.

It is almost humorous to see how many modern-day ministers try to excuse Luther for his excesses in this area. "He was a man of his times," they say. Or "he was given to polemics," or "others were saying worse things," or "his many illnesses were making him irritable." One writer piously states, "Let us neither excuse him nor condemn him."

The truth is, there is no excuse for Luther's outrageous and violent outbursts against the Jews, and without a doubt many Jews suffered terribly as a result of his anti-Jewish writings. We

can and should condemn his terrible outbursts against the Jews.

Adolf Hitler admired Luther and acknowledged him as one of Germany's great champions. In Hitler's own persecution of the Jews, he clearly took a page from Luther's playbook in saying, "by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."

### Conclusion

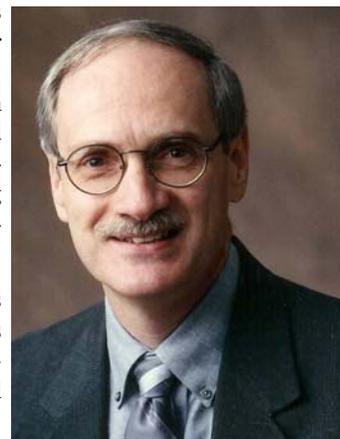
All of this is puzzling to us. We all recognize that no one is perfect, but we prefer our leaders and heroes to at least have minor flaws and warts — not monstrous ones that bring damage and pain to people.

Yet imperfection has never stopped God from making use of His chosen instruments. Luther was precisely what the times called for. He was fearless in the face of threats, tireless in his proclamation of the truth of salvation by grace, and brilliant in his written exposes of the immoral, corrupt and disingenuous Church of his day.

Unlike most monks and priests in those dark times, he actually read the Bible and held unflinchingly to the truths he discovered. Some things he got terribly wrong but the main thing he got very much right — we are indeed saved by grace through faith. Above all else, Martin Luther was a man who took God seriously.

Such a simple thought — who would believe it could start a revolution: "*The just shall live by faith.*" ❖

Dennis Pollock served as an Associate Evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries for 11 years before he decided to form his own ministry in 2005 called "Spirit of Grace." It is a ministry that focuses on conducting evangelistic campaigns in Africa.



Dennis Pollock

Dennis' wife, Benedicta, is a native of Nigeria, and she is actively involved in the ministry as an event coordinator and teacher.

Dennis is a masterful writer who specializes in writing biographical sketches that illustrate biblical points about the difference in living for Jesus and living for the world. These insightful essays, together with doctrinal teachings are also recorded and released monthly on audio CDs. For information about how to get on Dennis' mailing list, go to his website at [www.spiritofgrace.org](http://www.spiritofgrace.org).

# The Abandonment of the Reformation

Mike Gendron



Statue of Martin Luther in Wittenberg, Germany.

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it is gravely disturbing that many Christians are abandoning the essential Gospel truths that the Reformers gave their lives defending.

There are other Christians who believe the Reformation was a costly mistake because it divided the Church. They are now seeking to reverse the Reformation and reunite with the Roman Catholic Church.

What is causing this lack of discernment? Why are the doctrinal differences that were once black and white, now becoming gray? How can those who have been sanctified by the truth desire unity with an apostate church? Is it because people do not know how exclusive the true Gospel is? Or do they just not know how false and fatal the gospel of Rome is?

The Reformers departed from the Roman Catholic Church primarily on the basis of two important biblical doctrines: 1) the supreme authority of Scripture, and 2) justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

The Reformers boldly asserted that Scripture has authority over the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. They also reclaimed the purity of the Gospel whereby repenting sinners can become right with God by grace alone through faith alone.

## The Significance of the Word “Alone”

The glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ had been hidden under the religious traditions of the Catholic Church for over 1000 years. Rome had long taught that sinners are saved by grace plus merit, through faith plus works, in Christ plus other mediators, according to Scripture plus tradition, for the glory of God plus Mary.

The Reformers renounced the false and fatal gospel of Catholicism by proclaiming salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, all for the glory of God alone.

In a similar way, the apostle Paul drove a stake in the ground to protect the purity and exclusivity of the Gospel 2000 years ago. Using the most strident and inflexible language of his ministry he wrote: “. . . there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the Gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!” (Galatians 1:7-8).

Clearly, the Roman Catholic Church falls under this divine condemnation. It has distorted the Gospel by adding additional requirements for salvation, including: sacraments, good works, keeping the law, purgatory and indulgences.

## The Spark That Ignited the Reformation

When Martin Luther could no longer allow God’s forgiveness to be treated so disdainfully, he nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The church had over 1900 relics on display which included the bones and skin, hair and fingernails and even the heads of saints. Catholics were granted indulgences for the remission of their sins if they viewed the relics and made confession to a priest.

Luther’s initial protest exposed the pope’s abominable practice of selling salvation from purgatory’s fire for the price of indulgences. Through the sale of indulgences, divine forgiveness was sold like any commodity in the marketplace. Because of such widespread corruption and heresy in the Catholic Church, the Doctrine of Justification became the defining doctrine of the Reformation.

The Doctrine of Justification is said to be the hinge upon which the gates of heaven open and close. Those who are wrong about justification end up with a false and fatal gospel.

The Catholic Church not only got justification wrong, they condemned anyone who embraced the biblical doctrine of justification by faith on the basis of the imputed, legal righteousness of Christ. In its place, Rome taught an infused, moral righteousness that was initiated by water baptism, lost by mortal sin, and regained through the sacraments, until perfect righteousness could be attained.

Rome’s doctrine of justification was diametrically opposed to the biblical doctrine. One was revealed by God, the other invented by men; one was by grace, the other by merit, one based on the finished and sufficient work of Christ, the other on the imperfect works of sinful men. The Reformers relied on the truth of God’s Word to expose the error of lawless men just as light dispels the evil deeds of darkness.

## Why Is the Reformation Being Abandoned Today?

Since 1965, the Vatican has been carrying out a well defined strategy to reverse the reformation through its decree on ecumenism. They have successfully persuaded Evangelical leaders to sign numerous unity accords with Catholics which declare that all branches of Christianity share a common faith in the Gospel. Needless to say, this is a tragic betrayal of the Gospel that many Reformers died defending.

Even more tragic is the fact that Evangelicals are the ones who are compromising the truth of God’s Word while the Catholic Church continues to stand rigidly on its “infallible”

dogmas that deceive people who have little or no discernment.

Biblical ignorance and the lack of discernment are producing fertile ground for deception and apostasy. There are many Evangelical churches that no longer faithfully preach the whole counsel of God verse by verse.

When Christians are not fed a steady diet of God's Word, they will not get the truth, and when they don't know the truth, they cannot discern truth from error. Those who lack discernment will be the first to jump on the ecumenical bandwagon and abandon the doctrines that divide believers from unbelievers.

Consider the words of Pastor Andy McQuitty of Irving Bible Church in Texas, "The rift that occurred between Catholics and Protestants 500 years ago is 'theological pettiness.' We'll have plenty of time in Heaven to figure out who was right about Purgatory and Mary" (*The Chatter*, May 2005).

