



How The Reformation Happened

Hilaire Belloc

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At last, this is an accurate explanation of how Christendom suffered "shipwreck" in the Protestant Reformation. Traces the titanic conflict blow-by-blow from pre-Luther, through "The Flood," "The English Accident," and Calvin, showing the spiritual, military, political and financial struggles which had ended in a divided Europe by 1648. No educated person can ignore this book!

How The Reformation Happened Details

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From Reader Review How The Reformation Happened for online ebook

Silver says

I think I would have given it 5 stars, but it needed some kind of footnotes or something - would have made for a much stronger essay.

Belloc is very insightful, glad to have read about the Reformation from a perspective that you do not see in our Protestant-heavy history books, I would definitely recommend this.

Matthew Dambro says

One of "Old Thunder's" best. He demolishes the standard Protestant version of the Reformation. His reasoning is clear and his logic is impeccable. The breakdown of Christendom into a mass of contradictory beliefs; finally leading to only subjectivism and Leftist nihilism is a story that should be told. He is unashamedly Roman Catholic, yet he points out clearly the moral degradation that afflicted the Church from the time of the Black Death (1348) on. Reform as clearly called for, but not the wholesale destruction of a cultural unity that had existed for over a thousand years.

Mare says

Interesting viewpoint on the Reformation.

Brian says

Good, insightful history from one of England's most memorable Catholic authors. Belloc lays forth an understanding of history regarding the Protestant Reformation(s) that gives "at least the right sequence of political causes and their right proportion ... in a sketch of that fatal century".

Belloc survey's 5 factors and 2 consequences of the Protestant Reformation(s). Factor 1: There existed an opposition to the Catholic faith from its very beginning. Factor 2: The Reformation was mainly a protest against the spiritual and financial power of the clergy/hierarchy. Factor 3: The Reformation was prompted by corrupt condition of the Church and Papal court. Factor 4: The Reformation was aided by the growing rule of princes and general councils. Factor 5: The Reformation was politically motivated by the looting of Church property . Consequence 1: The Reformation isolated the soul, weakening the corporate nature of society. Consequence 2: Reformation isolated the soul ushering in a base form of subjectivism.

Good book that goes beyond the common understanding of Protestant history and into multi-layered political and economic understandings.

Roger Buck says

This book is passionate, opinionated, profoundly learned, acute and definitely politically incorrect. Refreshing! O Belloc! How you quench my thirsting soul in this arid world of materialism ... And how you penetratively understood the historical processes that generated our arid culture.

I hope to review this at more length at the growing Hilaire Belloc section of my blog:
<http://corjesusacratissimum.org/tag/h...> (which I shamelessly plug for any fellow friends of beloved HB who love him like I do ...)

Ryan Ferrera says

Essential reading for all Christians, especially those who have ever pondered the scandal of Christian disunity and wondered why it is so. The "reformation" was not a liberation from doctrinal error, but more aptly a revolution against temporal and spiritual authority of any kind. The personal abuses of Catholic clergy at this time (and there were many) were not doctrinal abuses of matters of faith, but offered the slightest opportunity for that devilish character at work in the world and the hearts of men to seize opportunity for power and wealth. John Calvin sowed the seeds of Protestantism with his works of systematic theology to devastating effect, popularly adopted by those enterprising men seeking a dismembering of authority for their own personal gain. Despite this turning point in history, the Lord's promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church holds true and the Catholic Church survived the protestant revolution as the lasting sign of Christian unity in the world. It shall be so until the end of the age.

Jed Park says

I had never read the history of the Reformation from a Catholic perspective. It was fascinating to me.

Cameron Murray says

This book has answered nearly everything I wanted to know about the Reformation. There are only but a few smaller questions that I have left unanswered, but the larger "why's" of the split of Christendom have been answered brilliantly by Hilaire Belloc.

This was the first book I had read by Belloc, and I do intend to read many more of his works as he is a prominent English Catholic writer whom I seem to become more drawn to as I continue to dive into his literature.

I think one of the things I particularly enjoyed about this book was Belloc's ability to remain objective while explaining the truths of the Reformation. I learned much about the corruption within the men of my own faith: Catholicism, that Belloc was able to explain objectively without much attachment to emotion to exaggerate or downplay whatever thing. Because he was able to do this so effectively, I was able to

understand and learn truths for what they are without becoming animated over them.

Belloc answered all of my "why's" that I have been desiring to learn, and I love that it was from a Catholic author able to maintain objectivity for explanation throughout the read. Too often we see the anti-Catholic hatred attempt to explain the Reformation and it's "positive effect" and "glory" that it has laid down upon history, when in reality, it was a travesty to split Christendom.

This will be the first book that I recommend to anyone who wants to learn the authentic truths of the Reformation. A must-read.

Michael says

Though the author (a Catholic) makes no pretense at impartiality, he also makes no attempt to deny the incredible institutional corruption in the Church at the time of the Reformation -- indeed he repeatedly emphasizes it. This is a sharp-edged polemic from a different era. Though I read the book fully aware of its brevity and limited scope, I had nonetheless hoped for a little more meat on the bone. Contains both unsubstantiated assertions and deeply thoughtful insights. The author's knowledge of every little corner of Europe is at times staggering.

Ethan says

This book should be etched in stone and turned into a monument. For any subject, my dream is to have someone just tell it to me straight, what really happened and why, the entire truth without any waste. Belloc is that person for the subject of the Protestant Reformation and the splitting of Christendom. This is an outstanding history book. I wish I'd read him years ago.

