

## American Minute with Bill Federer How Luther & Protestant Reformation had Political Repercussions on America

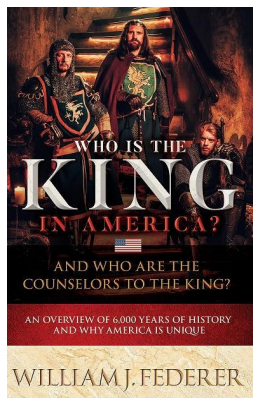
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On OCTOBER 31, 1517, an Augustinian monk named **Martin Luther** posted 95 debate questions or "theses" on the door of Wittenberg Church, which began the movement known as "**the Reformation.**"



**Luther's** initial objection was to the methods employed by **Johann Tetzel** to sell indulgences. He was then fiercely attacked by **Johann Eck** ... [continue reading American Minute here ...](#)

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In 1521, 34-year-old **Martin Luther** was summoned to stand trial before the most

powerful man in the world, 21-year-old **Holy Roman Emperor Charles V**.



**Charles V of Spain** had an empire that spanned nearly 2 million square miles.

**The sun never set on the Spanish Empire.**

## Spanish Empire

It included lands from **Europe** to the **Netherlands**, to the **Far East**, **North and South America**, and to the **Caribbean**.

**The Philippine Islands** were named after his son, King Philip II of Spain.

At a trial, called the **Diet of Worms**, **Charles V** initially dismissed **Luther's** theses as "an argument between monks."



**Luther** was ordered to recant without having had his theses addressed. He responded: "Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

**Luther** was declared outside the protection of law.

He was kidnapped and hid by **Frederick III of Saxony** in

the **Wartburg Castle**, where he translated the **New Testament into German**.

Earlier, in 1054 AD, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches split in the **Great Schism**.

In 1378-1417, the religious fabric of Europe was torn again during what was called the **Papal Schism**.

**John Wycliffe** (1330-1384) attempted a translation of Scriptures into English, for which he was declared a heretic and, after his death, had his bones burned.



**The General Prologue of Wycliffe's 1384 translation of the Bible** has the inscription:

"The Bible is for the Government of the People, by the People, and for the People."

In Prague, **Jan Hus** (1369-1415) shared Scriptures translated into the Czech language.



He was summoned to the **Council of Constance** where he was



willing to recant if his errors could be shown by Scripture.

Without having his issues addressed, he was declared a heretic and burned at the stake.

Whereas **Wycliffe** and **Hus** lived before the invention of the printing press, **Martin Luther** lived after.

**Johannes Gutenberg**  
(c.1400-1468)  
invented the Western world's first moveable-type printing press.

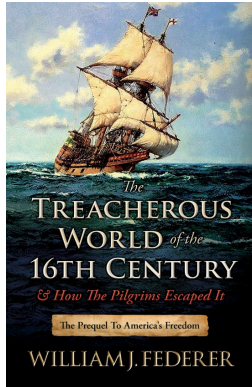
The first book of significance ever printed was the 42-line **Gutenberg Bible**, known as the **Mazarin Bible**, 1455.



**Pope Pius II** wrote of it to Cardinal Carvajal, March of 1455::

"All that has been written to me about that marvelous man seen at Frankfurt is true. I have not seen complete Bibles but only a number of quires of various books of the Bible.

The script was very neat and legible, not at all difficult to follow - your grace would be able to read it without effort, and indeed without glasses."



## [The Treacherous World of the 16th Century and How the Pilgrims Escaped it](#)

**Victor Hugo** wrote:

"Whether it be Providence or Fate, **Gutenberg** is the precursor of **Luther.**"



**Martin Luther** gave his account:

"I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God,' because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust.

My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him.

Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him.

Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know that he meant ..."

**Luther** continued:

"Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection

between the justice of God and the statement 'The just shall live by faith.'

Then I grasped that **the justice of God** is that **righteousness** by which **through sheer grace and mercy God justifies us through faith.**

Thereupon I felt myself to be **reborn** and to have gone through open doors into paradise.

