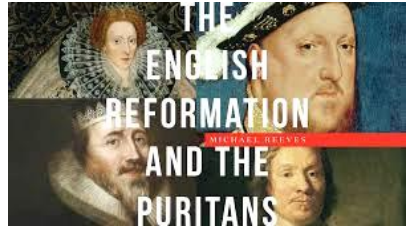


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Dying or Living for Christ in Perilous Times: Lessons From Reformation Witnesses



Heb 11:36-38 *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

As we commemorate the 506th anniversary of the 16th century reformation, we ought to remember those who gave their lives for Christ in the propagation and defence of the faith beside the magisterial Reformers. The *Voice of Martyrs* in their website shares of martyrs today in countries that includes Pakistan, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Nigeria, Iran, Yemen, Somalia, Vietnam and Pakistan for sharing the faith of the gospel. Even in the 21st century, there are many who are persecuted for their profession of faith.

Men Who Made Reformation History

Church History is as important as theology, and we do well to know and remember it. There are certain facts in history which the world tries hard to forget or ignore. These facts may not be favourite themes because they get in the way of things and are highly inconvenient. Yet as believers, we must never deny or forget our historic past and know the roots of our rich religious heritage. During the 506th commemoration of Reformation, we would normally speak of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox and other Reformers. This is appropriate generally; but for this year, we will give some attention to those who worthily contended for the faith with their lives, particularly the English Reformers to whom we owe our English Bible today.

The 16th and 17th English Reformation was somewhat different from the German revival under Martin Luther who ignited the Protestant cause with his 95 theses on Wittenberg Castle door on 31 Oct 1517 just before All Saints' Day. It was a sobering day for Christendom, and it sparked a whole series of protestant actions which transformed the spiritual landscape of Germany and

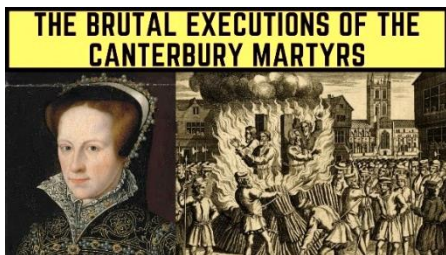
later a greater part of Europe which has far reaching consequences then and even now.

Understanding the English Reformation

As for England's Reformation, it began providentially with the marital woes of King Henry VIII, which led to Thomas Cranmer being appointed as the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury after he cut off Rome from England. He began sweeping ecclesiastical reforms in the Church of England. The mass was abolished, and ties severed with Rome; and the king appointed himself as the Head of the Church of England in 1534. The Crown was no more under the Romish yoke, as it was for the past almost 1,000 years. Most of England's reforming work were done during the reign of young Edward VI (who died prematurely) with the help of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. But things took a turn for the worse when Edward VI died and he was succeeded by Mary, the daughter of Henry VIII and his first Queen, Catherine of Aragon, notorious in history as Bloody Mary.



Mary stuck to the medieval church doctrines, and she had a profound hatred for the Protestants, and her opportunity had come to rid the kingdom of these pestilent 'heretics.' She wasted no time to do that. Cardinal Pole was invited to England, and Gardiner and Bonner were made Bishops. These infamous trio later played a pivotal role in the excruciating deaths of some of **the finest and godliest men England had ever seen but they did not die in vain as Tertullian had correctly said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."**



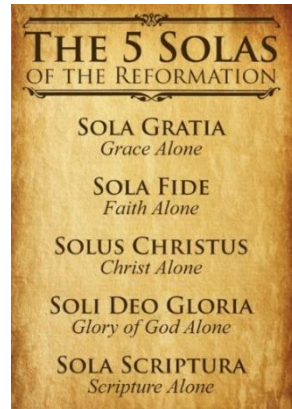
It is an established historical fact that during the four years of Queen Mary's reign from 1555-1558, about 284 Puritans were burnt at the stake for their Protestant conviction and practices. It is an accepted fact that these sufferers were not put to death for any offence against property or persons. They were not rebels tried

for sedition, insurrection or heinous criminal acts. **On the contrary, they were some of the holiest and most erudite Englishmen of the day and several of them were the most learned men at that time. They were treated ignominiously to gross injustice before and during the trials and were severely tried and burnt at the whims and fancies of the persecutors, without a just cause.**

Why Some Reformers were Executed

There is something that we must know and that is, the burning of the Marian martyrs was an act the perpetrators had never repudiated, apologised for or regretted of up to this present day. From these gruesome murders of the 15th century Spanish Inquisition to the infamous Massacre of St Bartholomew Day in 1572 of the French Huguenots, to the grotesque Irish massacre of 1641, and the ruthless persecution against the Waldenses of the 12th century, to the burning of the English Reformers in the 16th century; these had never been renounced or retracted.

Why were the Reformers burnt? Chiefly it can be summarised in one sentence, because of their biblical convictions which contradicted the defective doctrines of the established medieval church at that time. Because they believed what the Bible taught to be true concerning the Lord's Supper that it was a commemoration of the death of Christ and not a sacrifice; **because they stood alone on the authority, sufficiency and perspicuity of the Scriptures above that of man, church or synod; because they believe salvation is all of grace and faith alone through Jesus Christ alone and not of any work that men have done; and that all redeemed men are priests before God through Christ, and for these reasons they were liquidated for the Lord.**



These were the non-negotiable convictions of William Tyndale, John Rogers, Thomas Cramner, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Hooper, Thomas Bilney, John Bradford, John Philpot, Rowland Taylor and others as well; and space and time would not permit me to name every one of these glorified saints, who stood for their convictions without compromise for their God even at the point of death. We must not forget John Huss, the Bohemian Pre-Reformer who blazed the trail for the Reformers in the early 15th century. He was burned at the stake in Council of Constance in 1415 for his sound Protestant convictions based on the word of God.