This is not an isolated case of betrayal. A survey by Life Way Research of 1,000 senior evangelical pastors revealed almost two-thirds of them say Pope Francis is their brother in Christ. More than one-third say they value the pope's view on theology, and that he has improved their view of the Catholic Church.

This abandonment of Reformation theology is pathetic when the compromisers are contrasted with Martin Luther's profound view of the papacy. He boldly proclaimed, "The Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power . . . To lie, to kill, and to destroy body and soul eternally, that is where his papal government really consists" (Article IV, *The Smalcald Articles*).



## The Vatican's Strategy to Reverse the Reformation

The Catholic Church no longer calls all Protestants "heretics" because they are trying to reverse the Reformation. Instead, we are now referred to as "separated brethren" in order to seduce us to come back home to Rome for the "fullness" of salvation.

Their strategy is to persuade highly visible Evangelicals to promote Catholicism as a valid expression of Christianity. Another part of their strategy is to beguile people with Catholic mysticism, contemplative spirituality and postmodernism.

Our postmodern culture promotes pluralism, moral relativism, and tolerance while rejecting absolute authority and objective truth. This plays right into Rome's strategy to unite all professing Christians under the papacy.

### What Are We to Do?

We must remain sanctified by the truth of God's Word (John 17:17). God has called His people out of the kingdom of darkness into the glorious light of His Son. We must resist all movements to unite with unbelievers in spiritual enterprises (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

We can never have unity with Catholics because we are divided on the essentials of the Gospel, on how one is born again, on how one is justified, on how one is purified of sin and on who mediates between God and man.

We are divided on the efficacy, sufficiency and necessity of Jesus Christ. Every born-again Christian needs to enlist in the Lord's army to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12).

We need to increase our passion and love for the truth and contend earnestly for the faith against the winds of apostasy. We must defend the glory, honor and name of our Lord Jesus Christ and protect the purity and exclusivity of the Gospel. Finally, we need to be faithful to the great commission and evangelize the many victims of religious deception! ❖



Mike Gendron

Mike Gendron was a devout Roman Catholic and a strong defender of the "one true church" for 34 years before he developed a personal relationship with Jesus in 1981.

He left the Catholic Church in 1985, and in 1988 he left a successful career in corporate management to study at Dallas Theological Seminary. Four years later he formed Proclaiming the Gospel Ministries with the primary goal of reaching Catholics with the Gospel.

You can get on his mailing list and find a complete listing of all his books and video albums at his ministry's website: [www.pro-gospel.org](http://www.pro-gospel.org).

# The Bibles of the Reformation

Dr. David R. Reagan

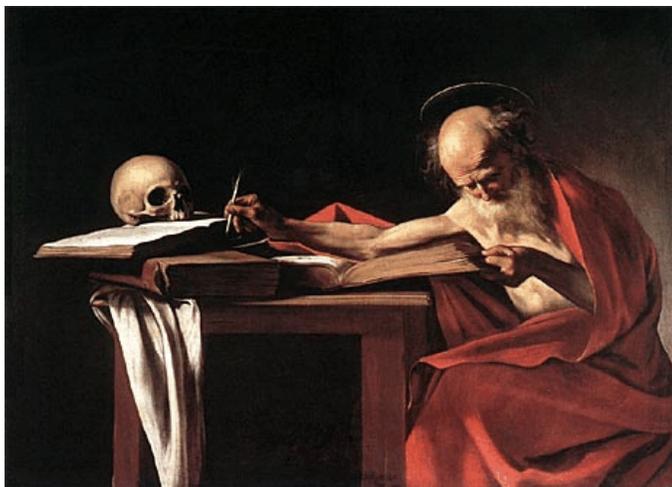
The King James Version of the Bible is the version we normally think of as being associated with the Reformation. It was published over 400 years ago in 1611, and it certainly was a product of the Reformation. But it was produced almost 100 years after the Reformation began in 1517, and it had many antecedents, even before the Reformation began.

It was not really a new and fresh translation of the Scriptures. Rather, it was primarily a revision of previously existing translations. And for that reason, it cannot be fully appreciated apart from a history of the English translations of the Bible.

## The Latin Vulgate

The first point that needs to be made clear is that the Bible used in the Western world for almost 1200 years prior to the King James Version was the *Latin Vulgate* (vulgate means the Latin that was commonly spoken).<sup>1</sup> This translation was produced between 382 and 405 A.D. by Eusebius Hieronymus, better known as St. Jerome (c. 347-420 A.D.).<sup>2</sup> He worked from Greek texts to produce his New Testament translation. When translating the Old Testament he resorted to Hebrew texts and is generally regarded as the first to do so. All previous translations of the Old Testament had been based on the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which was produced in the 3rd Century B.C.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of the King James Version, Latin had ceased to be the common language of peoples in Western Europe. It was understood primarily by the educated, and Latin Bibles were confined to libraries and churches. The average person was illiterate and had little knowledge of the Bible. Basically, all they knew about Christianity is what the Roman Church taught them, and much of that was thoroughly unbiblical.



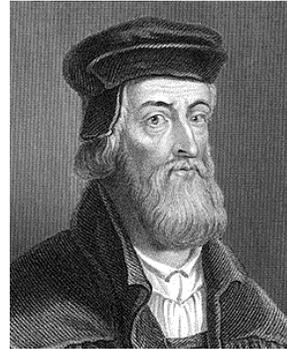
“St. Jerome” by Caravaggio (1571-1610). Monks used skulls as an aid to meditation, to remind them of their mortality.

## The Wycliffe Bible

The story of English translations begins in the 14th Century with an Oxford professor and theologian by the name of John Wycliffe (c.1324-1384).<sup>4</sup> He was a dissident Catholic who pro-

duced handwritten translations of the Scriptures in English, all of which were translated from the *Latin Vulgate*. Here is a sample of his translation in 1380 of John 3:16 —

For god loued so the world; that he gaf his oon bigetun sone, that eche man that bileueth in him perisch not; but haue euerlastynge liif.<sup>5</sup>

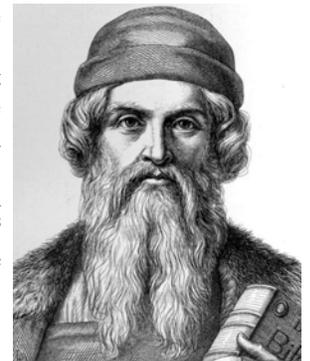


John Wycliffe

Wycliffe’s efforts to get the Scriptures into the language of the English-speaking peoples enraged the Vatican. The Church fought against the Bible being translated into vernacular languages for fear it would undermine unbiblical traditions like indulgences. The rage of the Vatican was so great, that 40 years after Wycliffe had died, the Pope ordered that his bones be dug-up, crushed, and scattered in a river.<sup>6</sup> The opposition of the Church throughout this period was, in fact, so virulent that in 1517 seven people were ordered to be burned at the stake for teaching their children to say the Lord’s Prayer in English rather than in Latin.<sup>7</sup>

## Johannes Gutenberg

In the midst of all this struggle to get the Bible into the languages of the people, a profound event occurred that had to represent the perfect timing of God. A German printer and publisher, Johannes Gutenberg (c.1398-1468), invented a printing press with movable type.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the first thing he printed was a copy of the *Latin Vulgate Bible*.



