

# Celebrating



**W**ednesday the 31<sup>st</sup> of October is the birthday of all Evangelical, Pentecostal and Bible-believing churches. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1517, Dr. Martin Luther launched the Protestant Reformation with his bold stand at the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

The Reformation began as an attempt to reform the Catholic church, by priests who opposed the false doctrines and immense ecclesiastic malpractice – especially the teaching and sale of indulgences, and simony, the selling and buying of clerical offices. The Reformers saw these as evidence of the systematic corruption of the church’s Roman hierarchy, which included the Pope.

In Germany, Reformation ideals were developed and spread by Dr. Martin Luther as he taught from the Scriptures, challenging the legitimacy of indulgences and the doctrinal authority of the Pope. Towering above all these great Reformers, Martin Luther stands out as the most courageous, controversial and influential Reformer of all time.



Martin Luther’s spiritual predecessors included John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, who likewise had attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformation began on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1517, in Wittenberg, Saxony, where Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses against indulgences to the door of the Castle Church, in Wittenberg.

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These Theses created such a sensation that within two weeks, they had been printed and read throughout Germany. Within the month, translations were being printed and sold all over Europe. The 95 Theses begin with the words: “Since our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ says: *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near*’ Matt 4:17, He wants the whole life of a believer to be a life of repentance.”

Luther maintained that no sacrament can take away our responsibility to respond to Christ’s command by an inner repentance evidenced by an outward change, a transformation of our entire life. Luther emphasised that it is God alone who can forgive sins.

# the Reformation

—by Dr Peter Hammond



## Freedom and productivity

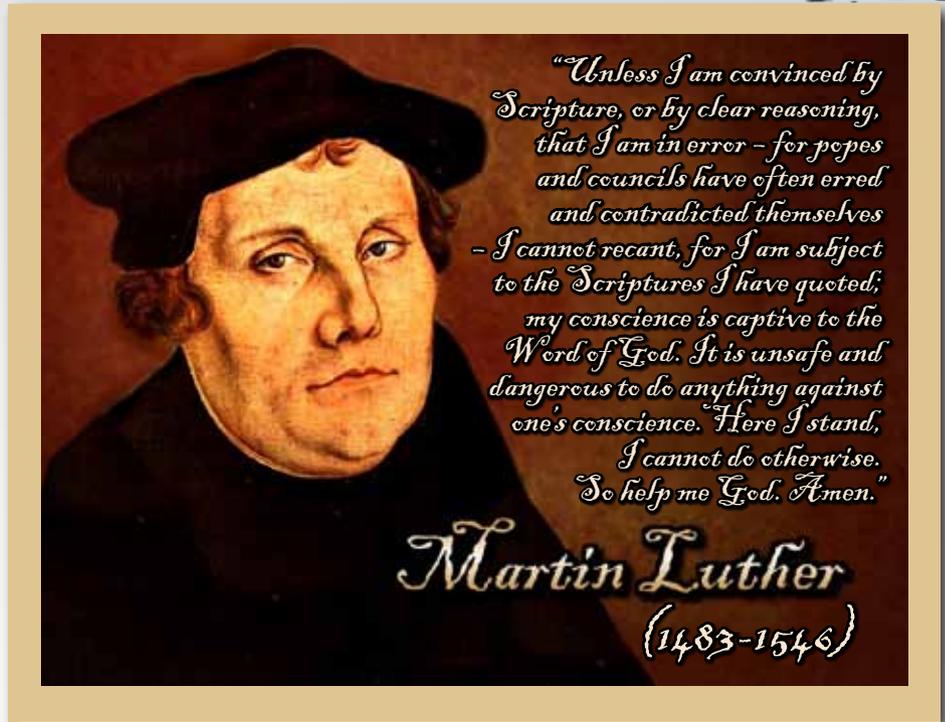
Western civilisation has been blessed with the greatest freedoms, productivity and prosperity ever known in history. The liberty, standards of justice and creativity enjoyed are a direct result of the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Peace with God

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught: *“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* Matt 6:33. 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 fund-raising tactics of the papacy and launch the Protestant Reformation.