The **whole of Scripture took a new meaning**, and whereas before 'the justice of God' had filled me with hate, **now it became inexpressibly sweet in greater love.**

This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven ..."

**Luther** concluded:

"If you have **a true faith that Christ is your Savior**, then at once you have **a gracious God**, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see **pure grace and over-flowing love.**

This it is to behold **God in faith** that you should look upon **his fatherly, friendly heart**, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness.

**He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly** but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face."

As the  
**Reformation**  
spread, it  
unintentionally  
fueled a peasant  
uprising called the  
**German**  
**Peasants' War** in



1524.

Mobs of poorly armed peasants threatened the aristocratic ruling class. The revolt was put down with over 100,000

peasants being slaughtered.

Meanwhile, in 1527, **Charles V's** unruly troops sacked Rome and imprisoned **Pope Clement VII** for six months.



This was the same Pope that refused to annul the marriage of **Henry VIII** and Charles V's aunt **Catherine of Aragon**, leading Henry break away from Rome and start the Church of England.

(**Catherine** had been married for six months to **Henry's** older brother **Arthur** before he died in 1502.)



**Charles V** oversaw the **Spanish** colonization of the **Americas**, and began the **Counter-Reformation**.

He eventually responded to the pleadings of the priest **Bartolome' de Las Casas** and outlawed the

enslavement of native Americans.



Gold from the New World was used by Spain to push back the **Muslim Ottoman Empire's** invasion of Europe.

**Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent's** Ottoman fleet dominated the **Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.**



**Suleiman** conquered into **Christian Hungary, Christian Serbia, and Christian**





**Austria, in addition to controlling the Middle East and North Africa.**

**Deuteronomy 28** lists blessings and cursings.

If a nation "shalt **hearken** diligently unto the **voice of the Lord thy God ... all these blessings** shall come on thee."

But if a **nation does not hearken** to the voice of the Lord, "all these **curses shall come upon thee,**" including:

**"The stranger** that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low ... and shall **pursue thee, and overtake thee,** till thou be **destroyed.**"

How did **God judge Ancient Israel** when it sinned?

He let the **strangers invade:** Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites. Egyptians, Assyrians Babylonians, etc.

When Israel **repented,** God raised up **deliverers.**

**Martin Luther** referenced this:

"The Turk is the rod of the wrath of the Lord our God ...

If the Turk's god, the devil, is not beaten first, there is reason to fear that the Turk will not be so easy to beat ... Christian weapons and power must do it ..."



**Luther** continued:

"(The fight against the Turks) must begin with **repentance**, and **we must reform our lives**, or we shall fight in vain.



(The Church should) drive men to **repentance** by showing our great and numberless **sins and our ingratitude**, by which we have earned God's wrath and disfavor, so that **He justly gives us into the hands of the devil and the Turk.**"

### Describe Spanish power under Phillip II-background

- ❑ The Spanish Empire was under the control of the Hapsburg Kings
- ❑ Charles V inherited an empire including Spain, colonies in America, parts of Italy, and lands in Austria and the Netherlands.
- ❑ Charles was a devout Catholic and opposed Muslims and Lutherans.
- ❑ In 1555, he agreed to the Peace of Augsburg-princes decided their own religions
- ❑ When he died he left his brother Ferdinand Austria and the Holy Roman Empire.



Charles V

In an attempt to unite the **Holy Roman Empire** against the Ottoman Muslims, **Charles V** agreed to a truce recognizing the Protestants, as Eric W. Gritsch wrote in *Martin-*

*God's Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983, p. 69-70):

"Afraid of losing the much-needed support of the German princes for the struggle against the **Turkish threat** from the south, **Emperor Charles V** agreed to a truce between **Protestant** and **Catholic** territories in Nuremberg in 1532 ...