Johannes Gutenberg

Looking back on this development today, it is obvious that God was preparing the way to get His Word into the hands of the common people.

## William Tyndale

The next key individual in the effort to produce an English Bible was a remarkable man named William Tyndale (c.1494-1536).<sup>9</sup> In fact, he ultimately proved to be the most important person in the whole process, as we shall see.

Tyndale was a genius who was fluent in eight languages. He was the leading scholar of Greek at Cambridge University when he decided to translate the New Testament into English. When he could not get the approval of the Church for his project, he moved to the Continent and took up residence in Germany where he finished his translation in 1525. Four years later he began translating the Old Testament.

Tyndale’s translations were the first in English to be based directly on Greek and Hebrew texts. His English New Testament was the first to be printed, making it available for widespread distribution. Copies were smuggled into England, resulting in



William Tyndale

Tyndale being declared a heretic. He further enraged English authorities when he wrote and published an attack in 1530 on King Henry VIII's divorce.

In 1535, Tyndale was betrayed by a friend and arrested in Brussels, Belgium, where he was imprisoned for a year before he was tried for heresy and then was strangled and burned at the stake. His last words were, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes." Within four years his prayer was answered when the King ordered four translations of the Bible to be published in English, all of which were based on Tyndale's work.<sup>10</sup>

### The Coverdale Bible

During the year Tyndale was imprisoned, two of his disciples completed translating the Old Testament into English. They were Myles Coverdale (c.1488-1569) and John Rogers (c. 1505-1555). Although Tyndale had based his translation of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) on Hebrew texts, Coverdale and Rogers translated from Martin Luther's German text (completed in 1534) and the *Latin Vulgate*.



Myles Coverdale

Coverdale and Rogers took what they had done and combined it with Tyndale's complete New Testament and his partial Old Testament translations to produce what came to be called the *Coverdale Bible*.<sup>11</sup> It was published in 1535.

### The Great Bible



Henry VIII

Meanwhile, King Henry VIII had broken with Rome in 1534 over his divorce of Catherine of Aragon, and he was anxious to provide an official Bible for his new Anglican Church. Accordingly, the Archbishop of Canterbury hired Myles Coverdale for the task, and he produced in 1539 what came to be known as the *Great Bible*.<sup>12</sup> Its name was based on its size since it measured over 14 inches in height.

This Bible was the first "authorized edition" to be published in England. The King ordered that it be distributed to every church and chained to each pulpit. He also ordered that a reader be provided so that the illiterate could hear the Word of God.<sup>13</sup>

### The Matthew-Tyndale Bible

Coverdale's collaborator on the *Coverdale Bible*, John Rogers, who operated under the pseudonym, Thomas Matthew, continued working on the Old Testament, determined to produce an English text based solely on Hebrew sources. He combined

his work with the New Testament produced by Tyndale and published the *Matthew-Tyndale Bible* in 1549.

This was the first English language Bible to be based entirely on Hebrew and Greek texts.

Four years later, in 1553, the eldest daughter of King Henry VIII ascended the throne, determined to restore England to Roman Catholicism. She was crowned Queen Mary I, and she immediately launched a severe religious persecution which ultimately resulted in almost 300 dissenters being burned at the stake, including John Rogers.<sup>14</sup> "Bloody Mary's" attack on the Reformers prompted a mass exodus to Europe.

### The Geneva Bible



Many of those who fled Mary's fury went to Geneva, Switzerland where John Calvin granted them asylum. There they began working on a new English translation. William Whittingham (c. 1524-1579) headed up the effort and oversaw the work of a skilled team of translators and biblical scholars which included Myles Coverdale.

In 1560 they produced *The Geneva Bible* which became one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into English.<sup>15</sup> It served as the primary Bible of the Protestant Reformation Movement and was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Milton, John Knox, John Donne, and John Bunyan. It was the first Bible to be brought to America, being transported across the ocean on the *Mayflower*.

The text of the Bible was not much different from the English versions that preceded it. In fact, more than 85% of the language came from Tyndale. What set it apart was its format and the study aids that were incorporated into it:

- It was the first English Bible with text that was divided into numbered verses.
- Extensive cross-referencing of verses was supplied.
- Each book was preceded with a summary introduction.
- Visual aids like maps, tables, and woodcut illustrations were added.
- It contained topical and name indexes.
- It featured an elaborate system of marginal notes designed to explain the meanings of verses.

Because of all these features, *The Geneva Bible* has often been referred to as the first study Bible. It was enormously

popular, and it quickly replaced all other Bibles. Its popularity continued for decades after the King James Version was released in 1611.

### The Bishop's Bible



Elizabeth I

But *The Geneva Bible* was not popular among the rulers of England. Queen Mary had been succeeded by her sister, Elizabeth I, who returned England to the Protestant fold, but Elizabeth was a devout believer in the Divine Right of Kings, and the marginal notes of *The Geneva Bible* were strongly opposed to both monarchy and the institutional church. This led to the production in 1568 of a new authorized Bible called *The Bishop's Bible*, which was a revision of *The*

*Great Bible* of 1539. *The Bishop's Bible* was never able to gain much acceptance among the people.<sup>16</sup>

### The Douay-Rheims Bible

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church had decided to give up its resistance to translations. Realizing they had lost the battle, they decided that if the Bible was going to be available in English, they might as well produce an official Catholic version.

They used the inaccurate *Latin Vulgate* as their source text, and in 1582 they published what was called the *Douay-Rheims Bible*.<sup>17</sup> The New Testament was published in 1582. The Old Testament was completed over 30 years later in 1610. This version contained notes that were very polemical in nature, designed to counter the claims of the Protestant Reformation.

### The King James Bible



James I

Queen Elizabeth was succeeded in 1603 by Prince James VI of Scotland who became King James I of England. The King inherited a church that was deeply divided between the Conformists and the Puritans. To try to settle the differences, the King called a conference in January 1604. The conference failed to produce peace between the contending groups, but it produced a call for a new authorized version of the Bible.

The plea was accepted by King James. Like Elizabeth, he hated the *Geneva Bible*, but he recognized that the *Bishop's Bible* was inferior. He desired to have a high quality English Bible that all his subjects could embrace.

A group of 47 translators were assembled, all from the Church of England. Detailed instructions were issued to guide the translation. Marginal notes were outlawed, except for the explanation of Hebrew or Greek words. The translation had to reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England.<sup>18</sup>

The translators were authorized to consult other English translations, and they did so. In fact, their work turned out to be

more of a revision of existing translations than it was an original translation. They acknowledged this fact in the preface they attached to the Bible:<sup>19</sup>

Truly (good Christian reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one . . .