## 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.”*

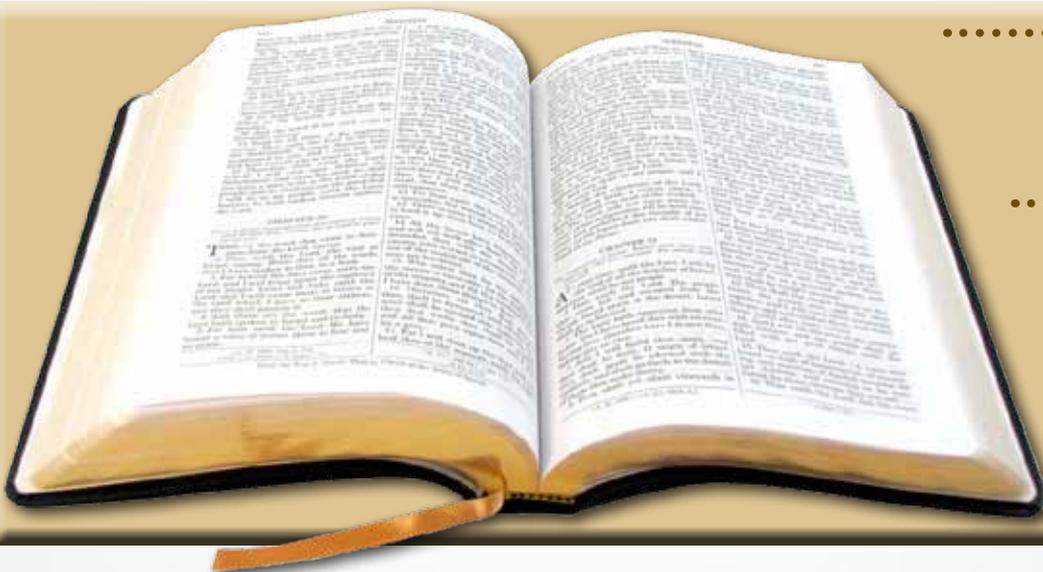


## Freedom of conscience

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 support-

ed authoritarianism. However Martin Luther 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.

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*‘Sola Scriptura’*

*– the Bible alone  
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# Celebrating the Reformation



to the concept of representative government and constitutional authority as the supreme law of the land. By emphasizing 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.

There is no doubt that the Reformation in Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Church needs a new Reformation

### 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. 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 dictatorships. The Protestant emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the supreme authority of Scripture led

We desperately want God to bless our country. However, we cannot expect a Holy God to bless those who are in rebellion to His Laws. As in the days of the Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, today we are facing a complex series of both internal and external threats.

Internally we are facing a renaissance of paganism. Externally we are facing an increasingly aggressive and radical form of Islamic

Jihad. Even more seriously, there is a severe crisis in our churches. Most of our people are ignorant of history, and have a very superficial grasp of Scripture. As a result, many professing Christians are compro-

mising, confused and ineffective. Our churches are filled with weak, worldly, lukewarm and inactive members. The salt has lost its flavour, and all too often the light is being hid under a bushel.

### Hijacked by humanism

With many Christians in defeat and retreat, we are facing a resurgent paganism, a pervasive humanism and an aggressive Islamic radicalism. It would appear that humanism has hijacked many churches. Theistic Evolution is uncritically accepted, worldly entertainment and a degenerate form of music predominates in all too many youth groups. All too many churches seem to be increasingly conformed to the world, rather than transformed by the renewing of their minds.

### Christ-less Christianity

Therapeutic messages and pragmatism have combined with consumerism and materialism to produce a trivial and often irrelevant church that is popular and nonthreatening.





**The desperate need for revival**

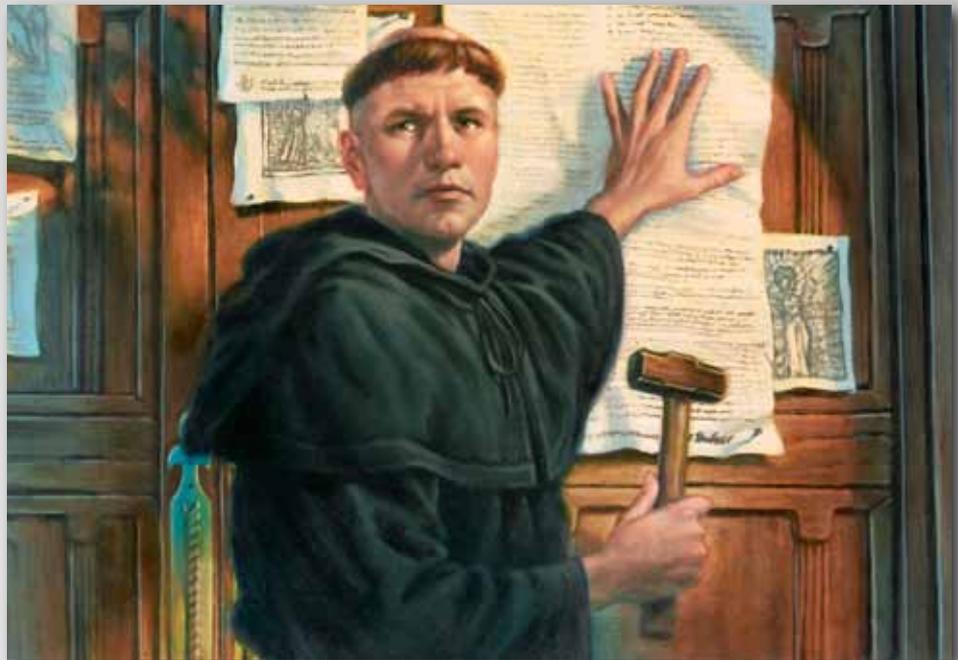
There is a general neglect of prayer, a lack of fear of God and an ignorance of basic Biblical Doctrine. Paganism can be seen in many churches and youth groups; the secularisation of education, entertainment and the news media has made its impact on many churches as well.

