

Reformation Heroes

Introduction

1. Most biblical scholars agree the period 800-1500 was a 700 year period ripe for reform. This evil did not happen suddenly. Ecclesiastical pretension and departure from the church's first love characterized the close of what most call the apostolic period.

2. The early papal church, which was Satan's masterpiece on earth, was a time of universal authority and cruel persecution of Christians who dared to question papal edicts. Its evil reign covers "the Middle Ages," the moral characteristics of which have been well termed "the dark ages." Popery blighted everything it touched.

3. The Reformation was God's intervention in grace and power to cripple papal authority and introduce into Europe the light which for 300 years had been burning with more or less brilliancy. History now calls the dark ages: "the Middle Ages."

3.1 In the Middle Ages the church became corrupt as it tried to combine Christianity with pagan philosophy and heathen religious rites so that much of the ritual of the church of that period can be traced directly to comparable ceremonies in heathen religion; and thus began the exaltation of Mary the mother of our Lord's humanity.

3.2 The early universal church exalted Mary to the plane of a female deity. It was taught that only through Mary could access to God be made and apart from her favor there could be no deliverance.

3.3 Along with this, the church experienced spiritual depravity and idols in the form of religious statues; amulets were sold as licenses to sin and thus ushering in an era of sin and evil in unprecedented proportions.

3.4 False concepts of evangelism developed, Anti-Semitism, exportation of Jews, torturing of Jews to bring about "salvation faith" and numerous other forms of pagan liturgy proliferated.

3.4.1 Especially onerous was the departure from the finished work of Christ. The error of continual sacrifice of Christ was advocated, transforming the observance of the elements of the Lord's Supper into another atoning sacrifice.

3.4.2 This error was corrected in modern Protestantism by the recognition of the bread and the cup as symbols and not the sacrifice itself; an act which Christ performed once for all on the Cross. The admonitions to avoid marriage and the prohibition of certain foods developed during this period. The concept of purgatory and payments of monies to redeem people from purgatorial suffering developed but even amidst such heinous heterodoxy there were those who held to the faith.

4. It is difficult to fix a date for the Reformation. Certainly I think we can all agree it began as the 15th century came to a close. A look at the lives of the reformers will give us insight into the ills pervading and their associated reforms.

The Reformation

Jan Hus (c. 1372 –1415), often referred to in English as **John Hus** or **John Huss**, was a Czech priest, philosopher, early Christian reformer and Master at Charles University in Prague. After John Wycliffe, the theorist of ecclesiastical Reformation, Hus is considered the first Church reformer, as he lived before Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. Hus was a key predecessor to Protestantism, and his teachings had a strong influence on the states of Western Europe, most immediately in the approval of a reformist Bohemian religious denomination, and, more than a century later, on Martin Luther himself. He was burned at the stake for heresy against the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

After Hus was executed in 1415, the followers of his religious teachings (known as Hussites) rebelled against their Roman Catholic rulers and defeated five consecutive papal crusades between 1420 and 1431, in what became known as the Hussite Wars. A century later, as many as 90% of inhabitants of the Czech lands were non-Catholic and some still followed the teachings of Hus and his successors.

John Wycliffe (c. 1320 – 1381) was an English scholastic philosopher, theologian, Biblical translator, reformer, and seminary professor at Oxford. He was an influential dissident within the Roman Catholic priesthood during the 14th century. Wycliffe attacked the privileged status of the clergy, which was central to their powerful role in England. He then attacked the luxury and pomp of local parishes and their ceremonies.

Wycliffe was also an advocate for translation of the Bible into the language of the people. In 1382 he completed a translation directly from the Vulgate into Middle English. Today this translation is known as the Wycliffe Bible.

It is probable that he personally translated the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and it is possible he translated the entire New Testament, while his associates translated the Old Testament. Wycliffe's Bible appears to have been completed by 1384, with additional updated versions being done by Wycliffe's assistant John Purvey and others in 1388 and 1395.

