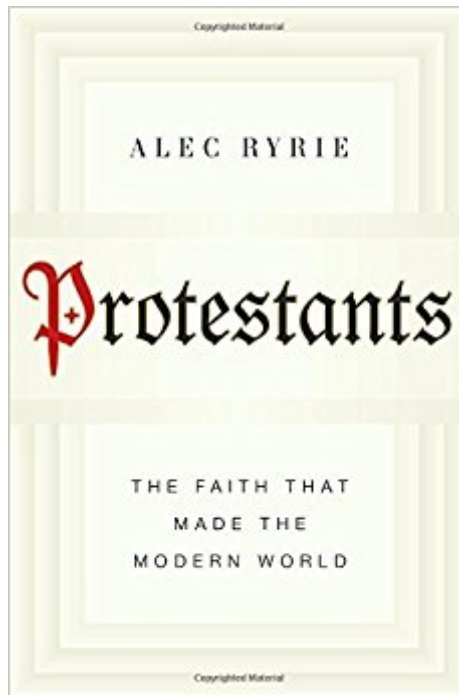


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# Protestants: The Faith That Made The Modern World



## Synopsis

On the 500th anniversary of Luther's theses, a landmark history of the revolutionary faith that shaped the modern world. "Ryrie writes that his aim 'is to persuade you that we cannot understand the modern age without understanding the dynamic history of Protestant Christianity.' To which I reply: Mission accomplished." —Jon Meacham, author of *American Lion* and *Thomas Jefferson*

Five hundred years ago a stubborn German monk challenged the Pope with a radical vision of what Christianity could be. The revolution he set in motion toppled governments, upended social norms and transformed millions of people's understanding of their relationship with God. In this dazzling history, Alec Ryrie makes the case that we owe many of the rights and freedoms we have cause to take for granted—from free speech to limited government—to our Protestant roots. Fired up by their faith, Protestants have embarked on courageous journeys into the unknown like many rebels and refugees who made their way to our shores. Protestants created America and defined its special brand of entrepreneurial diligence. Some turned to their bibles to justify bold acts of political opposition, others to spurn orthodoxies and insight on their God-given rights. Above all Protestants have fought for their beliefs, establishing a tradition of principled opposition and civil disobedience that is as alive today as it was 500 years ago. In this engrossing and magisterial work, Alec Ryrie makes the case that whether or not you are yourself a Protestant, you live in a world shaped by Protestants.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A masterly history. . . Rare is the historian who is as instructive about Christianity in Asia as he is about churches in the West, yet Ryrie manages both." - The Wall Street Journal

"In this compelling and sweeping book, Alec Ryrie charts the history of one of the greatest forces in the making of modernity: the rise of the Protestant faith and ethos. Without it, one is hard-pressed to envision the spread of capitalism or of democracy. Ryrie writes that his aim 'is to persuade you that we cannot understand the modern age without understanding the dynamic history of Protestant Christianity.' To which I reply: Mission accomplished." - Jon Meacham, author of American Lion and Thomas Jefferson

"A sweeping, wonderful book.... We take for granted what we have. We no longer understand that the world wasn't always this way, that we didn't always have things like freedom of speech, freedom of religion, or the concept of limited government." - Eric Metaxas

"Learned and lively...Ryrie credits Protestants with playing significant roles in the spread of free speech and the placement of conscience ahead of government dictates throughout Europe and across what eventually became the United States...Throughout the sweeping narrative, he offers his well-considered opinions about how the Bible fits into the teachings of various Protestant denominations.... Rarely has an author of such deep faith offered such a tolerant, engaging history of any religion." - Kirkus Reviews (starred)

"Comprehensive and highly readable... Ryrie is one of the world's leading authorities on the Protestant Reformation. . . He is a particularly graceful and humane writer -- a very kind person, you feel -- qualities that serve him well in a history this divisive and contentious." - Dallas Morning News

"Informative and stimulating... Ryrie is as eloquent as he is erudite." - Financial Times

"To cover the story of Protestantism in just 514 pages might seem recklessly task. But Ryrie has succeeded magnificently. He writes with the affection of an insider and the judgment of a first-class historian, and is excellent at conveying the sheer excitement, passion and violence that have marked Protestantism's story." - The Sunday Times