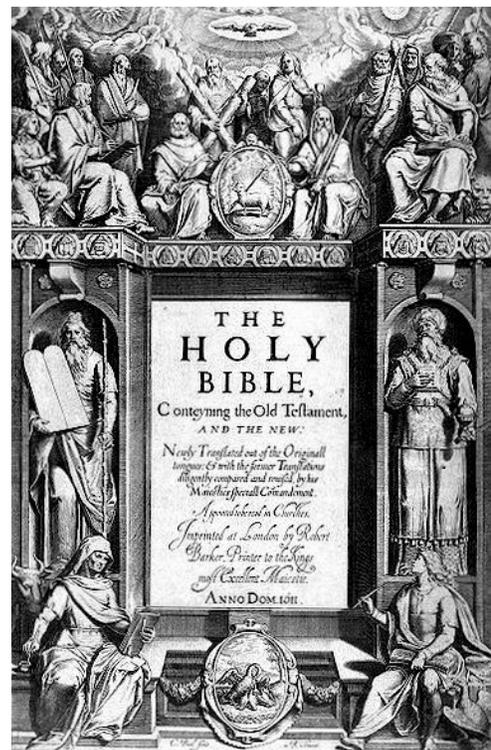
Again, like all the previous English versions, the *King James Bible* retained 85 percent of the New Testament text of Tyndale. And biblical expert Edgar J. Goodspeed contends that 19/20ths of the King James Version was borrowed from previous translations.<sup>20</sup>

In obedience to their instructions, the King James translators did not provide any marginal interpretations of the text. They did, however, provide 9,000 cross references and 8,500 notes regarding alternative renderings or variant source texts.

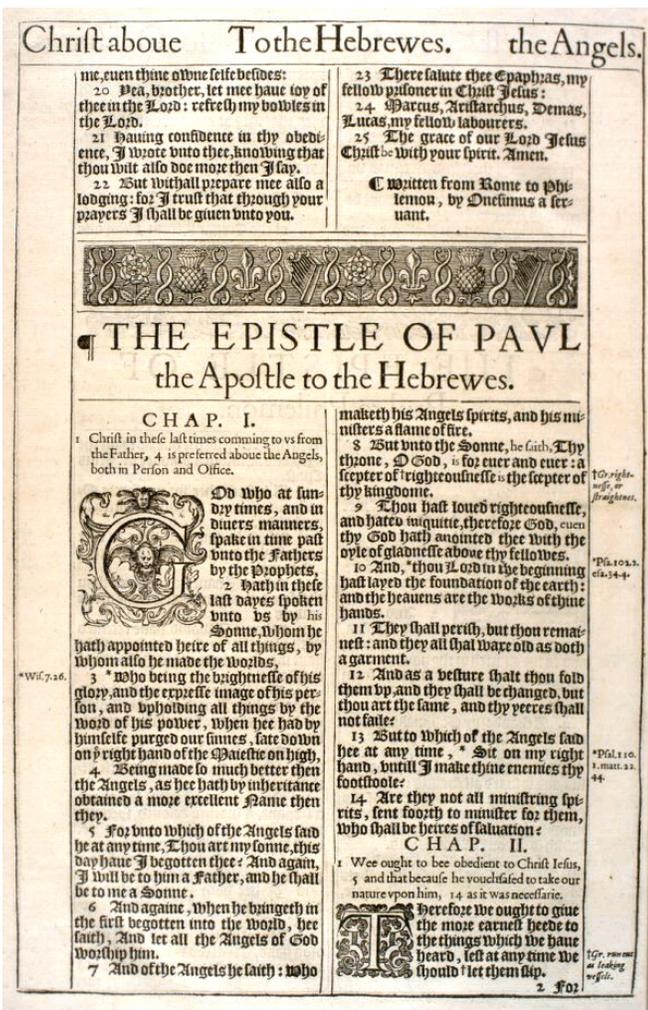
### The Ascendancy of the King James Bible

The *King James Bible* did not become the predominant Bible overnight. Scholars stuck with the *Latin Vulgate* and abandoned it slowly over the course of the 18th Century. The general public clung to the *Geneva Bible* for decades.

The turning point for acceptance of the *King James Version* occurred after the death of King James in 1625. His successor, Charles I, appointed an Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, who immediately banned the printing of the *Geneva Bible* in order to bring about a uniformity of Bibles. At first, this caused no problem because copies could easily be imported. But Laud later issued a further edict forbidding the Bible's importa-



Title page of the first edition of the King James Version in 1611.



The first page of the book of Hebrews as it appeared in the original 1611 edition of the King James Bible.

tion. The last printing of this great Bible was done in Amsterdam in 1644.<sup>21</sup>

With no continuing competition, by 1700, the *King James Version* had become the sole English translation for use in the Protestant Churches.

Over the years that followed, the *King James Version* went through many revisions. Most of these were to correct spelling errors and typographical errors. By the mid-18th Century the misprints had reached scandalous proportions. It was then decided that an attempt should be made to produce a standard text.

The first attempt was by Cambridge University scholars in 1762. Another effort was made in 1769 by Oxford University, and that edition became the standard text that is still in use today.

The Oxford edition of 1769 differs from the 1611 text in 24,000 places. Spelling and punctuation were standardized. The “supplied” words not found in the original languages were greatly revised and extended as a result of cross-checking against the presumed source texts. And in many places minor changes to the text itself were made.<sup>22</sup>

### The Decline of the King James Bible

The *King James Bible* remained supreme for a peak period of 250 years, from 1700 to 1950. During that time it became the

only book in the world to exceed one billion copies.<sup>23</sup>

The first serious challenge to the *King James Version* appeared in 1885 when the *English Revised Version* was published in England. Its stated purpose was “to adapt the *King James Version* to the present state of the English language . . . and to the present standards of biblical scholarship.”<sup>24</sup>

The *English Revised Version* was noted for being the first Bible to ever be published without the Apocrypha (14 inter-testament books). Until that time, all Bibles, both Protestant and Catholic — including the *King James Bible* — had been published with the Apocrypha.

American scholars followed suit in 1901 with the publication of the *American Standard Version*. It was nearly identical to the *English Revised Version* except for the much more frequent use of the term Jehovah in the Old Testament.<sup>25</sup>

By the mid-20th Century the wording of the *King James Version* had become antiquated to the point that many words were unintelligible and others actually meant the opposite of their original meaning. This serious problem prompted an explosion of new translations and paraphrases during the second half of the century.

### Recent American Translations

The *Revised Standard Version* of the New Testament appeared in 1946. The Old Testament text came out in 1952.<sup>26</sup> This version was denounced by conservatives as a “liberal translation.” Particularly controversial was its translation of Isaiah 7:14 where the word previously translated as “virgin” was changed to “young woman.” This Bible was quickly adopted by most of the mainline denominations.