Wycliffe's followers were known as Lollards and followed his lead in attacking the veneration of Saints, the Sacraments, Requiem Masses, Transubstantiation and the very existence of the Papacy. Beginning in the 16th century, the Lollard movement was regarded as the precursor to the Protestant Reformation. Wycliffe was accordingly characterized as the evening star of scholasticism and the Morning Star of the English Reformation.

Martin Luther (1483 -1546) was a German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation. Luther came to reject several teachings and practices of the Late Medieval Catholic Church. He strongly disputed the claim that freedom from God's punishment for sin could be purchased with money. He proposed an academic discussion of the power and usefulness of indulgences in his Ninety-five Theses of 1517. His refusal to retract all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 resulted in his excommunication by the Pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Emperor.

Luther taught that salvation and subsequently eternal life is not earned by good deeds but is received only as a free gift of God's grace. His theology challenged the authority and office of the Pope by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge from God. His translation of the Bible into the vernacular (instead of Latin) made it more accessible, which had a tremendous impact on the church and German culture.

Anabaptism (from Neo-Latin *anabaptista*, from the Greek ἀναβαπτισμός: ἀνά and βαπτισμός "baptism" is a Christian movement which traces its origins to the Radical Reformation in Europe. Some consider this movement to be an offshoot of European Protestantism, while others see it as distinct. Anabaptists are Christians who believe in delaying baptism until the candidate confesses his or her faith in Christ, as opposed to being baptized as an infant. The Amish, Hutterites, and Mennonites are direct descendants of the movement. Schwarzenau Brethren, Bruderhof, and the Apostolic Christian Church are considered later developments among the Anabaptists. The name *Anabaptist* means "one who baptizes again." Their persecutors named them this, referring to the practice of baptizing persons when they converted or declared their faith in Christ, even if they had been "baptized" as infants. Anabaptists required that baptismal candidates be able to make a confession of faith that is freely chosen, and so rejected baptism of infants. The early members of this movement did not accept the name *Anabaptist*, claiming that infant baptism was not part of Scripture and was therefore null and void.

John Calvin was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism, aspects of which include the doctrine of predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation of the human soul from death and eternal damnation. In these areas Calvin was influenced by the Augustinian tradition. Various Congregational, Reformed and Presbyterian churches have spread throughout the world. Calvin was a tireless polemic and apologetic writer who generated much controversy. He also exchanged cordial and supportive letters with many reformers, including Philipp Melancthon and Heinrich Bullinger. Calvin was recruited by another Frenchman William Farel to help reform the church in Geneva, where he regularly preached sermons throughout the week. The city council resisted the implementation of Calvin's ideas. Calvin was expelled from the city along with several of his followers. At the invitation of Martin Bucer, Calvin proceeded to Strasbourg, where he became a minister of The Church of French refugees. He continued to support the reform movement in Geneva.

Following his return, Calvin introduced new forms of church government and liturgy, despite opposition from several powerful families in the city who tried to curb his authority. During this period, Michael Servetus, a Spaniard regarded by both Catholics and Protestants as having a heretical view of the Trinity, arrived in Geneva. He was denounced by Calvin and burned at the stake for heresy by the city council. Following an influx of supportive refugees and new elections to the city council, Calvin's opponents were forced out. Calvin spent his final years promoting the Reformation both in Geneva and throughout Europe. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology, aspects of which include the doctrine of predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation of the human soul from death and eternal damnation.

In addition to his seminal work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he wrote commentaries on most books of the Bible, as well as theological treatises and confessional documents. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. After religious tensions provoked a violent uprising against Protestantism in France, Calvin fled to Switzerland, where he published the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536.

SAINT PATRICK - MISSIONARY TO IRELAND

We have difficulty placing Patrick in history. Even our dictionaries and encyclopedias can't agree when he was born, or when he ministered. What little information we have about St. Patrick indicates he served as a missionary to Ireland in c. A.D. 400. Patrick was apparently an Englishman who was kidnapped and taken to Ireland as a slave. He was later ordained by an early church Bishop on the continent of Europe (either in France or in England). All of this taking place before the Catholic Church became a formidable international body. Recall Constantine, the father of Catholicism, was converted in approximately A.D. 325. Because of Patrick's previous lifestyle his ordination was contested and required a great deal of penance.

