

Reformers - Standing for God and His people - by Andrew E. Davis

Introduction

This teaching is on the topic of **Reformation**.

The dictionary meaning of the word “Reformation” is:

The act of reforming, or the state of being reformed.

The meaning of the word “Reformed” is:

Amended by removal of faults, abuses... Improved in conduct, morals...

Essentially, it is the improvement of something that is faulty or improper.

For example, a country can slowly destroy itself, by the actions of a corrupt government, or, by corrupt laws put in place.

This happens in many places around the world today.

A government can be stealing the wealth of a country for their personal benefits, or, certain laws may be put in place to unfairly benefit an elite or upper class of citizens, while harming the rest of the population.

The citizens of that country can come to realization of these issues, and take a firm stance together to make a change happen.

They may choose to revolt, verbally, physically, or by some other manner, forcing the current government or the current laws to be reformed.

In this scenario, the oppressed citizens fixed the faulty and improper practices that was once tearing that country apart;

and now that country is able to move forward more productively, more honestly and more fairly, for all members, of all statures and positions.

The word Reformation, however, is most commonly associated with a religious movement that took place during the 16th century.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, was a religious, political, intellectual and cultural revolution that divided the Roman Catholic Church in Europe.

Much of the church migrated into various branches of Protestant Christianity, which greatly differed from Roman Catholic views and practices, especially concerning the distribution of power and authority between the church and the body of believers, and also the belief that the Bible should be the sole source of spiritual authority, rather than tradition or the leaders of the church.

Earlier examples of Reformation

There were numerous attempts at reforming the Roman Catholic Church before the 16th century Revolution.

However, before we continue to examine other opposers of the Catholic Church, let us look further back in time.

There were reformations within the House of God, long before the Catholic Church ever existed.

One earlier reformer, was **Jesus Christ** himself.

Jesus reformed Judaism by fulfilling or continuing the Jewish law; carrying out the prophecies as the Messiah.

Judaism was the religion of the Judeans at that time. They were the Children of Israel, including Jesus.

They studied the scriptures known as the Torah, which are the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses - (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Let us see what Jesus says in Matthew 5:17 of our Bibles.

Matthew 5:17 - Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Many of those influential, educated, elder Judeans, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, did not like the idea of this young man, Jesus of Nazareth, speaking with authority to change or adjust their law.

They did not accept Jesus as being the Messiah, thus they incited his Crucifixion.

The Apostles and other preachers of God's Word were also reformers.

On the day of Pentecost (which was around the year 33 AD), we migrated from the Gospel Administration, into the Grace Administration of God's timetable.

For the first time, since the beginning of time, man was able to be born again of God's Spirit. This can be considered to be the start of Christianity as we know it.

Many great men and women helped to usher in this new administration, by spreading the Truth of God's Word that Jesus Christ passed on to them.

The Apostles of Christ, the believers in Jerusalem, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, Timotheus, Apollos, Priscilla, Aquila and many other ambassadors for Christ – they all spoke God's Word without fear.

From the Apostle Peter, teaching on the day of Pentecost, all the way to the Apostle Paul, who made good use of his status, being both Judean and a Roman citizen, to minister to both Judean and Roman audiences, spreading the Word of God as far as he possibly could.

These believers prevailed through adverse times of danger and persecution, playing a significant part in the reformation of God's church.

For nearly 300 years after Pentecost, Christianity was banned in Rome.

Christians were persecuted, tortured and killed, if discovered by the Roman officials.

During that same time, Christianity was being slowly diluted, infiltrated and interwoven with the pagan practices of the Romans.

A pagan idol worshiper could now become a "Christian", by having "Holy Water" sprinkled upon them, without the need for renewing their mind to the Truth of God's Word or living a Christian lifestyle.

In the year 313 AD, the Roman Emperor, Constantine established himself as the head of the church, which made this new version of "Christianity" the official religion of the Roman Empire. This was the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church.

By now, you should be able to see where the name "Roman Catholic" came from.

The word "Catholic" means: Universal, or of general interest.

Essentially, the Roman Catholic Church of that time, was a mix of the Roman pagan religions (most of which worshiped a Trinity or 3-in-1 God) combined with a diluted version of Christianity.

The Reformation in Europe

For over a thousand years, the Roman Catholic Church continued to grow and dominate the region. *(It's Capital, Rome, is in Italy)*

Many changes happened.

