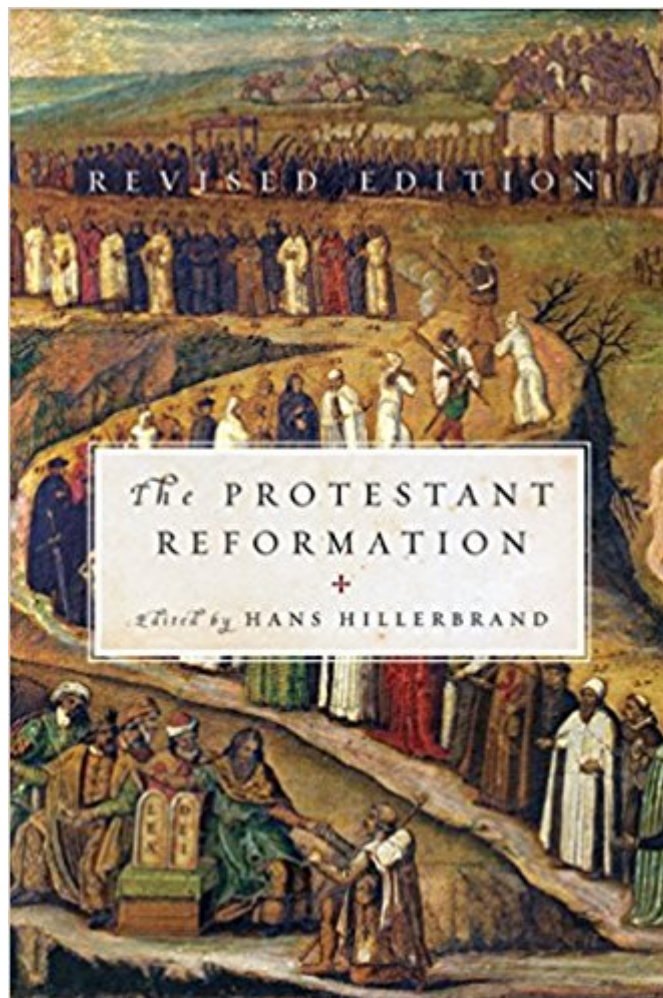


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The Protestant Reformation



Synopsis

Originally published more than forty years ago, this important collection brings together the works and writings of the revolutionary minds behind the Protestant Reformation—and it remains a major resource for teachers, students, and history buffs alike. Over the decades, however, modern scholarship has shed new light on this tumultuous period, raising probing questions and providing new connections that have radically changed our understanding and outlook. With this newly revised and updated edition of this essential work—now including texts written by women as well as entries dealing with popular religion—modern viewpoints are cogently addressed, while the scholarly integrity that has made this book a revered classic has been scrupulously maintained. Throughout, Hans J. Hillerbrand's basic assumption remains consistent: religion—no matter how dependent on societal forces—must be seen as the pivotal element in the story of the sixteenth century.

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Customer Reviews

This collection of important primary sources pertaining to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century has had an amazingly persistent history. Originally published some 40 years ago, it still enjoys the confidence of students of the Reformation. In contrast to most other source collections, The Protestant Reformation offered lengthy excerpts from important primary sources, rather than short snippets, so as to provide the reader with an understanding of the broader cogency and dynamic of an author's arguments. However, since the time of the original publication,

the study of the Reformation of the sixteenth century has taken several important turns that have revised or changed the traditional understanding. Accordingly, these new perspectives need to be noted. This new edition seeks to accommodate these new trends and perspectives while retaining the basic orientation of the original edition. It includes texts written by women as well as texts dealing with popular religion. Its basic assumption, however, continues to be that religion - no matter how variously dependent on societal forces--must be seen as the pivotal element in the story of the sixteenth century.

Hans J. Hillerbrand is the former chair of the department of religion at Duke University. A recognized expert on the Reformation and the history of modern Christianity, he has published many articles and books on the period and was the editor in chief of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*. He is the former president of both the American Academy of Religion and the American Society of Church History, and he lives in Durham, North Carolina.

If you're interested in learning about the history of the Protestant Reformation and the impact it has had on the world, this is not the first book I would recommend. Hillerbrand's book is, however, probably the 2nd book I would recommend. Start with a broader, more comprehensive history that ties everything together, then read this book for the actual writings by the people who shaped the Reformation. Hillerbrand writes an excellent introduction, and a chronology/timeline lists the major events, but the real strength of the book is in presenting the actual writings by the movers and shakers of the Reformation. My favorite part was the chapter on Martin Luther. Luther wrote for the common man, and his words are amazingly clear and concise. The theological issues that Luther wrote about are as relevant today as they were five centuries ago when Luther lived. One fascinating chapter contained parts of William Tyndale's New Testament, published about 80 years before the King James Bible. It's amazing how much the English language changed in those years. The Tyndale Bible is very difficult to read, while the KJ version is close to modern English. These writings make the Reformers come alive as real people. Fascinating reading.

