



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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LORD'S DAY 8 OCTOBER 2006

Dear Readers,

WHY WE REMEMBER AND CONTINUE THE REFORMATION TODAY

Introduction

Over the past 16 years, Protestants are making greater concessions to the Roman Catholic church in the historic signing of the *Evangelicals Catholics Together 1994 and 1997 and the Lutherans returning to Rome in 1999 in a compromised treaty on the 31 Oct and the passion of the Christ movie and the questionable alpha course* that is so prevalent today. There is a strong prevailing disposition among the liberal, ecumenical and neo-evangelical community to give up or at least minimise the major doctrinal differences between Protestant churches and the Roman church. There is either a lack of knowledge and understanding or discernment on the gravity of the matter, or a deliberate and calculated betrayal of the Protestant faith by some.

As we commemorate the 489th Anniversary of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, we need to ask the crucial basic question of why the Reformation took place and whether it is over and if there is a need to continue today in the spirit of that Reformation.

Why was there a Reformation in the first place? One of the reasons why the Reformation happened was due to the **rediscovery of the attractiveness of the pure gospel**. After the Renaissance (13th to 15th centuries), the minds of the people in Europe were opened to the searching of the arts, literature, and ancient works. People in Europe began to question the teachings and practices of the established church. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, the humanist scholar, by the sovereign hand of God did the church a great favour by the edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516 from which many translations of the bible will be based upon in the 16th to 18th century. Men like Thomas Bilney, Luther and others read the NT first hand and began to discover for themselves the spiritual vitality and beauty that was lacking in the medieval church. They could not contain this great spiritual excitement in rediscovering the watershed doctrine of justification by faith alone. It gives meaning, purpose and life to the Church and the Church was invariably revived. Is this prized heritage something to be jettisoned overnight? We need to pray for wisdom and discernment, ponder carefully and not barter truth for peace to our detriment in these hazardous times.

The Middle Ages was a time of **theological declension and falling away**. The worship of relics, saints, indulgences, mass, ceremonies, rosaries, and works reigned supreme in the hearts of the ordinary people in the church for 1,000 years. John Wycliffe, a Pre-Reformer in the 14th century, asked an English commoner how he hoped to go to heaven, and he replied that his priest had assured him that he could buy his way to heaven. That would probably be the average answer you would get from most people living during those pathetic times of the dark ages. The Reformation broke that spiritual yoke and bondage from a work-for-your-salvation religion, and restored the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ alone (Eph 2:8–9; Titus 3:5, Rom 1:17). Justification...

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by faith alone, the authority and sufficiency of the bible and the universal priesthood of believers were the touchstones of the movement.

Today, the New Age Movement and other religious movements (ie cults and occult) have generally this theme in mind: we have to placate the gods with “good life and the works of our hands,” and we are ourselves gods too (cf. Gen 3:5). Protestant Christianity stands radically different from the rest. Jesus says, in John 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

The clergy of the Middle Ages were blind spiritual guides and their unmarried monks were often guilty of moral excesses, corruption, gluttony and other social wiles. The people were spiritually starved and frustrated. Like what Isaiah said, they waited for light (Isa 59:9). The Waldenses (started by Peter Waldo) like John the Baptist, preceded the way of truth and light in the Pre-Reformation days of the 12th and 13th centuries, but were mercilessly persecuted and martyred. But the sovereign Lord had predestined a time for revival. And they later joined the reformation.

The Reformation changed the **role of the clergy**. Luther called himself a pastor, not a priest, because the Bible teaches the universal priesthood of believers (1 Pet 2:9). He would hear no auricular confession before a confessional box. For the first time, after more than 1,000 years, priests would be redundant in the church for those who know Christ Jesus personally. Every man is to pray directly to his God because of Christ Jesus, our only Mediator (1 Tim 2:5). Luther and Calvin (and others) got married and started the Christian family living in a covenant home. Children were catechised and brought up in the fear and nurture of the Word. Celibacy was never a burden the Lord meant His servants to bear (1 Tim 3:1–5).