The Catholic Church expanded its reach across Europe, including Germany.

The Roman Empire eventually fell.

Education and Technology was on the rise.

During this time, there were many seekers of the Truth, who could observe the horrible deterioration of Christianity that was going on.

Many individuals did attempt to fight for the Truth. They did their best in standing for God, denouncing what the Roman Catholic Church was doing.

Unfortunately, because the Catholic Church had so much power and control over the region, and because most of the leaders of the church were very heartless and cruel towards those who did not adhere to their will, many martyrs of God were executed during their attempts to reform the Catholic Church.

Some of these seekers of the Truth include: **Jan Hus, Peter Waldo and John Wycliffe**, to name a few.

On **October 31st, 1517 in Wittenberg, Saxony, Germany**, a monk, priest and professor of theology named **Martin Luther**, nailed his **Ninety-Five Theses** on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences, to the door of the Castle Church.

This date and event is widely acknowledged as being the **start of the Protestant Reformation**.

The theses debated and criticized the Church and the papacy, but concentrated upon the selling of indulgences and doctrinal policies about purgatory, particular judgment, and the authority of the pope.

This man, by the way, is not to be mistaken with Martin Luther King of the 20th Century; who was an African-American, Christian minister and activist, best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights, using non-violent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs.

Interestingly, Martin Luther King's name was originally Michael King. He eventually chose to change his name to Martin Luther King, in honor of the 16th century German reformer, Martin Luther.

Martin Luther of the 16th century was very fortunate to be living during that particular period of time.

He and other Reformers **made heavy use of inexpensive pamphlets as well as Bibles translated for the first time into their native German language, by use of the relatively new printing press, which enabled swift movement of both ideas and documents throughout Europe.**

Due to the works of many prominent reformers, much of Europe slowly became more educated, and at the same time, more aware of the falsehoods within the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus, many thousands revolted against the church, in an attempt to break away from their control and dominance, aiming to gain the freedom to practice Christianity in their own ways, according to the new Truths they had begun to learn about the Bible and Christianity.

These groups of reformers, who sought after and stood up for the Truth, became known as **Protestant Christians.**

The Roman Catholic Church responded with a Counter-Reformation, initiated by the Council of Trent.

Central Europe entered into fierce conflict, leading towards what is known as the Thirty Years' War, which left Europe massively devastated.

The Thirty Years' War was a series of wars in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. It was one of the longest, most destructive conflicts in European history.

This war took the lives of approximately 8 Million people. Germany lost somewhere between 25 to 40% of its population due to deaths.

It was not until another century after this war, **around the year 1750, that the Reformation could truly be considered to have ended.**

The Protestant Reformation inflicted great costs to the people of Europe.

However, out of it came many very positive changes to the continent and to the rest of the world.

There were **deep and lasting political changes, as well as new religious freedoms.**

It sparked **intellectual and cultural growth** on all sides of the schism (or separation).

And most importantly, it led towards the **unfolding and availability of God's word to people across the world.**

Encouragement for Believers Today

As we can see from examining the history of Christianity, our past has been filled with many seekers of the Truth.

We as children of God, have faced much persecution along our journey to bring the Truth of God's Word to light.

From the ancient times of Abraham to Moses.

From Jesus Christ to the brave men and women who spoke the Truth of God's Word on the day of Pentecost and onwards.

From the many intellectual reformers, such as Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther and others, to the end of the Protestant Reformation.

Even up till now, Christians have continued to face scrutiny and hateful attacks while striving for the Truth.

We as **believers living in this day and time, in this location, are extremely fortunate.**

We have **higher levels of technology** which enables us to transfer information to any part of the world in fractions of a second.

We have a **vast abundance of information** to use and to learn from.

We have **freedom of thought and expression**, and do not have to fear being thrown in jail or executed for practicing our faith.

For the most part, we are relatively safe to speak God's Word as freely as we want to.

There will always be some exceptions however; there are very brave Christians in certain places like the Middle East, Africa and Asia, who are still being persecuted for their faith in this day and time.

Yet astonishingly, they still stand strong and do not back down from their beliefs.

We surely must keep these brave individuals in our prayers.

For those of us who do not face such obstacles, we should be leading the way in spreading the Word of God.

We have very little holding us back, except for our own selves.