We should never forget the 'so-called' beginning of that movement, the Reformation, when Luther banged a notice on a church door that served as a bulletin board for the community. That message quickly spread and the 95 theological theses became the catalyst for the burning question of where ultimate authority could be found. For Luther, the evident and emerging answer was found in the NT itself, whereas for all his opponents that was safeguarded by the person of the Pope himself. So

when in 1517 the start was ushered in by the clanging of a hammer, it was Jesus in reality banging at the door of the church which had replaced Him with ritual, ceremony, pomp and most of all superstition. Of the many alternate, sometimes overlapping and quite ingenious explanations of the whys and wherefores of the reformation, one still must pay heed to the theological core as a succinct and comprehensive answer. Among the better scholars of the Reformation Era is Hans Hillerbrand. His insight should be highlighted. "To be sure, Luther and his fellow-reformers now and then talked about the correction of ecclesiastical abuses and their efforts may have been so understood by the people. But the real thrust of the reformers was in a different direction - a reinterpretation of the gospel. The reformers propounded a different understanding of the New Testament, and while this understanding had connections with the theological tradition of the Fathers, especially St. Augustine, it can justifiably be called new. When the Protestants talked about "reform," therefore, they thought not so much about the practical life of the church as about a new theological understanding." [Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed. *The Protestant Reformation in Documentary History of Western Civilization*, ed. Eugene C. Black & Leonard W. Levy, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. xxii]. A new theology, indeed! What the church realized in the sixteenth century, that the church needs reform, is still true today. Christendom is a conglomeration of ritual, ceremony, idolatry and superstition once more. Only a new theology will save the church from the worldly compromise, but that new theology is going to look very much like that of Luther and Calvin. What Luther called the Babylonian Captivity in his day, we are witnessing in our own times similar phenomena, with the Evangelical Captivity with its evangelistic megastars like Bill Hybels or Rick Warren, the Megachurch Captivity with Joel Osteen, the Televangelist Captivity with Benny Hinn and Creflo Dollar, and on and on it goes. The average Evangelical church that has remained true to the Bible is blinded by other glaring inconsistencies. Whether Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian, much compromise has infiltrated the church via humanistic tendencies masquerading as plausible theological affirmations. Whether it is Arminianism or Semi-pelagianism, the result is the same: God is not the Ruler of History in many churches across the spectrum. *Soli Deo Gloria* is no longer true; even sociologists are insightful enough to explain church growth! It is not God getting the glory. Rather techniques and ingenuity are the true heroes. One local church in my community was even offering ten dollar gift-cards for all adult first time visitors. And better still for the person that initiated the most visitors a fifty dollar bonus. Tetzels is being undone in our own backyard. This time it is: "when the soul emerges through the church door, a dead president hits your wallet for sure." The time is ripe, just like 1517. We are in a time when the church needs someone to smash a post against the door. Who will it be? Maybe you are the man! Will you do your homework as Luther did

and study afresh the New Testament? Will you risk infamy or even worse, persecution or death for the cause of Christ? Will you submit all your cherished traditions to the scrutiny of God's inerrant Word? Are you willing to change into that person and believer that God desires in order to show the world once again that a man and a mallet can change the world? If so, look up! We may be on the verge of a reformation of the reformation!

This is a great collection of works that changed the face of Christianity in the 16th century. Using original source documents compiled into this reader, Hillerbrand gives space to explore the major reformation movements of the Evangelicals (Luther), the Reformed Church (Calvin), as well as the Anabaptists and other movements so commonly reduced to the Reformation. I used this book for an undergraduate course on the History of Reformation Europe and found it to be an excellent source, especially when paired with John Olin's compilation of original source documents on the Catholic Reformation.

The book is in good condition and arrived on time. It will serve the purpose; I needed it for a class and it will get through that. I am very happy with it. It is not the kind of book most people read for entertainment. But it is very informative.

One of the few books that makes sources of the Protestant Reformation available and accessible to students. A well thought out collection of documents with useful introductions that covers the Reformation from Luther through the English Reformation. The introductions are clear and to the point. The sources are well-chosen to bring out some of the major literature of the period.

This is a selection of primary source readings from the period. It isn't designed to take the place of a more comprehensive narrative history. Hillerbrand includes a helpful variety of extracts from Luther, Zwingli, the Anabaptists, Calvin, and the English Reformation, all with brief introductions.

don't listen to the negative reviews. I had Dr. Hillerbrand as a professor during my undergrad time at duke, and not only is he a solid scholar of the reformation, but this book is a solid primary source collection as well.

If you want to know how it all started and why and who the key players are, I highly recommend this book. I had to read it for a college course I was taking and as I read it, I truly appreciated it as

required reading.

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