The late medieval times became a period of enormous interest in Christianity. People flocked to Wittenberg and Geneva to hear Luther and Calvin; and Zwingli in Zurich (Knox was also influencing Scotland in no small way later). The success of Tetzl, Rome’s super salesman of indulgences, (ie forgiveness tickets to clear purgatory for loved ones) sanctioned by Pope Leo X for the rebuilding of St. Peter’s Church for Rome, diminished as the enlightened people realised that forgiveness is rich and free in Christ Jesus alone, and not a commodity that can be bought in the ‘spiritual’ marketplace. The financial corruption and spiritual deception by the church officials of the church was finally over. It would never be the same again after the 16th century revelation through the God initiated Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation brought home the **importance of Christian education**. In the medieval times, only the priests were educated. Now, every true believer needs to understand his new-found faith. The Bible is to be given to them in their own vernacular language, and they are to read it, relish and apply it. One of the great ideas of the Reformation was to unravel the enormous wealth of Holy Scriptures and have it savoured by the common people. We thank God for the works of Luther, Wycliffe, Tyndale and others for their legacy. Calvin encouraged theological learning in Geneva, and soon John Knox of Scotland and others came from afar to study in Geneva college. With the invention of the moveable type printing press by Johann Guttenberg in 1454–1455 (a divine provision), literature could be duplicated quickly and disseminated all over Europe. The development of exegetical works, commentaries and biblical theological textbooks like Calvin’s Institutes flooded Europe. These relieved the people of erroneous and heretical preaching and practices all those years. The Reformers’ motto was “Back to the Scriptures,” recommended to the Western world in all their writings.

(The Reformation is one of the most life-shaping and life-changing movements in modern history.) Biblical illiteracy of the common people for so many centuries was finally over. Hosea 4:6 says,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

The Church regained its true sense of spiritual direction and rediscovered the real dynamics of...

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the early Church in expository preaching and right observance of the sacraments, true worship and prayer, and evangelical repentance. It was almost a second Pentecost revival initiated by the Holy Spirit that revolutionised the world. That singularly altered the course of European history and drastically changed the spiritual landscape of western continental Europe.

Why was there a Reformation? Because **there was a lost gospel to be rediscovered in all its fullness**. Because the Church had veered off from the straight and narrow way. The Reformation gave us important bearings, landmarks and pertinent lessons to address today's issues and problems with the inspiration and the relevant resources of the past.

We need four things today and always:

1. A Reformed and Transformed Mind

"The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). That gave Luther a new heart in the truth of Holy Scriptures. We need a new spirit to pursue and defend the truth. Salvation belongs to the Lord alone (Titus 2:10), not to man or works. I am convinced that one of the battlefields today is the mind (Phil 4:8). God has given to us a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7), and we must strive to understand and know what and why we believe. Emotions must not take centre-stage in our lives, understanding of the Scriptures should be instead. Paul speaks of the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:1–2) that comes about as a result of knowing and applying God's Word, and *"bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor 10:5). We need to discipline our minds with the word of God and not the seductive pictures in the movies web portals and worldly magazines of today.

Children of the Reformation are single-hearted. It is a heart dominated exclusively by one principle, love for God, His Kingdom, His cause, His Church and His Truth. It is a heart of discernment and evangelical obedience to God's Word. It is submission to the will of God and total reliance on the finished work of Christ alone at Calvary. It is a disciplined, vigilant and diligent mental spirit to advance the cause of Christ against all foes. An informed and reformed mind must pervade every Christian today.

2. A Reformed Covenant Home

The Reformation literally reformed and transformed the Christian home. With Luther and Katherine von Bora's marriage (Calvin and Idelette, and others also), they started catechising the children and had regular family worship. It was unheard of for a priest to have a wife, let alone have children at home. The Reformers blazed the trail of the setting up of a covenant relationship at home. It was an example for others on how to raise children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. The English Reformers and Puritans taught their children the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Shorter Catechism of Westminster and the Bible. And many children came to know Christ as Saviour and Lord at a tender age.

Do we fill our children with the Word and prayer or are their minds filled with the things of the world only? The average family, the most basic building block of our society, is under siege by the adversary today. There is an increase in divorce, recalcitrant children and irresponsible parents. The English Reformers paid great attention to giving domestic instruction to their children. Families are destroyed by a lack of knowledge of God's Word and spiritual fidelity to God first and then to each other. Today we need a reformation of the family, from worldly values and earthly pursuits to holiness, godliness and the principles of the Reformed faith found in God's Word. Moses advised in Deuteronomy 6:6–7,

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Let godly fathers and mothers follow the examples of the Reformation forebears, and protect...

and preserve the sanctity, vitality and harmony of the Christian home in the midst of the demise of the homes wrecked by divorces, spousal violence and teenage rebellion (Ps 127:1).