Many Christians are being brainwashed by secular education, distracted by worldly entertainment and deceived by secular news media. As a result, we can see a neutralising of the church as it has been side-lined out of the market place, preoccupied with end times speculations and generally passive and inactive in the issues of the day. Instead of the Church changing the world, in all too many cases, the world is changing the Church.

**The solution**

What is needed if we are to rescue our churches from worldliness and work for Biblical Reformation and spiritual Revival?

We are almost four years away from the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launching of the Reformation. The 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2017 will mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's bold stand against the superstitions and idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church with his nailing of the ninety-five theses on the church door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The Coalition on Revival has launched FIRE



(Fellowship for International Reformation and Evangelism) as a comprehensive plan to reform our congregations.

**Reformation 500**

This is working parallel with a plan to reform our communities,

500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's bold stand against the Emperor at Worms, 18 April 1521: "My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand, I can do no other!"

**A world war of worldviews**

In this clash of civilisations, the battlegrounds are found in classrooms, cinemas and college campuses, in bookshops and market places, in pulpits and parliaments, in homes and hearts.

We need field workers for the Reformation, like John Wycliffe's Lollards, sowing Gospel seed, in the common language, in the market places, highways and byways, on social media, and from door to door. Reformations need literature, leadership training and itinerant Evangelists.

We need to re-emphasise Reformation doctrines, revive worship, renew prayer, revitalise our families, restore Biblical economics, re-establish Christian schools, reform society, remove idols and restrict government to Biblical limits. »



# Celebrating the Reformation



## Foundational documents

The Coalition on Revival has produced a number of vital foundational documents to assist your church and ministry in working for Biblical Reformation. We have compiled many of these documents into the 'Coalition on Revival Reformation FIRE Manual', available as a free download on [www.Reform500.org](http://www.Reform500.org), or contact: 021 689 4480 to order hard copies.

## 95 Theses for Reformation Today

In addition, the Reformation Society has produced '95 Theses for Reformation Today' as a basis for study and discussion in order to produce a Global Church Council document for publication. If you have suggestions to improve this document please communicate them to us in writing.

## Mobilisation

We need to inform, inspire and involve. We need to motivate and mobilise. We need to educate and enlist. It is essential that we are informed, inspired, and involved in fulfilling the Great Commission, working for Reformation and praying for Revival, applying the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. Do you want to be part of this bold new initiative for Reformation Today? Establish a FIRE group in your area. Join us on the Reformation 500 Facebook page. Link, like and share the 95 Theses for Reformation Today.

## Reformation FIRE Conference – 30<sup>th</sup> of October, Franschhoek

In the Western Cape, we are planning a Reformation FIRE Conference at the Dutch Reformed Church hall in Franschhoek, Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013. The Conference will run from 9:00 – 16:00 and will include lunch. The theme of the Conference is Reclaiming Africa for Christ. Please register through [info@reformationSA.org](mailto:info@reformationSA.org). For more information see 'Events' on the 'Reformation 500' Facebook page or visit [www.ReformationSA.org](http://www.ReformationSA.org).

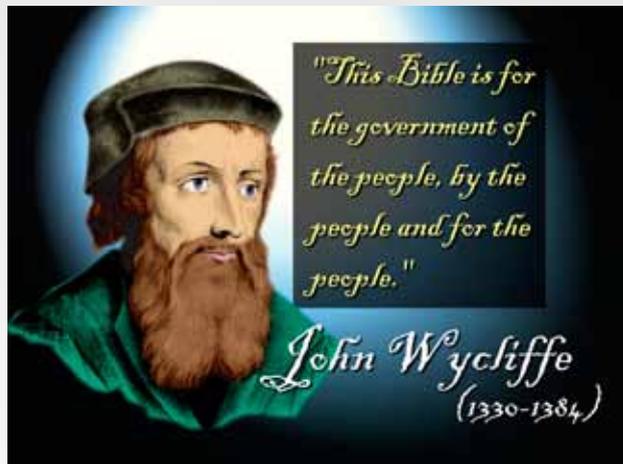
## Reformation and revival

The website and Facebook page, have more details on the Reformation 500 FIRE move-

ment and great resources to empower your ministry.