Most conclude his trip across Ireland and voyage across the channel were rife with various sins--many involving crimes of moral turpitude. Much of the information contained herein comes from a very brief autobiography obtained from a book written by Thomas Cahill entitled *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. The life of a shepherd-slave could not have been a happy one. The young boy had been taken from his family and shipped across the channel to a strange land. Patrick was without family to take care of him. He learned early-on how to take care of himself. His only protection came from his master.

His master was a man who did not hold his own life highly, let alone anyone else's. The work of a shepherd was bitterly isolated. Months at a time he spent alone in the hills. Deprived of intercourse with other humans, he must have taken a long time to master the language and customs of the Irish. The approach of strangers held special terror.

Like many others in such impossible circumstances Patrick developed a close relationship with God and a very active prayer life. “Tending flocks was my daily work and when evening came I would spend hours praying and asking God for guidance and direction. The love of God and the fear of Him surrounded me more and more—my faith grew and the spirit in me was aroused.” Patrick endured six years of this woeful isolation. On his last night as a slave he received a revelation from God. A mysterious voice said to him, “Your hungers are rewarded, you are going home.” Patrick’s master’s farm was located inland, nowhere near the Sea. But Patrick set out, “Whither I knew not.”

He walked some 200 miles through unknown territory. Miraculously Patrick was never stopped or followed. The young boy must have lived off the land traveling many miles until he reached the Southeaster Inlet where he saw a ship being loaded. The sailors were loading a cargo of Irish Hounds to be sold in Europe. Hounds were highly prized as hunting dogs. Patrick approached the captain who eyed him suspiciously. He showed the captain that he had the money for His passage (where he got it, we’ll never know for sure though most agree he stole money from various folks while traveling across Ireland). The captain told him curtly, “You are wasting your time asking to sail with us.” This was Patrick’s greatest moment of danger. Recognized as a fugitive in a seaside settlement he could not expect to remain a free-man ...

“I began to pray and before I finished my prayer one of the sailors shouted “Come quickly they are calling you, Come on board we will take you on trust.” It took three days to cross to the continent and as they left their ship and journeyed inland they found only devastation. This may well have been the year 407 when hundreds of thousands of hungry Germans had crossed the icy Rhine wreaking devastation through much of Gaul. The little party of exporters may have arrived in the wake of the German war parties.

At any rate they discovered neither a single human nor a meal. The captain taunted Patrick “How about it Christian? You say your God is great and all powerful, so why can’t you pray for us? We are starving to death.” ... Patrick responded “From the bottom of your heart turn trusting to the Lord my God ... For with Him nothing is impossible ...” Suddenly the sound of a stampede attracted the attention of captain and crew and as they raised their eyes a herd of pigs were seen coming down the road in their direction. Not just food but the best food of all. It took Patrick a few more years, but he at last made it home to England where he was welcomed as a son by his parent.

They begged him not to leave them again. But Patrick was no longer a care-free teenager. He was hardened physically and psychologically by un-shareable experiences and hopelessly behind his peers in education. He had no desire to settle down. Try though he might he could not get the Irish out of his mind ...

When he could no longer resist ... he left his family and followed the leadership of God to an island monastery located at present day Cannes, where he petitioned for a theological education in preparation for an ordination as a missionary. At last with great difficulty he is ordained and became what was perhaps, the first missionary bishop. Patrick the escaped slave became Saint Patrick, Apostle to the Irish nation. His love for his adopted people shined through his writings and it was not just a generalized Christian benevolence but a love for individuals as they were. He worried constantly for the Irish, not just for their spiritual needs, but also for their physical welfare ... In his last years he could look out over an Ireland transformed by his teaching. According to tradition he established bishops throughout the country--the former slave had succeeded beyond measure.