Where the Christ-centred home is, the fear and worship of God will be there also.

3. A Reformed and revived Church

What about the church that we are in? It is a separated, gospel-preaching and faith-defending Reformed Church. It is an assembly of saints that stands firmly on the doctrines of grace taught in the Scriptures and will not compromise nor barter it for anything. It is a redeemed community jealously guarding, protecting and defending the precious tenets of true religion, especially the vital issues concerning salvation, and the authority, providential preservation, inerrancy, verbal inspiration, sufficiency and perspicuity of God's Word. The motto of the Church should be "reformed yet reforming."

There is to be a sense of spiritually measured militancy and urgency for the propagation of sound biblical doctrines, unadulterated with worldly ideas and human philosophies. No New Age teachings, Alpha course, the passion of the Christ movie, the prophetic and dancing movement of the charismatic churches and secular psychology and man centred church growth techniques, (ie Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary) ecumenical or humanistic or modernistic, liberal wisdom, or any hotchpotch ECT (Evangelical Catholic Together) theology should rob us of the Truth again. The Church of Christ must stand firmly on this and not waver, compromise or be ignorant in the tumultuous days ahead.

We need the gumption and tenacity just like the Reformers to propagate and advance gospel truth without fear and favour of men. Being human, we are vulnerable to deception and falsehood and a vigilant and obedient church is the answer. Truth can be lost by wickedness as well as weakness. The days will be few when men will endure sound teaching and biblical truth. Our time to preach the gospel is soon running out, with the imminent coming of Christ (Titus 2:13; Rev 22:12, 20) In the midst of wars and disasters and calamities and the signs of the times. The Church of Christ must continue steadfast and faithful to preach, teach, contend and defend the most holy faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

4. A Reformed Expository Preaching and teaching of the word

The 16th Century Reformation was accompanied by strong and uncompromising doctrinal expository preaching of the Word of God. Luther, Calvin, Knox and Zwingli were gifted and eloquent preachers and teachers of the Holy Scriptures. They wasted no time in sharing with the masses what they discovered from the canonical Scriptures, as opposed to traditions and church councils. Today, we desperately need a return to God-honouring and cross-centred biblical preaching, without the fear and favour of men, and with the power and unction from above. John Robbins of the Trinity Foundation has commented aptly here:

Biblical preaching is preaching that declares the whole counsel of God and not just snippets from that counsel. Most "evangelical" congregations are starving, living hand to mouth from the crumbs that fall from the pulpits. Neither the preachers nor the congregations suspect that there is a system of doctrine in Scripture, a system so rich and satisfying that no one need starve or go hungry, a system built upon the revelation of Jesus Christ alone, a system that answers all questions, and supplies all needs. "Evangelical" preachers have rejected the idea that the Bible is sufficient, and its corollary, the sufficiency of Christ. They deny that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation. They are careless so called shepherds, betraying the trust of their Lord and their sheep. Many of them are false shepherds, preaching only the doctrines and commandments of men.

The power of the Gospel to salvation is implicitly denied and the Gospel itself dishonoured by such ministerial machinations and man centred methods. Psychological manipulation has become the substitute for the power of the Gospel in many churches today.

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The Gospel is not merely a gate to Christianity; it is the narrow road as well. It is the focus and centre of Christian doctrine and worship. Paul's determination in preaching must be ours: To know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (The Trinity Review, September 1999, 3).

The solid and in-depth exposition of the gospel has been replaced by the superficial and shallow homilies in many modern churches. Preaching is often theatrical, melodramatic, entertaining and emotional and some musical or dramatic man pleasing entertainment and dancing as well. Its focus is personal experience (some one remembered hearing a message for Good Friday service in a certain church, where the speaker shared about his experiences in his recent overseas trip, and not Christ and the vicarious atonement). The congregation is often regaled with the psychological theories and life experiences of men and other banter that pander to the itching ears of some. Worldly advice and psychological tips (ie positive thinking and self esteem by charismatic speakers) are passed around from the pulpit, and from the seminaries as though they are biblical truths today, to unsuspecting gullible members and friends. A church devoid of sound biblical doctrinal preaching will have members who are spiritually malnourished and emaciated, and vulnerable to falsehood and heresies, which is what we are witnessing today in many churches

Conclusion

An informed, knowledgeable and vigilant and courageous Christianity is the answer to the widespread heresies and seductive false teachings of today. We must not be content with a superficial acquaintance with the infallible and inerrant Word, but we must strive to be thoroughly grounded and rooted in the most holy faith. We need more than just a resuscitation of the ailing economy, we need a true reformation and transformation of the churches, families and individual lives, with a high view and a profound knowledge and application of the Scriptures, coupled with faith and obedience in Christ. Amen.

