
Martin Luther: an introduction to the Protestant Reformation

When studying any time period over the course history, one commonality that each era will share is that they all have people who made a difference in some capacity or another. Some call them influencers, some call them leaders, but what these people truly are, are people who sought out change and were not afraid to go for it. Martin Luther was one of these people who sought out change no matter what it took. Throughout his life, he did not let people or organizations come between what him and what he thought was right. Martin Luther not only started a worldwide movement, but also paved a way for people to view religion as a whole throughout the course of his life. The life of Martin Luther began on November 10th, 1483 in Eisleben, Saxony. His parents went by the names of Hans Luther and Margaret Luther and were very strict in their discipline with Martin Luther. When Martin Luther was thirteen years old, he left home and because of the lack of an effort to stay in communications with his family after that, one can conclude that him and his family were not very close. When it came to Martin Luther's education, he took part in quite a few different schools during his time as a student. Martin Luther attended the local Latin school in Mansfield in 1490 and in 1497 Martin Luther became a part of the school of the Brothers of the Common Life at Magdeburg. This eventually led to him going to school in Eisenach in the year of 1498 which then led to his enrollment in the University of Erfurt in 1501 where he then studied Aristotle. While focusing his studies on philosophical studies, Martin Luther was able to gain his bachelor of the arts in 1502 and his master's degree in 1505. After years of studying to finally get to this moment in his life where he would begin the study of the law, he abruptly decided to change this chapter of his life after two months and decided to enter a monastery.

By Martin Luther entering a monastery of the Augustinian Order, this meant that he would, "Take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and in two years be ordained as a priest". The question as to why he chose this could be linked to reasons such as a feeling he felt of overpowering sinfulness, having his education in monastic schools and external circumstances such as being caught in a thunderstorm. The storm that he saw made him so scared that he vowed to Saint Anna that if he was able to make it out of the thunderstorm alive that he would become a monk. Martin Luther made his vows in 1506, was ordained a priest in 1507, and in 1511 he was given a permanent position at the University of Wittenberg to lecture on Aristotle's Ethics.

When discussing Martin Luther, one must discuss the time period of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation was a movement in the 1500s that involved western European Christianity. During this time, "Christians that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and formed their own, independent churches" were known as Protestants. The reason for these Christians breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church was because they did not agree with the church's practices, teaching, and institution. Because the Protestants did not agree with the church, they wanted to change and reform it which is how the name "Reformation" came into the picture during this time.

The reason as to why Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation go hand and hand is because of the impact that Martin Luther had on the Protestant Reformation. When taking a

look back on the causes of the Protestant Reformation, it starts with the act of selling indulgences. During this time the Roman Catholic Church was selling indulgences. An indulgence was, "A document granting a person exemption from the penalty for his or her sins". This started to become unsettling with people because they believed doing such things as selling indulgences were against what was written in the Bible. On October 31st, 1517 Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses in response to the selling of indulgences. The 95 Theses were nailed on the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany and were 95 reasons as to why selling indulgences was not supported by the Bible. During this time, Martin Luther made use of the printing press that sent out the 95 Theses all over Western Europe in just a matter of a few months. The Roman Catholic Church tried to silence Martin Luther by excommunicating him from the church in 1521, however the movement did not stop growing after that Martin Luther took being excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church and made the opportunity to organize his own kind of church with the people in his movement. He founded his church on the belief that salvation is by faith alone and not good works. Not only did he follow that belief, but he made a church that, "Looked to the Bible as their only authority".

As a result of Martin Luther's movement, other people in different areas were able to be inspired as well, specifically in Switzerland. Their overall goal in Switzerland was to, "Eliminate not only what contradicted the Bible, but also whatever the Bible had not actually commanded". The leader that was mainly responsible for the progression of this group was John Calvin who was originally from France, but settled in Geneva. John Calvin echoed Martin Luther in the way that good works cannot save an individual, however, John Calvin believed, "Since not all are saved, God must predestine some for salvation and others for damnation". Furthermore it was John Calvin that was responsible for the branch of Calvinism and although it differs from Lutheranism, it was still a result of Martin Luther's original movement against the Roman Catholic Empire.

Another place in which the Protestant Reformation had its impact was in England, however, the impact was more different than what would be expected due to the Reformation being largely a political movement. During the time of Martin Luther's movement, King Henry VIII did not defend Luther's views and supported the Catholic Church. King Henry VIII was referred to as the "defender of the faith" by the Pope, however when King Henry VIII wanted a divorce, the Pope would not allow for him to get one. Furthermore, in order to get the divorce that King Henry VIII wanted he separated England from the Catholic Church. Protestantism did not stay away from England, however, because when King Henry VIII died, the nation saw more of a Protestantism influence under Edward VI.

In closing, the Reformation changed the course of where Europe was going in its religious aspect and that is mainly due to Martin Luther. Although some did not agree with all of Martin Luther's views, they were still inspired by his bravery to stand up against something no matter how big it may seem. The Reformation was a step on the right track, "In the development of European nations as we know them today, and also encouraged the development of national literatures and styles of art. Martin Luther did not just start the Protestant Reformation back in the day, but his life left a legacy and paved a way for people to view religion as a whole.