

31 OCTOBER IS REFORMATION DAY

Friday, 31 October, is the birthday of all Evangelical and Bible-believing churches. On 31 October 1517, Dr Martin Luther launched the Protestant Reformation with his bold stand at the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Freedom and Productivity

Western civilisation has been blessed with the greatest freedoms, productivity and prosperity ever known in history. The liberty, standards of justice and creativity enjoyed in Western civilisation is a direct result of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century.

First Things First

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught: ***"But seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*** Matthew 6:33

Peace with God

It was Martin Luther's earnest quest for peace with God, and his intensive study of the Scriptures, which led him to challenge the unethical fundraising tactics of the papacy and launch the Protestant Reformation. Luther's love for the Word of God and his dedication to truth led him to challenge the entire ecclesiastical and political authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire.

Captive to the Word of God

"Unless I am convinced by Scripture, or by clear reasoning, that I am in error – for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves – I cannot recant, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen."

Freedom of Conscience

In this incredibly courageous stand against the assembled political and religious might of Europe, Luther argued for freedom of conscience based upon the authority of Scripture. Until that time, the prevailing practice was authoritarianism, both in church and state. All religions and cultures supported a monarchy, aristocracy and authoritarianism. However, Martin Luther

and the Reformers maintained that, because of the depravity of man, no human authority could be trusted as absolute. He rejected ecclesiastical totalitarianism and championed the principle of *Sola Scriptura* – the Bible alone is our ultimate authority.

Education for All

By translating the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into the common tongue, and making it widely available to both nobles and peasants, Luther championed universal education and literacy, the Priesthood of all Believers, freedom of conscience and religious liberty.

Representative Governments

The Protestant doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers became the foundation for modern representative republics. The equality of all men before God and the Law underlined the absolutism of monarchs and popes who set themselves above the Law.

Constitutional Authority

Instead of the prevailing "*Rex Lex*" (the king is the law), the Reformers championed "*Lex Rex*" (the Law is king!) No one is above God's Law. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Everyone is under God's Law. *Sola Scriptura* eroded the foundations of ecclesiastical and political totalitarianism. The Protestant emphasis on the Priesthood of all Believers and the supreme authority of Scripture led to the concept of representative government and constitutional authority as the supreme law of the land.

Religious Liberty

By emphasising the Biblical doctrine of Faith as a gift of God, Luther undermined the Catholic Inquisition and provided the theological foundations for religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

Freedom of Speech

The social implications of this religious Reformation were enormous. The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* led to constitutionalism. The Priesthood of all Believers led to the concept of representative republics and democratic forms of government. Religious liberty and freedom of conscience led to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association and all the other out-workings of political and social freedom.

Ideas have Consequences

There is no doubt that the Reformation in Europe during the 16th Century has to be seen as one of the most important epochs in the history of the world. The Reformation gave us the Bible – now freely available in our own languages.

The Banned Bible

Few people today realise that the first Bibles printed into English had to be printed in Germany and smuggled into England in bales of cotton from Holland. And that the first Bible translator, William Tyndale, was burned at the stake for the crime of translating the Bible into English. Seven mothers and fathers were burned alive at Coventry for teaching their own children The Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles Creed - in English.

Courage and Sacrifice

The sacrifices made by the Reformers and the far-reaching impact of their courageous application of the Word of God to every area of life, needs to be rediscovered. The Christian Church has made more positive changes on earth than any other force or movement in History.

Blessing the Nations

Most of the languages of the world were first codified and put into writing by Christian missionaries. More schools and universities have been started by Christians than any other religion, nation or group. Christian Reformers and missionaries have succeeded in bringing about the abolition of slavery, cannibalism, child sacrifice and widow burning. Those countries which enjoy the most civil liberties, are those lands where the Gospel of Christ has penetrated the most.

Transforming Nations

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is life-changing, history-making and nation-transforming. If it doesn't change your life and the lives of those around you, then it's not the Biblical Gospel.

Checks and Balances

The Reformers emphasised God's Sovereignty that Scripture alone is our final authority that Christ alone is the Head of the Church, and that justification is by God's Grace alone, on the basis of the finished work of Christ, received by Faith alone. The Reformers' teaching on the depravity of man, the Covenant and church government have influenced positive political and

social developments in liberty throughout the Western world and beyond, establishing checks and balances, the separation of powers and constitutional authority.

Faith and Freedom

All of us are beneficiaries of this tremendous movement for Faith and Freedom. If you love liberty, you need to re-examine the history and principles of the Reformation. Visit www.ReformationSA.org for inspirational character studies and articles on the doctrines and events, which God has used to transform whole nations and bring about the greatest spiritual Revivals ever known.

Resources for Reformation

A wide variety of Reformation resources, including dynamic Reformation character studies, lectures and sermons on audio CD and MP3 and [*The Greatest Century of Reformation*](#), [*The Power of Prayer Handbook*](#) and [*Reforming our Families*](#) books are available from *The Reformation Society*.

Reformation Celebration

Does your church, or school, plan to celebrate the Reformation this October? (If you are in the Cape Town area, please join us for the **Reformation and Revival Seminar** Saturday 30 October in Cape Town; and Sunday 31 October, **Reformation Day Service** at the Huguenot Monument in Franschhoek at 11am), or invite Reformation Society speakers to address your school or church.

Great Films Available

You can also organise for inspiring Reformation films, such as ***Luther*** and ***William Tyndale – God’s Outlaw***, to be shown at your cell group, school or college.

Inspiration and Involvement

If you want to transform your community, and if you are praying for Revival, then contact The Reformation Society for resources you can use to inspire your family, school and congregation with examples of excellence.

"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" Psalm 85:6

Dr Peter Hammond

The Reformation Society

P.O. Box 74

Newlands 7725

Cape Town

South Africa

Email: info@ReformationSA.org

Website: www.ReformationSA.org

Those in North American can contact:

Frontline Fellowship (USA)

1177 Branham Lane PMB 413

San Jose, CA 95118, USA

Tel: 1-866-785-7210

Fax: 1-866-796-0651

Email: info@frontlinefellowship.net

Website: www.frontlinefellowship.net