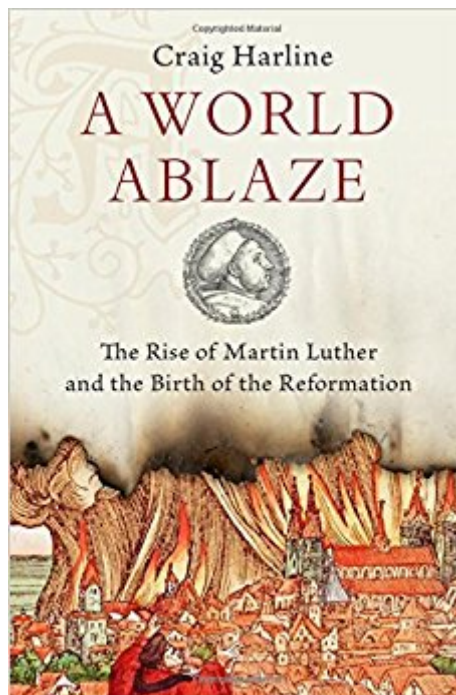




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A World Ablaze: The Rise Of Martin Luther And The Birth Of The Reformation



Synopsis

October 2017 marks five hundred years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg and launched the Protestant Reformation. At least, that's what the legend says. But with a figure like Martin Luther, who looms so large in the historical imagination, it's hard to separate the legend from the life, or even sometimes to separate assorted legends from each other. Over the centuries, Luther the man has given way to Luther the icon, a polished bronze figure on a pedestal. In *A World Ablaze*, Craig Harline introduces us to the flesh-and-blood Martin Luther. Harline tells the riveting story of the first crucial years of the accidental crusade that would make Luther a legendary figure. He didn't start out that way; Luther was a sometimes-cranky friar and professor who worried endlessly about the fate of his eternal soul. He sought answers in the Bible and the Church fathers, and what he found distressed him even more -- the way many in the Church had come to understand salvation was profoundly wrong, thought Luther, putting millions of souls, not least his own, at risk of damnation. His ideas would pit him against numerous scholars, priests, bishops, princes, and the Pope, even as others adopted or adapted his cause, ultimately dividing the Church against itself. *A World Ablaze* is a tale not just of religious debate but of political intrigue, of shifting alliances and daring escapes, with Luther often narrowly avoiding capture, which might have led to execution. The conflict would eventually encompass the whole of Christendom and served as the crucible in which a new world was forged. The Luther we find in these pages is not a statue to be admired but a complex figure -- brilliant and volatile, fretful and self-righteous, curious and stubborn. Harline brings out the immediacy, uncertainty, and drama of his story, giving readers a sense of what it felt like in the moment, when the ending was still very much in doubt. The result is a masterful recreation of a momentous turning point in the history of the world.

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"There could be few more enjoyable or instructive ways to meet Dr. Martin Luther than in the company of Craig Harline. This engaging book combines wit and human sympathy with a deep knowledge of the period, and it moves with the energy of a good novel." -- Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of *The Reformation and Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* "Here one of the most remarkable stories in all of European history meets one of the most gifted storytellers among all historians writing today. Even readers familiar with the astonishing, unexpected emergence of Martin Luther and his Ninety-five Theses in 1517 will love the concrete immediacy and reconstructed real-life character of Craig Harline's gripping, gritty, and graceful account." -- Brad S. Gregory, author of *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* "Captivating and illuminating. Craig Harline offers us a revealing glimpse of one of the world's most significant figures. Focusing on the most turbulent years of Luther's reforming career, Harline gets us under his subject's skin, making him come alive. At the very same time, he also helps us understand the various social, political, cultural, and spiritual issues that shaped his Reformation. With impressive skill and a distinctive prose reminiscent of Hemingway, he deftly sheds new light on Luther the man: a flesh-and-bone monk whose inner struggles turned into a movement that surprised the world and changed it forever." -- Carlos Eire, T. Lawrason Riggs Professor of History and Religious Studies, Yale University "This is not the story of Luther the crusading reformer but of a compassionate priest and brilliant scholar compelled by internal and external forces that would lead him to become that reformer... There are discussions of political and religious situations of the era, lively outlines of significant personalities, and overviews of the academic and intellectual

climate. These provide a vivid portrayal, told with a deft and light touch of an amused yet sometimes perplexed admirer. Harline provides plenty of drama, giving a window into the apprehension felt by all involved in this part of history." --Library Journal

Craig Harline is the author of numerous books on the history of Christianity, especially during the Reformation, including *Conversions: Two Family Stories From the Reformation and Modern America* (2011), which was a finalist for the Mark Lynton History Prize from the Columbia School of Journalism, and *Sunday: A History of the First Day From Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (2007), which was one of *Publishers Weekly's* Best Religion Books of the Year. His memoir, *Way Below the Angels: The Pretty Clearly Troubled But Not Even Close to Tragic Confessions of a Real Live Mormon Missionary* (2014) received Foreword Reviews' INDIEFAB Book of the Year award in the category of Religion. He is currently Professor of History at Brigham Young University, and has been a visiting professor at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, in Belgium.

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