Thus the **Lutheran movement** was, for the first time, officially tolerated and could enjoy a place in the political sun of the **Holy Roman Empire.**"

As the Islamic threat intensified, reformer **John Calvin** wrote to **Philip Melanthon** in 1543, (*Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts & Letters*, I: 373):



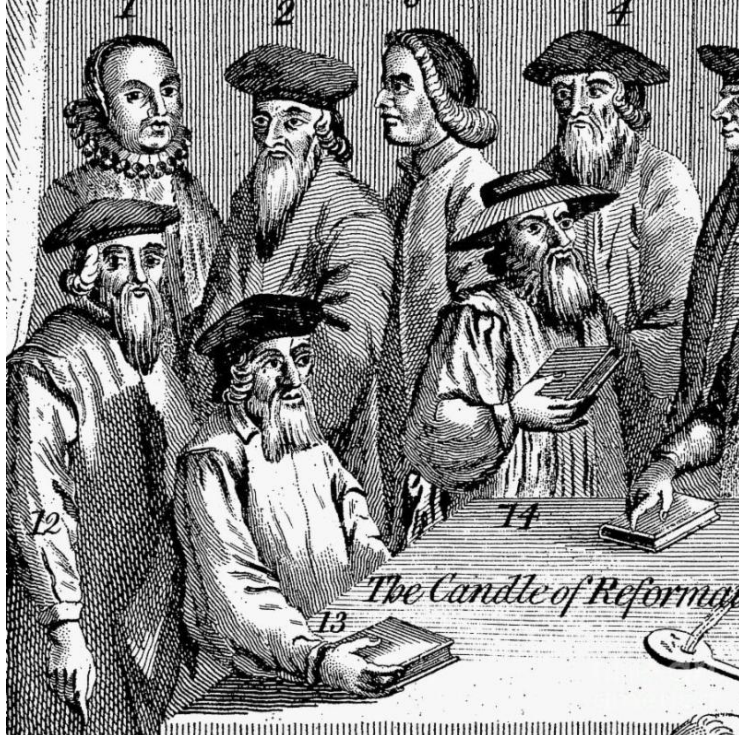
"I hear of the sad condition of your Germany! ... The Turk again prepares to wage war with a larger force.

Who will stand up to oppose his marching throughout the length and breadth of the land, at his mere will and pleasure?"

Followers of the reformers who "protested" certain doctrines, were generally referred to as **"Protestants."**

Notable Protestant Reformers include:

- John Calvin,
- Thomas Crammer,
- John Knox,
- Philip



- Melanchthon,
- William Tyndale, and
- Huldrych Zwingli.

Some **Protestant** countries refused to help **Charles V** who was defending Europe from the Muslim invasion.

Finally, **Charles V** made a treaty with the **German Lutheran Princes** by signing the **Peace of Augsburg**, September 25, 1555, ceasing the religious struggle between **Lutherans and Catholics**.

**Charles V - Treaty with Lutheran Princes to unite against Islam**



**PEACE OF AUGSBURG  
1555**

**'Cuius regio, eius religio'**  
'whose is the reign – his is the religion'

A line in the treaty, "**cuius regio, eius religio**," allowed each king to decide what was to be believed in his kingdom.



A month later, October 25, 1555, suffering from severe gout, **Charles V** abdicated his throne and lived the rest of his life secluded in the monastery of **Yuste**, leaving his son **Philip II** to rule.

Three years before he died, **Luther** penned an indefensible anti-semitic work that contributed to future **Jewish persecutions**.

**Luther** influenced **John Wesley**, who influenced **George Whitefield**, who preached the **Great Awakening Revival** in **Colonial America**.



**Wesley** wrote:

“In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading **Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans** ...