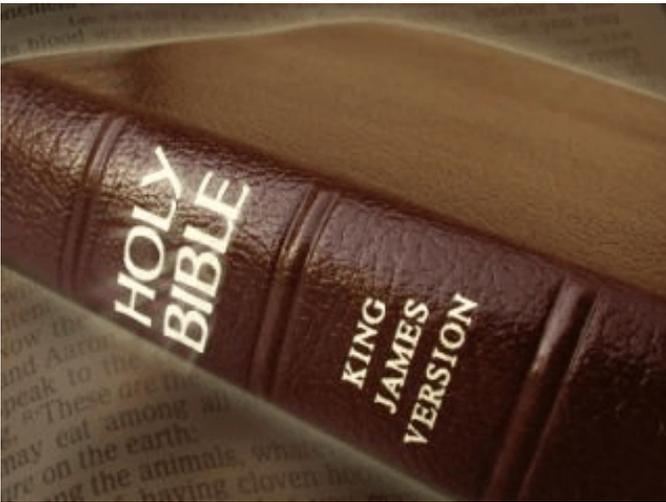
In 1971 the complete *New American Standard Bible* was published.<sup>27</sup> It constituted an extensive revision of the *American Standard Bible* of 1901. It was quickly adopted by Evangelicals because it is considered by many to be the most accurate word-for-word translation that has been produced in the English language. It was updated in 1995 to make it more readable.

The *New International Version* was published in full in 1973.<sup>28</sup> It offered a “dynamic equivalent” conservative translation, meaning it sought thought-for-thought accuracy rather than word-for-word. It was also aimed at a junior high school reading level. It was ridiculed by Fundamentalists as the “Nearly Inspired Version,” but it has quickly become the best-selling modern-English translation.

The *New King James Version* appeared in 1982.<sup>29</sup> It attempted to keep the basic wording of the old *King James Version* in order to appeal to King James loyalists. It replaced most of the obscure words and the Elizabethan “thee, thy, and thou” pronouns. There was also an attempt to update grammar, spelling, and word order.

The dawn of the 21st Century saw the publication of the *English Standard Version* in 2002.<sup>30</sup> It represents a major attempt to bridge the gap between simple readability and the precise accuracy of the *New American Standard Bible*. And like the old *Geneva Bible*, the *English Standard Version* has been issued in the form of a phenomenal Study Bible (2008) that is full of charts, maps, diagrams, and explanations that run 2,750 pages in length!

## The Response of King James Defenders



As you can see, there has been a flood of new translations since 1950, and the listing above does not contain paraphrases that range from the conservative (*The Living Bible*) to the liberal (*The Message*). Nor have I listed a number of very liberal translations. When you consider the sudden appearance of all these translations, there can be no doubt that people are seeking Bibles they can easily understand.

All these new Bibles have prompted King James users to dig in their heels. They greet every new version with derision and harsh criticism. Often their attacks get out of hand as they dub the new versions “Satan inspired.” Some even argue that the *King James Version* is a sacred, inerrant translation and that it is therefore the only “perfect” translation that exists today.<sup>31</sup> Any survey of the history of English Bibles like the one I have presented above makes the King James perfection claim a laugh.

The more responsible critics usually point to what they call the “erosion” of the New Testament by the modern translations. They argue that the Greek text for the New Testament that was compiled by Erasmus (1466-1536) and published in 1516 is the only proper basis for a New Testament translation, and they point out that it was what was used for the *King James Version*. This text became known as the *Textus Receptus*.



Erasmus

They then attack the modern translations for abandoning the *Textus Receptus* and relying instead on the Greek text compiled by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort and published in 1881. They argue that although the Westcott and Hort version is based upon much earlier manuscripts than those used by Erasmus, the manuscripts are unreliable because they are “Catholic manuscripts.” This accusation is based on the fact that one of the manuscripts was found at a Catholic monastery in the Sinai desert and the other at the Vatican in Rome.

These attacks on the Westcott-Hort text are really irrelevant, for although the Westcott-Hort text was the “standard” critical

Greek text for a couple of generations, it is no longer considered as such, and it has not served as the New Testament text for any of the modern translations. The standard text today is the Nestle-Aland text (1st edition in 1898; 27th edition, 1993).



The truth of the matter is that none of the Greek texts are perfect. They represent a pasting together of segments of the most ancient manuscripts. Erasmus did his best, but there have been thousands of manuscripts discovered since he put together his compilation, and many of those are much older than anything he had to work with. Furthermore, none of the differences in the compilations have any effect on the basic doctrines and truths of the New Testament.

The King James defenders need to keep in mind that the major purpose of the new conservative translations is twofold: greater accuracy and easier-to-understand language. How can you fault those aims? Here’s how one person has summed it up:<sup>32</sup>

We must remember that the main purpose of the Protestant Reformation was to get the Bible out of the chains of being trapped in an ancient language that few could understand, and into the modern, spoken, conversational language of the present day. William Tyndale fought and died for the right to print the Bible in the common, spoken, modern English tongue of his day . . .

Will we now go backwards and seek to imprison God’s Word once again exclusively in ancient translations?

### Thanks to the King James Version

We are all beholden to the leaders of the Reformation Movement who were so determined to get the Bible in the hands of the people and in translations they could easily read and understand.

We also owe a great debt to the *King James Version* and the impact it has had on both the Church and Western Civilization. It was a great Bible for its day and time. It has served the English speaking peoples well for the several centuries when it was the dominant translation (from 1700 to 1950).

The time has come to lay it to rest with honor and dignity and with heartfelt thanks. It has stamped our language indelibly. It has inspired many generations. Most important, it has opened the door to God for millions of people by delivering them from spiritual darkness into the light of the glory of Jesus Christ. ❖

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Note: The references for this article can be found with the copy that is posted on our website at [lambliion.com](http://lambliion.com). Just go to the site and type into the site’s search engine: King James Version.

## Television Update

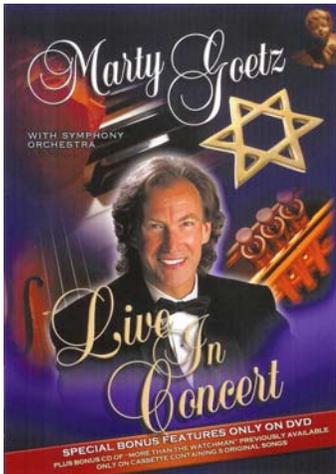
# Continuing to Expand!

We continue to add new television outlets. We have added ten new national networks since the first of this year, the latest being a new one that started in South Africa and is now opening in the US — called FaithUSA.

We have also just added three more powerful new regional stations. One covers the Dallas - Ft. Worth area. It is KDAF-TV, channel 33. We will be following Robert Jeffress' program on Sunday morning. You could not ask for a better lead-in program than that! The other two new regional stations are WTOG-TV in Tampa Bay, FL., and WCCB-TV in Charlotte, NC.

All of these new stations are part of the CW network of stations. This is a joint venture between CBS and Time-Warner.

We recently shot four new Christmas programs that will be broadcast in December. The programs we constructed from the presentations that were made at our last Bible conference in July were broadcast during September and October.