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In Green Pastures Devotional Readings for Every Day of the Year

By J.R. Miller, D.D.

8 October 2006

MORNING

2 PETER 1:5 "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;"

OUR lesson presents us with a splendid sum in addition. The graces are to be added, one to another. Faith comes first; but faith cannot stand alone, so we add to our faith virtue—that is, manliness, with all the noble qualities that apply to manliness. Next we are to add knowledge—knowledge, of course, of the true kind, wisdom for life, spiritual knowledge, knowledge of God and of God's will.

Self-control comes next—this is the key of all noble life. No matter how strong we are, or how much we know, if we have not self-control, something is wanting. He that can rule himself is strong, while he that lacks self-mastery, no matter what other gifts he may have, is pitifully weak.

Self-control produces another element—patience, patience in suffering. Another quality to be added to patience is Godliness—Godlikeness. Then comes brotherly kindness—affectionateness to those among whom we mingle.

Last of all—love, the crowning gift and blessing. To have these elements of character is to be ready for life.

EVENING

SERVING CHRIST IN HIS PEOPLE

WHEN we lay our lives at Christ's feet in consecration, and tell Him that we want to serve Him with them, He gives them back to us again, and bids us use them in serving His people, our fellow-men. In the humblest and the lowliest of those who bear Christ's image Christ Himself comes to us. We do not know when He stands before us in a lowly one who needs our sympathy or our help. It would be a sad thing if we turned Him away unfeeling from our doors some day, or neglected to visit Him in His sickness. Let us not say we love Christ if we are not ready to serve those whom He sends to us to be served.

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: STRIVING TO LIVE ABOVE OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS
IN CHRIST (Ephesians 1:3)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	Today: 08/10/2006	Next Week: 15/10/2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We welcome Grace Lim, June Low, Chan Siong Yee and Isabella Egowye to our worship service last week.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Alvin Chow	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Speaker:</i>	Rev Jack Sin	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	
<i>Message:</i>	The Grave Necessity of Remembering and Continuing the 16th Century Protestant Reformation	Christ's Intercessory Prayer for the Church (John 17:1-26)	
<i>Organist:</i>	Anthony	Anthony	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Seetoh Yoong Chiang	Jeff Pun	
<i>Speaker:</i>	Rev Jack Sin	Pr Mok Chee Cheong	
<i>Message:</i>	Growing in the Fear of God in a Hostile Environment	The Fifth Commandment WLC Questions 123-133	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Anthony	Feng Qian	
Other Duties			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
	Today	Next Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Service: For those who are interested to serve (as ushers, Sunday school teachers, pianists, organists, kitchen, ...), please see Mok, Jonathan or Daniel. • Daily Remembrancer: We still have copies of the Daily Remembrancer available for purchase at the book table. Each copy will cost £5. • YAF Meeting: Please take note that a meeting will take place on Fri 13 Oct after the YAF activity. • Pray for brethren facing recent bereavement: Please pray for God to be with Sis Sabelo during this difficult period following the recent bereavement of her younger brother and cousin. • Thank You: Jee and Yanning would like to thank all the brethren who were assisting them during their wedding ceremony and reception. <p style="text-align: center;">~~~~~</p>
<i>Ushers</i>	Yoong Chiang/Evelyn	Jeff/Constance	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Carol	Joyce	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Jasmin	Maureen	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	YAF Group 2	YAF Group 1	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	DHW – Genesis 27	DHW – Genesis 28	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 13 Oct	7.00 pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Spkr: Tbd	
Sat 14 Oct	4.00 pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Spkr/C'man: Jonathan	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering: £259.33		Lunch: £32.50	

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

In the twilight of the morning,
 When the shadows steal away,
 And we wake from balmy slumber
 To behold another day,
 Let us go alone in secret,
 And unburden all our care
 At the feet of our Redeemer,
 In the simple, earnest prayer.
 Let Thy presence, blessed Saviour,
 Our protection ever be;
 Give us strength for every trial,
 Keep, oh, keep us close to Thee.
The Simple Earnest Prayer - Fanny Crosby