"What a treat this book is. Its scholarship showcases one of the leading historians of Protestantism writing today, but the delight of it is the crisp prose, cool wit, wise judgements and sheer scope from the gates of Wittenberg to the streets of Seoul. Ryrie has a gift for showing how the history of religion is the history of people, in all their baffling, frightening and endearing variety." - Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of Reformation and Christianity

"An astonishment of narrative sweep and close analysis, transforming a familiar subject into one not seen before, Protestants is a breathtakingly original charting of the God-driven current running below the surface of the West, and, now, of the world. In its triumphs and tragedies, Alec Ryrie illuminates faith, yes; but the real revelation here is human life itself - its intelligence, open-endedness, hope." - James Carroll, author of Christ Actually and Constantine's Sword

"This is a book of breathtaking

range and penetrating insight. It will shape our perception of the Reformation and its long shadow for years to come." – Andrew Pettegree, author of *Brand Luther* "Protestants is spectacularly good. Ryrie writes with empathy but without illusions; his trademark combination of wit and erudition makes the journey as enjoyable as it is enlightening." – Prof. Peter Marshall, author of *Heretics and Believers* – "Ryrie's agile mind, pithy style and energetic narrative bring 500 years of Protestant history to life and carries us into the present global era. *Protestants* is shrewd, incisive and proceeds at an astonishing pace. If you wish to buy one book to understand the impact Martin Luther has had on the modern world, this is it." – Bishop Graham Kings, *Mission Theologian in the Anglican Communion* "This sweeping and thought-provoking book may prove a bible of the Protestant quincentenary." – Booklist (starred)

Alec Ryrie was born in London and grew up in Washington DC. He graduated from Cambridge University with a double First in History and received a doctorate in Theology from Oxford University. He is Professor of the History of Christianity at Durham University and a licensed minister in his local church. An expert on the Reformation in England and Scotland, he is the author of the prizewinning *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* and *The Sorcerer's Tale: Faith and Fraud in Tudor England* and is co-editor of the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*.

Who would have thought it possible to say something original about the Protestant Reformation after 500 years? Alec Ryrie manages it, and with some style, as well as some provocation. The provocativeness is the easy part - recent works that are avowedly attempts at revision (Brad Gregory's *"Unintended Reformation,"* James Simpson's *"Burning to Read"*) were provocative and well written but lacked intellectual conviction or balance, and generated more heat (and sales) than light. Diarmaid MacCulloch's *"The Reformation"* was very good on the eponymous event itself; but Ryrie is outstanding on the global history since the sixteenth century (and he's pretty good on that century as well). He has read extremely widely and is as at home discoursing on Martin Luther King and Korean Christianity as on Luther and Lutheran theologians. Ryrie at times is happy to provoke (e.g. on progressive theology and evangelicals in post-War America) but there is substance as well as flair and he is more thought-provoking than just provocative. He is especially interesting on Protestant missions; and he brings a particularly insightful and (unusually) sympathetic eye to Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons - the latter are a favorite topic of historians of religion but the first two groups are often treated with remarkable superficiality in overview accounts of the history of Christianity, even though they are as, or more, significant in

global terms, if not in American terms, as Mormons (and rather more Protestant, as Ryrie delicately points out). In sum: This will be THE must-read history of global Protestantism (and a major work on global Christianity) for the foreseeable future; teachers can expect to see it plagiarized regularly. Overall this is both a tour d'horizon and a tour de force.

Excellent and well documented study. Compelling narrative. Provides a new and broader contextual analysis of the rise of Protestantism. A must read.

The book provides a good overview of the origins, history and current state of Protestantism. Appreciated broad sweep. Chapters on Korea, China and Africa. I did feel his coverage of current US scene was a little thin. Changes in the US church are moving rapidly. More on this in light of his main thesis (Protestants are motivated by a love affair with God) would've been welcome.

Excellent study of Protestantism. Well written, balanced and scholarly, but accessible for anyone seriously interested in history, religion and how Protestantism has influenced world history. I highly recommend it.

Great history

Using the book for a church review of how we got where we are. Great book.

far too much detail -- geared to academics and students rather than for the general public.

A good overview of the history of the Reformation.

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