We always end the year by broadcasting one of the most popular programs we have ever produced. It features the life and music of Marty Goetz, who is one of the leading Messianic musicians in the world. The album this program is drawn from is one titled "Marty Goetz Live in Concert." It was videotaped before a live audience in Canada. Marty is accompanied by a symphony orchestra. The music is joyous, humorous and inspirational. The album includes a DVD with 17 video songs and a bonus CD with 5 audio songs. It sells for \$20, including the cost of shipping. This item makes great Christmas presents!

We have a lot of exciting new programs planned for the Winter, including a number of teaching programs by Dr. Reagan.

Keep in mind that you can go to our website anytime and watch our TV programs on demand. The same is true at the other Internet networks that are listed on this page. ❖

## Television Broadcast Schedules

### National Networks:

**Daystar** — Wed. 6:00pm CT, DirecTV 369, Dish 263, AT&T U-verse, cable, broadcast stations, satellites and web streaming (daystar.com).

**Word** — Sun. 5:30am CT, DirecTV 373, Cable, AT&T U-verse, cable, satellites and web streaming (thewordnetwork.org).

**Angel One** — Mon. 8:00am CT, DISH 262 (www.angelone.tv).

**CTN** — Wed. 12:30pm CT, DirecTV 376, Dish 267 and web streaming (ctnonline.com).

**CTVN** — Sun. 8pm CT. The network has 44 full-power stations and 57 low-power affiliate stations. Glorystar satellite service and web streaming (www.ctvn.org).

**FaithUSA** — Thurs. 4:00pm CT, DISH 269 and web streaming (myfaithusa.com). **New!**

**GEB** — Sat. 5:00pm CT, DirecTV 363 and web streaming (geb.america.com).

**GodTV** — Thurs. 8:30am CT, DirecTV 365 and web streaming (www.god.tv).

**NRB** — Sun. 4:00pm CT, DirecTV 378 and web streaming (http://nrbtv.org).

**TCT** — Sun. 7:30pm CT, DirecTV 377, ten broadcast stations in the Midwest, and web streaming (tct.tv).

**Upliftv** — Mon. & Fri. 9:30am CT, DirecTV 379 (upliftv.com).

**Walk TV** — Sun. 7:30am CT, 265 affiliate stations nationwide. To find a station in your area, go to <https://thewalktv.wordpress.com> and click on the "Affiliates" tab.

**WHT** — Sat. 7:00pm CT, DirecTV 367 and web streaming (lesea.com/wht).

### Regional Networks:

**CFNT** — Fri. 3:00pm CT. Broadcast station in Wichita Falls, TX (cfnt.org).

**FNV** — Sun. 12:30am CT, Mon. 8:30am, and Wed. 7:00pm, Three broadcast stations and cable throughout southern Louisiana (familyvisiontv.com).

**KDAF** — Sun. 8:00am CT. Broadcast station covering the Dallas - Ft. Worth area. Channel 33. **New! Start-up date is October 1st.**

**KSCE** — Sun. 10:30am MT, broadcast station in El Paso, TX. DirecTV & DISH Local 38, AT&T U-verse 38, cable and web streaming (kscetv.com).

**VTN (The Victory Television Network)** — Covering the state of Arkansas. Tues. at 10:30am CT, Sat. at 2:00pm, and Sun. at 10:00pm (vtntv.com).

**WCCB** — Sun. 7:00am ET. Broadcast station in Charlotte, NC (ccbcharlotte.com). **New!**

**WTOG-TV** — Sun. 8:30 ET. Broadcast station covering Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL (<http://cwtampa.cbslocal.com>). **New!**

### Internet Networks:

Our programs are available on demand on these websites.

**HisChannel** — hischannel.com

**YouTube** — youtube.com/user/ChristinProphecy

**GodTube** — godtube.com

**Truli** — truli.com

**Vimeo** — vimeo.com

**DailyMotion** — dailymotion.com/us

**Lamb & Lion** — lamblion.com

# BATTLE for ISRAEL

## Holy Land Pilgrimage MAY 19 - 30, 2018



Tim Moore, Evangelist

Lamb & Lion Ministries is excited to announce that dates have been confirmed for our first **Battle for Israel Holy Land Pilgrimage**, hosted by our Assistant Evangelist, Tim Moore. A Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, Tim has over 33 years of military experience. He is also a commercial pilot and an elected member of the Kentucky State Legislature. Tim is an expert in Bible prophecy and an experienced host of Israel tours.

This exciting new venture in the Holy Land builds on the foundation of the spiritual pilgrimage designed by Dr. David Reagan, Founder and Director of Lamb & Lion Ministries.

Pilgrims will be visiting key battle sites throughout Israel - from the Old and New Testament period, the modern nation of Israel, prophesied future battles and spiritual battles.

The cost of this 12-day tour is \$4,200 per person. This includes airfare, bus transportation within Israel, hotels, all entrance fees and three meals each day. The only extra cost is a fee for tips.

Lamb & Lion Ministries  
PO Box 919  
McKinney, TX 75070

[www.LambLion.com](http://www.LambLion.com)

(972) 736-3567  
Mon-Fri, 8a-5p CST

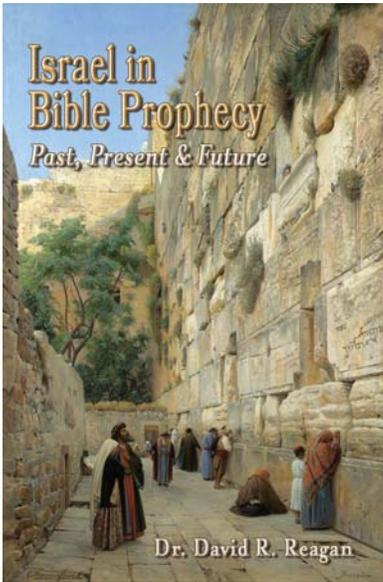
This experience will bring the Bible alive to you and draw you into a closer relationship with the Lord - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who protects and preserves those who are His. Sign up today for this life-changing pilgrimage and witness God's manifest providence to Israel!



Behold, He who keeps  
*Israel* will neither  
slumber nor sleep.