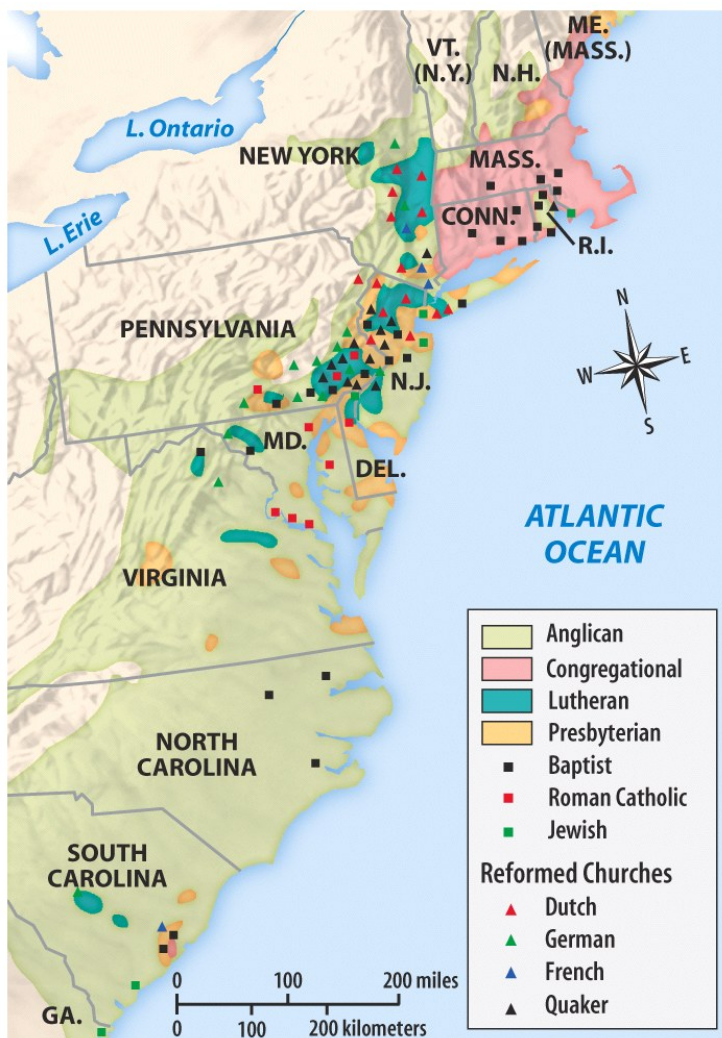
About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, **I felt my heart strangely warmed** ...

I felt I did trust in Christ; **Christ alone, for salvation**; and an assurance was given me, that **he had taken away**

my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

In the two centuries following **Luther**, different kings in Europe chose different denominations for their kingdoms.

This resulted in millions migrating from one country to another simply for conscience sake.



Many of these Christian religious refugees fled Europe to settle colonies in America.

New York University Professor Emeritus Patricia Bonomi, in her article "**The Middle Colonies as the Birthplace of American Religious Pluralism**" wrote:

"The colonists were about **98**

**percent Protestant."**

**One to two percent** of America's population at the time

of the founding were **Catholic**, and **one-tenth of a percent** were **Jewish**.

The 56 signers of the **Declaration** were predominantly **Protestant**, with a notable exception being **Catholic Charles Carroll of Maryland**.

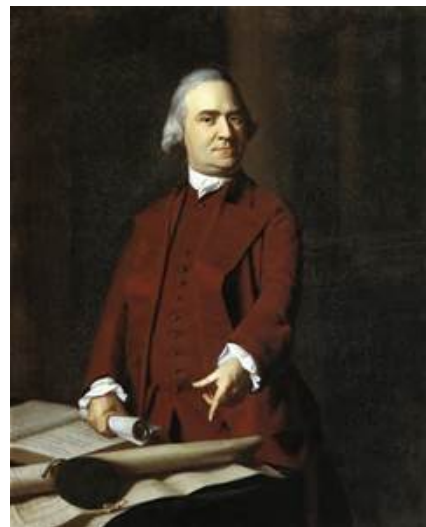
British Statesman **Edmund Burke** addressed Parliament, 1775:

"All **Protestantism** ... is a sort of **dissent**."