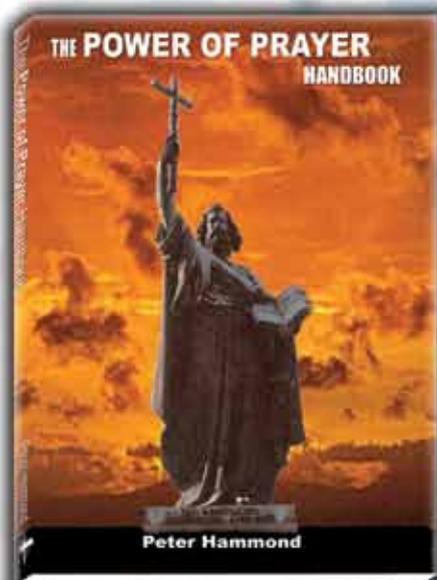
May God find us faithful to His Word and effective in fulfilling the Great Commission, as we work for Biblical Reformation and pray for Spiritual Revival. ■

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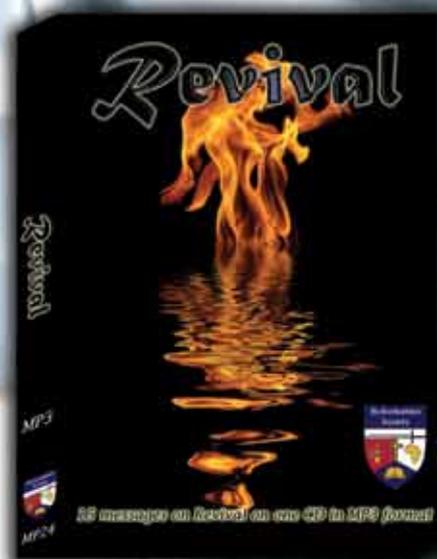
# Resources to Empower You to Work for Reformation and Pray for Revival

## The Power of Prayer Handbook



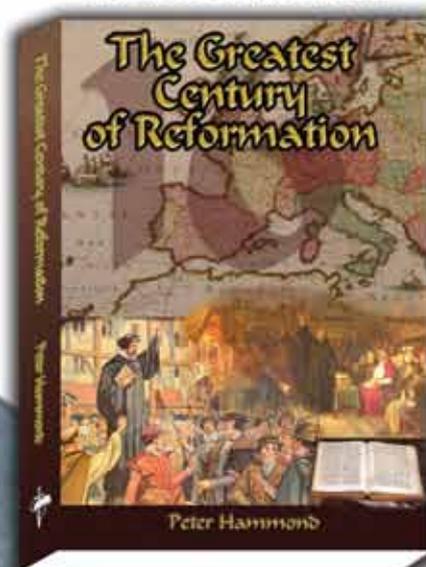
96 Pages  
21 Pictures  
R48

## Revival



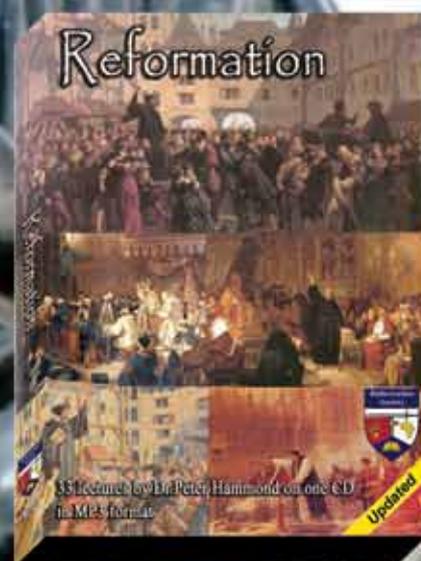
14 Lectures  
MP3 Disc  
R98

## The Greatest Century of Reformation



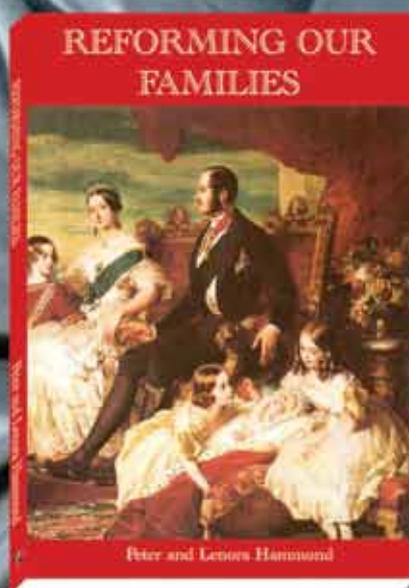
200 Pages  
180 Pictures  
R68 (Soft cover)  
R150 (Hard cover)

## Reformation



33 Lectures  
MP3 Disc  
R98

## Reforming our Families



128 Pages  
23 Pictures  
R58

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