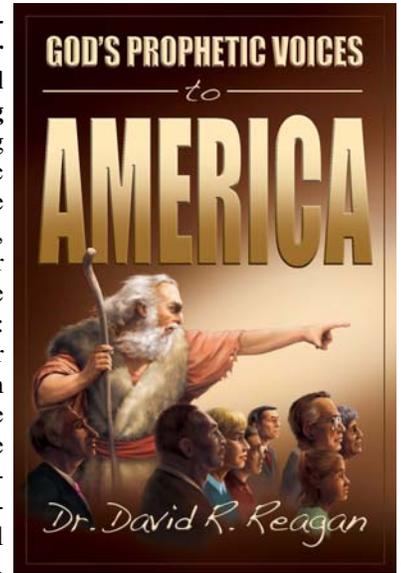
Psalm 121:4 NASB

# Bible Prophecy Study Resources

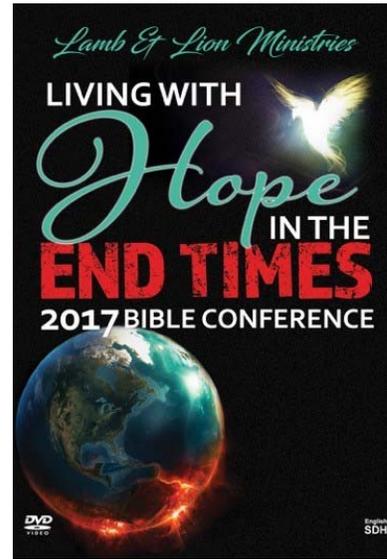


The miraculous fulfillment of Bible prophecy among the Jewish people and its meaning as a sign of the Lord's soon return. A 250 page book about four end time prophecies fulfilled in Jewish history before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, seven that were fulfilled in whole or in part during that century, and those that are yet to be fulfilled in the future. The book concludes by explaining the importance of these fulfilled prophecies to the Church. \$20, including shipping.

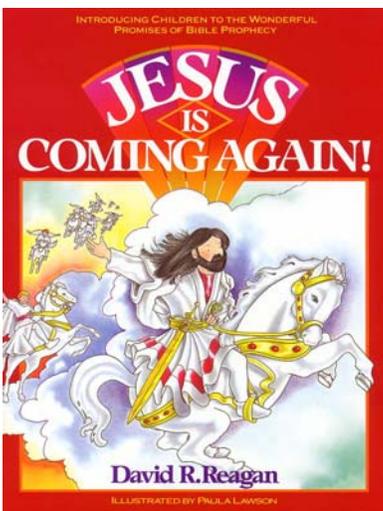
The messages of 13 prophetic voices calling our nation to repentance and warning of impending destruction. A fascinating overview of four prophetic voices in the past and nine who are current today, with a summary chapter by Dr. Reagan in which he responds to the question: "Is there any hope for America?" Dr. Reagan considers this to be the most important book he has ever written, containing the most urgent message. 285 pages, with full color photos throughout. \$20, including shipping.



Is God really in control of the weather, and if so, then why does He allow natural disasters that destroy so much property and take so many lives? This is one of Dr. Reagan's most popular video productions. Basically, it deals with the sovereignty of God in the world today. Videotaped before a live audience at a Stealing the Mind Conference. The running time is 45 minutes. It will provoke you to think and drive you into the Scriptures. \$20, including shipping.

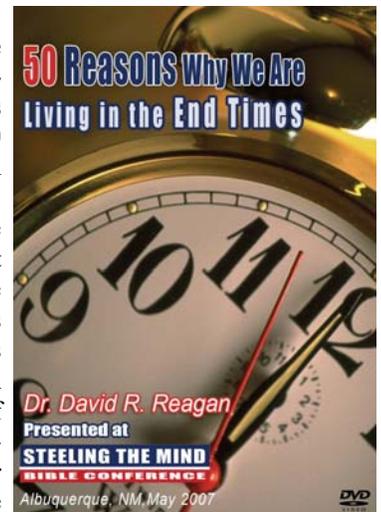


The world seems to be falling to pieces before our very eyes. Is there any hope, or are we doomed to disaster? This album contains three DVD discs with a total of six presentations that were made at the Lamb & Lion 2017 Bible conference. Presenters include Ed Hindson, Tommy Ice, Don Perkins, Glenn Meredith, Andy Woods and Dave Reagan. Approximately 5 hours in length. Great for both individual and group study. \$25, including the cost of shipping.



Are you looking for a good Christmas present for a child or grandchild? This 28 page book is designed for pre-school and elementary kids. It focuses on the blessings that God has promised the world when Jesus returns. Beautifully illustrated in full color. Large in format (8.5x11"). Durable cover. Teaching tips for parents. Coloring page at the end. \$10, including the cost of shipping. Call for quantity prices.

Are we really living in the season of the Lord's return? And, if so, what is the evidence? In this 50 minute presentation taped before a live audience Dr. Reagan presents 50 signs the Bible tells us to look for that will signal the season of the Lord's return. And he points out that every one of them is currently on the scene. A lively presentation full of illustrations. Study it yourself and then show it to your church. \$20, including the cost of shipping. ✚



# Ministry News

## Schedule of Activities —

### January:

Vic Batista in Miami, FL, hosts a radio Bible teaching program with Nathan Jones (3,10,17,24,31). 5:30pm ET on 102.3 FM. Also streamed on Facebook & Twitter.

Dave Reagan attends annual board meeting of Acts 29 Ministries in Panama City, FL (5).

### February:

Vic Batista & Nathan Jones radio program (7,14,21,28).

Tim Moore at a men's retreat sponsored by The Evangelical Free Church in Green Valley, AZ (16-17).

### March:

Vic Batista & Nathan Jones radio program (7,14,21,28).

Dave Reagan at the Stealing the Mind Conference at Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho (3).

### April:

Vic Batista & Nathan Jones radio program (4,11,18,25).

Dave Reagan at the annual prophecy conference in Saskatoon, Canada (13-14).

Dave Reagan at The Brookhaven Church in McKinney, TX (29).

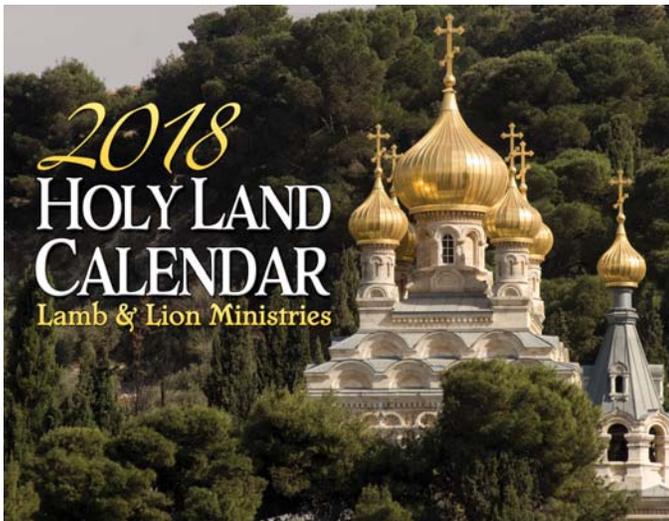
### May:

Vic Batista & Nathan Jones radio program (2,9,16,23,30).

Lamb & Lion Regional Conference at the 412 Church in San Jacinto, CA (18-19).

Special "Battle Tour" of Israel led by Tim Moore (19-30).

## Holy Land Calendar —



Our annual Holy Land calendar is ready for distribution. It contains a beautiful full-color picture for each month of the year. And in addition to key American holidays, it indicates the dates for all the Jewish holidays and feasts. It is printed on heavy-duty paper. This calendar would make great Christmas gifts. It sells for \$10, including the cost of mailing. You can place your order through our website at [lamblion.com](http://lamblion.com), or you can call 972-736-3567 Monday thru Friday, 8am to 5pm Central time. The incredibly beautiful church featured on the cover is the Russian Orthodox Church of Mary Magdalene.