John Knox (c. 1513-1572) was a Scottish clergyman, theologian, and writer who was a leader of the Protestant Reformation and is considered the founder of the Presbyterian denomination in Scotland. He is believed to have been educated at the University of St Andrews and worked as a notary-priest. Influenced by early church reformers such as George Wishart, he joined the movement to reform the Scottish church.

He was caught up in the ecclesiastical and political events that involved the murder of Cardinal Beaton in 1546 and the intervention of the regent of Scotland Mary of Guise. He was taken prisoner by French forces the following year and exiled to England. While in exile Knox was licensed to work in the Church of England. It was there he rose from the ranks to serve King Edward VI of England as a royal chaplain. He exerted a reforming influence on the text of the Book of Common Prayer. In England he met and married his first wife, Margery Bowes. When Mary Tudor ascended the throne and re-established Roman Catholicism, Knox was forced to resign his position and leave the country. Knox moved to Geneva and then to Frankfurt.

In Geneva he met John Calvin, from whom he gained experience and knowledge of Reformed theology and Presbyterian polity. He created a new order of service, which was eventually adopted by the reformed church in Scotland. He left Geneva to head the English refugee church in Frankfurt but he was forced to leave over differences concerning the liturgy, thus ending his association with the Church of England.

On his return to Scotland he led the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Protestant nobility. The movement may be seen as a revolution, since it led to the ousting of Mary of Guise, who governed the country in the name of her young daughter Mary, Queen of Scots. Knox helped write the new confession of faith and the ecclesiastical order for the newly created reformed church, the Kirk. He continued to serve as the religious leader of the Protestants throughout Mary's reign.

In several interviews with the Queen, Knox admonished her for supporting Catholic practices. When she was imprisoned for her alleged role in the murder of her husband Lord Darnley, and King James VI enthroned in her stead, he openly called for her execution. He continued to preach until his final days.

William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536) was an English scholar who became a leading figure in Protestant reform in the years leading up to his execution. He is well known for his translation of the Bible into English. He was influenced by the work of Desiderius Erasmus, who made the Greek New Testament available in Europe, and by Martin Luther. A number of partial translations had been made from the seventh century onward, but the spread of Wycliffe's Bible resulted in a death sentence for any unlicensed possession of Scripture in English—even though translations had been accomplished and made available in all other major European languages. Tyndale's translation was the first English Bible to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts, the first English one to take advantage of the printing press, and first of the new English Bibles of the Reformation. It was taken to be a direct challenge to the hegemony of both the Roman Catholic Church and the laws of England maintaining the church's position. In 1530, Tyndale also wrote *The Practyse of Prelates*, opposing Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon on the grounds that it contravened Scripture.

King James

The following has been taken from a book written by Col. R. B. Thieme, Jr. The title of the book is *Canonicity*. “By now the rift between Protestants and Catholics had widened considerably. In England, where Parliament consisted primarily of Puritans, Protestants and Anglicans, the people began to talk about a new standard translation. James I was on the throne, and it seemed that Tyndale’s prayer was being answered. It is necessary, however, that you understand some of the background connected with the reign of King James I. Elizabeth, Queen of England, had a beautiful cousin, Mary Stuart, who had returned from France in 1561 to take her rightful place as Queen of the Scots. Scotland was in a state of turbulence: the clans fomented discontent; the new faith preached by John Knox swept across the chilling lochs; and Catholic Mary was held in contempt, not only for her presence in Scotland, but for her continuing claim to the Tudor crown of Elizabeth. Mary unwisely married the Scottish Lord Darnley.