Andrew says

Pretty good account, though he assumes a lot of previous knowledge and his role is really just to throw out various situations and go off on his idea of the thing. Luther not too important. Calvin is. England is critical and decisive on account of the middle nobles wanting to scarf up the church's property. Then these same "new millionaires" propping up and controlling Elizabeth.

Still.. a good conversational account.

Hayden says

Good historical account of how the Reformation began and spread through the major areas of Europe.

Sunni says

So far I've enjoyed this read. It is a very balanced and unbiased account of the Reformation. I would love to re-read this book without distractions.

David says

For Protestants, this is kind of like reading the *Screwtape Letters* version of history. Belloc mostly concentrates on the politics of the Reformation, not making much of an attempt to handle doctrinal matters (even in his discussion of Trent). His criticism is particularly (and surprisingly) mild towards Martin Luther and Henry VIII; he attributes the force of Protestantism to Calvin. Though his coverage draws suspicion, Belloc's perspective is occasionally insightful and it is hard to finish the book without sharing his grief over the Church's loss of unity.

Mahmoud Haggui says

by the early 1500s, many people in Western Europe were growing increasingly dissatisfied with the Christian Church. Many found the Pope too involved with secular (worldly) matters, rather than with his flocks spiritual well-being. Lower church officials were poorly educated and broke vows by living richly and keeping mistresses. Some officials practiced simony, or passing down their title as priest or bishop to their illegitimate sons. In keeping with the many social changes of the Renaissance, people began to boldly challenge the authority of the Christian Church.

Early Calls for Church Reforms:

There were some early calls for church reform in that last part of the fifteenth century. Jan Hus (1372-1415) a Bohemian scholar was burned at the stake for his criticisms of The Church. Englishman John Wycliffe (1328-1384), a professor at Oxford, attacked the Eucharist, the Christian ceremony of taking bread and wine, calling it a source of superstition. Wycliffe claimed the bible to be final authority, superseding even that of the Pope. Both Hus and Wycliffe attracted a small following, but any major opposition to the Christian Church was still a century away.

Martin Luther and his 95 Theses

A German monk by the name of Martin Luther was particularly bothered by the selling of indulgences. An indulgence, a religious pardon that released a sinner from performing specific penalties, could be bought from a church official for various fees. Martin Luther was especially troubled because some church officials gave people the impression that they could buy their way into heaven. To express his growing concern of church corruption, Martin Luther wrote his famous 95 Theses, which called for a full reform of the Christian Church. In it, he stressed the following points:

- People could only win salvation by faith in God's forgiveness. The Church taught that faith, along with good works was needed for salvation.
- The Pope is a false authority. The bible was the one true authority.
- All people with faith in Christ were equal. People did not need priest and bishops to interpret the bible for them. They could read it themselves and make up their own minds.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther tacked his 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg, in Saxony,

Germany. Luther invited other scholars to debate him on the matter church policies.

Martin Luther in Exile

Thanks to the printing press, Luther's 95 Theses was reprinted throughout Germany, and soon he attracted many followers. And many enemies. In 1520, the Pope excommunicated Martin Luther. Luther responded by burning the papal decree in front of his students. In 1521, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V put Luther on trial, and had him declared an outlaw. Luther went into exile, living at Wartburg Castle, home to Prince Frederick the Wise, of Saxony. During his time at Wartburg, Luther translated the bible into German.

When Luther emerged from his exile ten months later, he found many of his theories had been put into practice. Priests now wore regular clothing, and called themselves ministers. Religious services were held in German rather than Latin. And many of the clergy had begun to marry. Martin Luther himself married a former nun in 1524. Instead pushing for reforms, the protesting Christians had begun their own religion. Styling themselves after their founder, they called themselves Lutherans.

Martin Luther's message held great appeal for various groups, some of whom had less than spiritual concerns. Many Western European rulers resented the political power held by the Pope. In addition, many northern merchants did not like paying heavy taxes to the Church, which was situated far away, in Rome. They welcomed a chance to break with Rome once and for all.

Protestantism

In 1529 several German princes banded together, and signed a decree at the Diet of Speyer, publicly declaring their support for Luther and his teachings. They became known as the protesting princes. Hence the word Protestant.

In the years following Martin Luther's radical break with the church, much warfare occurred in and around Western Europe. Despite their best efforts, Catholic (as they were now referred to) rulers often could not bring their subjects back to the Church. In 1555, at the Peace of Augsburg, all German princes agreed that the religion of each German state was to be decided by its ruler. Elsewhere in Europe, the Wars of Religion were not so easily solved.

New Religions

Martin Luther and the protesting princes inspired an entire generation of people to break away from the Catholic Church. Men like John Calvin and John Knox became outspoken critics of Catholicism, and brought Protestantism to other parts of Western Europe. King Henry VIII (you know, the guy with all the wives) cleverly jumped on the protestant bandwagon, declaring himself head of the new Church of England. He then granted himself a very convenient divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Other groups, such as the Huguenots in France, and Anabaptists in the Netherlands would further divide the Christian religion. The Catholic Church scrambled to do damage control, initializing what would become the Counter Reformation (also known as the Catholic Reformation). However, they would not succeed in stamping out Protestantism. Never again would all Christians worship under one roof.