Before the Protestant Reformation, there were very few people that had the Truth of God's Word. Most people at that time did not even have access to a Bible.

There were many **Millions governed by the Roman Catholic Church**, and just a **small handful of Protestants, probably a couple hundred**, if that many.

By the end of the reformation, there were Millions of Protestant Christians across Europe.

Now in our modern times, there are approximately 1.2 Billion Catholics and **800 Million Protestant Christians** across the world.

So, as you can see, the acts of a few, brave men and women of God, has impacted **Billions of lives over just a few hundred years of time**, potentially saving many souls for Heaven, so that we can be reunited with God, after Christ's return.

Not all Protestant Christians have the accurately divided Word as we may have, but at least now, they are free to read the Bible for themselves, and live a more Christ-like lifestyle as a child of God, rather than being subjected to rituals and paganistic teachings as they were a couple hundred years ago.

Now they can be saved for Heaven, by believing and confessing **Romans 10:9-10**, which says:

Romans 10:9 - That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:10 - For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.



Map of the Roman Empire / Roman Catholic reign – 117 A.D.
This dominion expanded across Europe in the coming centuries.



Map of the Religious Divisions of Europe – 1555 A.D.
Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican and Anabaptist are all branches of Protestantism.
Prior to 1520 AD, all of Europe was Roman Catholic.

Do you, as an individual child of God, think that you can make a big impact in the lives of many?

Consider this:

Do you think that you can **win 1 person for God**, within a matter of let's say... **2 to 3 months?**
Do you think you have the ability to teach, support and nurture one individual, and bring them to the understanding of the Truth of God's Word, in 2 to 3 months of time?

Sure, I know that most of us can definitely accomplish this.

If you were able to **keep this up, for one year**, you'd be able to bring approximately **5 new believers** into God's household during that time.

5 believers for God, 5 more people saved for Heaven, just in 1 year.

Yes, it could be a bit of a challenge, but it is definitely achievable with the tools, resources and information we have today.

Now, what if each of you made a lifetime goal, to **keep this up for the next 20 years.**

Some may decide to get this done in the next 10 years, others, 40 years, we all have different circumstances and abilities.

But for the sake of this example, we will consider, if you were to bring 5 believers into the Word of God, per year, for the next 20 years.

In that case, you would have **saved 100 souls for Heaven**, and I am sure, that would make God very proud.

But! It doesn't end there...

If **each of those 100 believers you brought** into the Word of God, also brought others to the Truth.

Let's say, they only **brought 1-tenth** of as many believers into the household as you did during your lifetime.

So each of those 100 people you witnessed to, went on to **bring just 10 others on average**, during their lifetime, to the Word of God.

They may spend anywhere between 30 to 50 years actively spreading God's Word.

Within about 40 years after your efforts, that would be an **additional 1000 people saved** for Heaven.

It doesn't stop there.

Those 1000 new believers may go on to invite 10 others each, into God's Word, during their lifetime, **saving 10,000** new souls for God.

Those 10,000 may go on to invite 10 more each, **saving 100,000** new souls for God.

And those 100,000 may do the same, bringing 10 new persons each unto an understanding of the Truth.

By this time, that's **1,000,000 additional souls, saved for Heaven.**

Over 1,100,000 souls in total, over that period of time since your ministering of God's Word.

Because of YOUR efforts during your lifetime here on earth,
within just about 200 years from now, **Millions can be saved and brought to the Truth of God.**

Millions of people who may never have gotten the opportunity to be saved, if it were not for your actions.

And this is **not a wild exaggeration.** This is a very possible and achievable scenario that can unfold over a few generations, by your nurturing of believers for God, during your lifetime.

This is a form of **Exponential growth.**

It is how we went from just a **few hundred Protestants just 500 years ago, to approximately 800 Million today.**

So do not doubt yourself. **Do not doubt your ability as individuals to make a huge impact on the future.**

Because of the efforts of a few brave men and women Century's ago, all of us, and millions of others around the world now have freedom, education and a true understanding of the Bible.

These men of God did great works, even though they faced great adversities.

Today, we have very little to fear.

We have the full power of technology at our finger tips, an abundance of freedom, and liberty of thought and religion.

So, we should take advantage of the unique and fortunate position we have right now, to eagerly bring many, many more, to know the Truth of God's Word, potentially saving millions of souls in years to come.

Thank you, and God Bless!

- Andrew E. Davis

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