This created further antagonism, both to the English because of his Tudor connections and to the Scots because he was Catholic. The Scots had become Calvinistic in their beliefs and resented Mary’s Romanism and the influence of her French court. The people were determined that never again should the Roman Church be allowed to gain and hold political power in their nation. After a series of indiscretions and acts of poor judgment, Mary was forced to abdicate in favor of her infant son, who then became James VI of Scotland. Fleeing the wrath of the Protestant nobles, Mary sought refuge in England. Elizabeth was in a quandary. She dared not send Mary back to Scotland, for the Scots might execute their ... monarch; she was equally afraid to give her sanctuary in England where Mary was certain to be a rallying point for all manner of malcontents. Therefore, Elizabeth was obliged to keep her ‘guest’ strictly confined and thus began a kaleidoscope of intrigues and plots that was to span almost two decades. Eventually, Mary’s continued sedition left Elizabeth no other alternative. Mary was executed in 1587.

James VI, Mary's son by Lord Darnley, who had been King of Scotland since 1568 under the regency of the Earl of Moray, was reared a protestant. He was taught Calvinistic theology, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. Jamie was quite a student. He could discourse on theological subjects in both English and Latin. When Elizabeth died, she left no heirs, thus ending the House of Tudor. James VI was brought down from Scotland and crowned James I of England, beginning the reign of the House of Stuart. The year was 1603. James had led an uneasy life in Scotland and actually looked forward to coming to England. However, he soon found that England, too, had its troubles; the Puritans were in revolt against the established church. One thousand Puritan preachers had gathered together to write a petition. They beseeched his noble Majesty and parliament for a change in the established church service and the removal of such superstitions as the sign of the cross. Furthermore, the Puritans refused to use the prescribed prayer book because of its corrupted translations. This petition became known in history as the Millenary petition because of the thousand signatures affixed to it. It resulted in the Hampton Court conference on January 14, 1603, over which King James himself presided. It was during one of the endless debates that the leader of the Puritans, John Reynolds, said, "May your Majesty be pleased, that the Bible be newly translated, such as are extant not answering to the original." Immediately Reynolds' request ran into opposition from Bancroft the Bishop of London. The Bishop claimed that if all who wished were permitted to come up with translations, the country would be swamped with Bibles. So the talks dragged on. Finally the King of England grew weary listening to the debates in Parliament.

King James sided firmly with Reynolds in favor of a new Bible. He admitted that he had "never yet seen a Bible well translated into English," and he wished that "some special pains were taken for a uniform translation . . . done by the best learned of both Universities . . . lastly ratified by royal authority . . . to be read in the whole church and no other." James was vitally interested in theology and in languages. He was knowledgeable in the Scriptures and in Bible doctrine. Besides, the thought that a new and better translation of the Bible should be published during his reign appealed to James tremendously. He made but one condition:

He would handpick the translators himself. Although the new translation had his complete backing and would eventually be ratified by him, he did not contribute one penny toward its expense. It is said to have cost 3500 pounds sterling – a considerable sum in those days. On July 22, 1604, the King announced that he had appointed fifty-four men to make the new translation. How did he select the scholars? His only requirement was that they must be good linguists. Half of them were Hebrew experts and the other half experts in Greek. The list included Anglicans and Puritans, believers and unbelievers. Of those selected, seven men died before the work was begun, including John Reynolds, who had asked for this translation. Actually, only forty-seven men worked on what we call today "The Authorized Version."

It was a perfect time for the translation to be undertaken, for the English language had been greatly improved by men like Shakespeare and Spenser; classic literature had reached its peak. The beauty of the English language of that day and its power of expression are thus preserved for us in the King James Bible. Thus, a style of language which would otherwise be long outdated has come down to us fresh and, with the exception of some words, very much to the point.

The scholars were divided into six teams; two teams worked at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster, with the work portioned among them. In each of the groups, the teams were further broken down into an Old Testament team and a New Testament team. All worked independently of each other. That explains, of course, why the word *pneuma* was translated “spirit” in one place and “Ghost” in another. It was simply a matter of esprit de corps – school spirit. The Westminster group used Ghost, and the Oxford group used Spirit. Each put down what he preferred. One of the teams worked entirely on the Apocrypha, which as you know, is no longer included in the King James Version of the Bible. The teams translating the Old Testament used the Masoretic Text as their source. For the Greek, the **Textus Receptus** (“the text received by all”) was used. It took the scholars three years to finish their work of translating the Bible and an additional nine months to revise the text and put it together. To everyone’s satisfaction, the old ecclesiastical words of the Bishop’s Bible of 1568 were all retained. Surely four years or less is not too long for a work of such magnitude. All in all, the 1611 edition was a good translation from the manuscripts that were then available.