But the **religion** most prevalent in our **Northern Colonies** is a refinement on the principle of resistance; it is the **dissidence** of **dissent**, and the **protestantism** of the **Protestant religion**."

**Samuel Adams** stated when he signed the Declaration of Independence:

"This day, I trust, the **reign of political protestantism** will commence."



**John Adams** wrote in *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, 1765:

"Desire of dominion ... becomes an encroaching, grasping, restless, and ungovernable power ...

Tyranny, cruelty, and lust ... was soon adopted by almost all the princes of Europe ...

The people were held in ignorance ... till God in his

benign providence raised up the champions who began and conducted the **Reformation**.

From the time of the **Reformation** to the first settlement of America, knowledge gradually spread in Europe, but especially in England; and in proportion as that increased and spread among the people ... tyranny ... lost ... strength."

Consistent with **Adams'** view are those of **Robert D. Woodberry** of the National University of Singapore, who wrote a paper titled "*The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy*" (*American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, May 2012).

American Political Science Review

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### The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy

ROBERT D. WOODBERRY *National University of Singapore*

*This article demonstrates historically and statistically that conversionary Protestants (CPs) heavily influenced the rise and spread of stable democracy around the world. It argues that CPs were a crucial catalyst initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely. Statistically, the historic prevalence of Protestant missionaries explains about half the variation in democracy in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania and removes the impact of most variables that dominate current statistical research about democracy. The association between Protestant missions and democracy is consistent in different continents and subsamples, and it is robust to more than 50 controls and to instrumental variable analyses.*

**S**ocial scientists tend to ignore religion in the processes of post-Enlightenment modernization. In individual cases and events, the role of religious actors is clear—especially in the primary documents

curate views of human nature reflect history more precisely and produce more powerful statistical models. Of course, scholars could adjust both rational-choice models and post-Marxian class analyses to account for

It is, **Woodberry** demonstrated statistically that countries where **Protestant "conversionary" missionaries** went to in the 19th century became more prosperous in the 20th century:

"The association between **Protestant missions** and democracy is consistent in different continents and subsamples, and it is robust to more than 50 controls and to instrumental variable analyses."

**Luther** wrote:

"I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the **Holy Scriptures**, engraving them in the hearts of youth.



I advise no one to place his child where the **scriptures** do not reign paramount.

Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the **Word of God** must become corrupt."



**Luther** wrote:

"The Bible was written for men with a head upon their shoulders."



A quote attributed to **Martin Luther** was published in the **Weimarer Ausgabe** edition of *Luther's works* (D. Martin Luther's Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe, publisher Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1933, Briefwechsel, 18 volumes, 3. Band, ed., 81-82):

"Also it does not help that one of you would say:

'I will gladly confess Christ and His Word on every detail, except that I may keep silent about one or two things which tyrants may not tolerate' ...

For whoever denies Christ in one detail or word has denied the same Christ ... in all details,

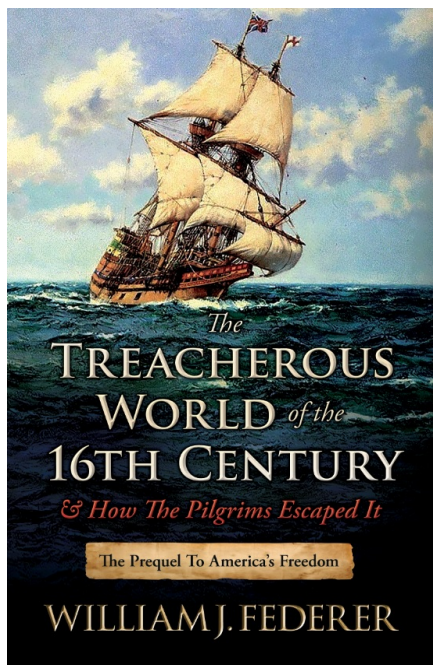
since there is only one Christ in all His words, taken together or individually."

William J. Federer video & audio

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[The Treacherous World of the 16th Century and How the Pilgrims Escaped it](#)

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