## Financial Accountability —



We are very pleased to announce that our nations' number one monitor of charitable organizations (of all types), called Charity Navigator, has given this ministry its highest rating (4 Stars) for financial

accountability for the 13<sup>th</sup> year in a row! This award is a great tribute to the financial policies established by our board, to the oversight of our operations by our board, and to our Chief of Operations, Rachel Houck, and her financial team, headed up by our Financial Director, Reva Frye. Any time you are considering a donation to a non-profit organization, you should first check them out on the Charity Navigator website at [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org). You may be surprised to discover that some non-profits spend half their income on fundraising! Others pay exorbitantly high salaries.

## AIG Ark and Museum —

Dr. Reagan recently spoke at a Stealing the Mind Conference that was held at a conference center near the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. The reason for this venue is because it is located close to both the Creation Museum and Ark Replica that have been built by Answers in Genesis Ministries.



Left to right above: Todd Hutchinson, Dave Reagan, Vicky Neichter and Larry Neichter. The full-scale model of Noah's Ark is in the background.

Tickets to the conference included the entrance fees to both the Ark and the Museum, which are located about 30 miles apart from each other. The head of AIG, Ken Ham, was one of the speakers at the conference, together with Dr. Reagan and another Creation speaker, Russ Miller. Dr. Reagan was accompanied to the conference by one of our staff members, Todd Hutchinson, and the two of them were joined by Tim Moore, our Assistant Evangelist and the one who hosts our pilgrimages to Israel. Two of our Prophecy Partners from Louisville, KY, Larry and Vicky Neichter, attended the conference, and our staff members joined them in visiting both the Creation Museum and the Ark. ❖



At the AIG Creation Museum: Tim Moore, Dave Reagan, Vicky and Larry Neichter, and Todd Hutchinson.



**LAMB  
& LION  
MINISTRIES**

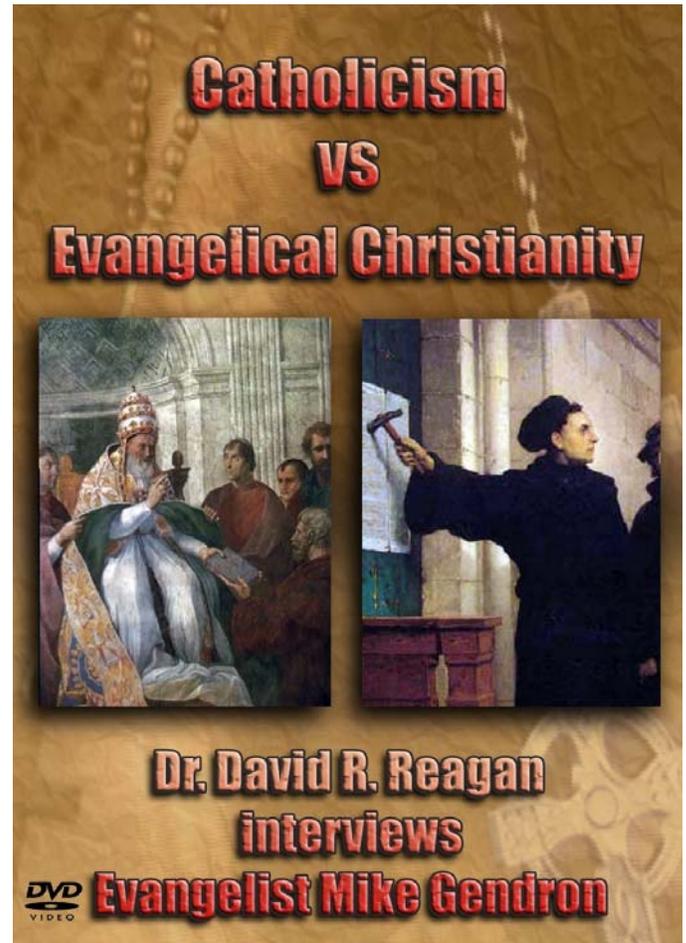
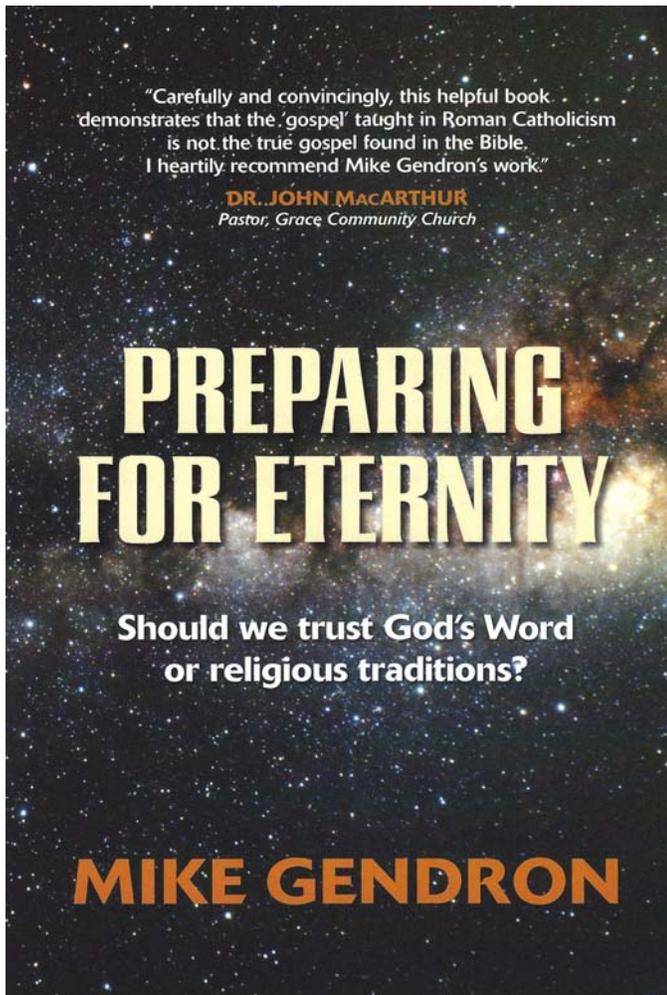
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## Two Vital Resources Comparing Catholicism with Evangelical Christianity

Mike Gendron was a devout Catholic for 34 years before he was born again in 1981 by accepting Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He resigned his position in the corporate world, enrolled in seminary, and has devoted his life since that time to proclaiming the Gospel to Catholics whom he loves with all his heart.

His book is a classic study of the biblical errors of



Catholic doctrine. It also contains a powerful presentation of the true Gospel.

The video album pictured above features a 65 minute interview of Mike by Dr. Reagan. In the process, Mike shows clearly how the fundamental beliefs of Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity are incompatible with each other.

Both the book and the video album sell for \$20 each, including shipping. You can purchase both for \$30, including shipping. Ask for special offer #672. Order though our website at [lamblion.com](http://lamblion.com) or call our office at 972-736-3567, Monday thru Friday, 8am to 5pm Central time. ✚