The majestic Anglo-Saxon, with its clarity and style, its directness and force, have made the King James Bible an English classic and a model for hundreds of years. Yet upon its release, the Authorized Version turned out to be the most unpopular and universally condemned translation that had ever come off the printing press. It caused the biggest ruckus ever raised over an edition of the Bible in the English-speaking world.

Some criticism was justified because, in the process of printing, over four hundred typographical errors were made which had to be corrected. For the most part, however, the criticism was unfounded and biased. The Catholics condemned it for favoring the Protestants. The Arminians thought it favored Calvinism. The Calvinists claimed that it favored Arminianism.

The Puritans objected to the church polity and the ritual, as well as the use of such words as “bishop,” “church,” “ordain” and “Easter.” In short, everyone who considered himself to be an expert on the subject screamed in protest and began to write pamphlets condemning the new version of the Bible. No one liked it except King James I.

Puritanism played a major role in English history during the first half of the 17th century, but the magnitude of that role is still a matter of debate.

The English Civil War was first defined as a "Puritan Revolution" by Samuel Rawson Gardiner in the 19th century. Anti-Catholic feeling was stoked by John Pym, a significant and alarmist politician at the time of the Grand Remonstrance of 1641; but revisionist historians such as Kevin Sharpe have cast doubt on the simple outlines of this description.

Puritans were blocked from changing the established church from within and were severely restricted in England by laws controlling the practice of religion. Their beliefs, however, were transported by the emigration of congregations to the Netherlands, and later to New England in North America, and by evangelical clergy to Ireland (and later to Wales), and were spread into lay society and parts of the educational system, particularly certain colleges of the University of Cambridge. They took on distinctive beliefs about clerical dress and in opposition to the episcopal system, particularly after the 1619 conclusions of the Synod of Dort were resisted by the English bishops. They largely adopted Sabbatarianism in the 17th century.

The Puritans were in alliance with the growing commercial world, with the parliamentary opposition to the royal prerogative, and with the Scottish Presbyterians in the late 1630s with whom they had much in common. Consequently, they became a major political force in England and came to power as a result of the First English Civil War (1642–46). Almost all Puritan clergy left the Church of England after the Restoration of 1660 and the 1662 Uniformity Act, some becoming nonconformist ministers. The nature of the movement in England changed radically, although it retained its character for a much longer period in New England. Puritans by definition were dissatisfied with the limited extent of the English Reformation and with the Church of England's tolerance of practices which they associated with the Catholic Church. They formed and identified with various religious groups advocating greater purity of worship and doctrine, as well as personal and group piety. Puritans adopted a Reformed theology and, in that sense, were Calvinists (as were many of their earlier opponents), but they also took note of radical criticisms of Zwingli in Zurich and Calvin in Geneva. In church polity, some advocated separation from all other established Christian denominations in favor of autonomous gathered churches.

These separatist and independent strands of Puritanism became prominent in the 1640s, when the supporters of a Presbyterian polity in the Westminster Assembly were unable to forge a new English national church. The Puritans were never a formally defined sect or religious division within Protestantism, and the term "Puritan" itself was rarely used to describe people after the turn of the 18th century. Some Puritan ideals became incorporated into the Church of England, such as the formal rejection of Roman Catholicism; some fell out of favor, such as the beliefs in demonic possession; some were absorbed into the many Protestant sects that emerged in the late 17th and early 18th centuries in the Americas and Britain. The Congregationalist tradition, widely considered to be a part of the reformed tradition, claims descent from the Puritans.