In the Reformation of England, there were godly men who paid the ultimate price for their faith in the faithful Thomas Bilney who stood for the truth and was falsely tried and degraded and martyred in 1531 and John Rogers was executed in Smithfield in 1555 and Thomas Cranmer, the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury in 1556. This would be preceded by Latimer and Ridley, both faithful bishops of the Church of England who refused to deny their faith and defied the Queen Mary in their protestant conviction in 1555. I could go on, but it suffices us to know that they are many who did not bow to Baal as Elijah of old.

The godly and learned William Tyndale was burnt at the stake in Vilvoorde, Belgium for his work in the translation of the English Bible in 1536. He died

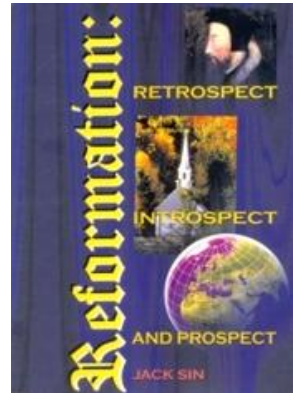
victoriously, having his prayer answered two years later, when the King commanded that every parish in England was to have an English Bible in 1538. Many died singing, praying, and submitting themselves to the will of God in the midst of great trial and testing. Their spirit lives on today even though they be dead, and we must not forget this. It will do us good to read Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the latest book, *By Their Blood*, by James Hefley to refresh our frail memories of what happened to these faithful soldiers of Christ. Far too often, the spirit of worldly lethargy and indifference has done great harm to the cause of truth, for truth is lost not just by wickedness, but by weakness too. **We need to be vigilant and to be inspired and challenged again by the illustrious lives and deaths of these glorious saints of old as we live in days of possible persecution and tribulation ad warned by the Word of God (Mt 24:1-14). Courage and godly discretion are desperately needed in difficult times.**

Conclusion

Heb 13:3 *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

We are living in momentous times as we witness the serious unprecedented war in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas and the Ukraine and Russian conflict into its second year. The ecclesiastical horizon on every side is dark and dangerous as the forces of darkness closes in. The steady progress of the forces of darkness reminds us of the soon return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The ecumenical movement, fanned by cultic and occultic and New Age influences, are on the ascendancy. The days are almost ripe for world dominion by the man of perdition as we approach the end of times. We have to set up our gospel banners and not be ashamed of it when the day comes.

If ever we meet the Lord in another world without shame, we must continue in the godly zeal for the truth which the Reformers did and stood for. There is a voice in the blood of martyrs, and it cries aloud from heaven even today. **Let us continue steadfastly in the most holy faith, preaching the truth, teaching the Word, confirming the saints, admonishing the believers, watching vigilantly, waiting for the soon coming of our Lord, evangelising the lost and defending the faith with godly zeal as the Lord enables us. The 21st century Reformation continues today in the true spirit of the Reformation heroes who were courageous to the end of their lives**



Jack Sin

(For deeper studies see Foxes Book of Martyrs by John Foxe, and By Their Blood, by James Hefley and Reformation Retrospect, Introspect and Prospect by Jack Sin)

A Special Trip to my Homeland as a Caregiver

First of all, I would like to thank God for protecting me and blessing me abundantly. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my employer and her sister for this wonderful opportunity to participate in this Yangon Mission Trip. They prepared me with everything and even helped me to get the OWIC (Overseas Worker Identity Card) issued in Yangon.



Despite the trials and tribulations in life, I am happy to be able to return to my country after working in Singapore for 5 years as well as a caregiver to a team member of SHBPC Yangon Mission Team.

Even though I did not get a chance to meet up with my family due to the political crisis and safety issues, the people of God whom I met on this trip warmed my heart very much. They treated me like a family member.

During this trip, I was like a tourist in my homeland while the other 3 members were more like the locals! Through my interaction with them and the brethren, I gained new experiences, knowledge in God's Word and in general besides picking up new perspectives of life.

I consider myself to be so very blessed that I must remember to be a blessing unto others. I am most thankful to God for allowing me to experience new grace every day.

ALL GLORY TO GOD.

AMEN.

Naw Phaw Thu Zar
18th October 2023

Dear Pastor Jack

Great messages! I am encouraged by your sharing the gospel from Church history. Praise God that your donations are big helps for us that we received them unexpectedly. We continually will pray for your family & Church.



Thank you very much for your love and financial support.

God Bless.

*Rev Timothy Khobal
Founding Principal
Hosanna Bible College, Yangon*



Dear Pastor,

We do praise God for His goodness shown to our family this time of your trip even as you visited us and shared the Word and provided a special dinner with KFC and gave many items of gifts that we enjoyed. You and your team are so precious to us and to God that we cannot never forget.

We are so grateful to you for your sacrificial love and care for our family, we recognise your firm commitments to the ministry for His kingdom's sake. Please convey our heartfelt thanks to everyone who took part in giving all those gifts even as some of them are not mentioned the names but known and counted by God.

Your lives and all you have sacrificed are such a great blessing to us.

God bless all for His glory!

Elder Habakkuk

Gilead Balm Home, Yangon





Pray for:
**India Mission Team to
 Bangalore & Hyderabad**
(31 Oct to 11 Nov):
*Pastor Jack, Angie,
 Dn Paul Tan,
 Eld Jeffrey,
 Sis Peng Ha*



**New Covenant BPC
 (Ps Babu)**



**CALM Church
 (Ps John Caleb)**

Memory Verse

Phil 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Lord's Day Sunday Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor Jack is ministering at Gospel Light BP Church this morning.
3. Bro Joseph Wee brings us God's Word this **Reformation Sunday** morning on "**The Cause & Case for a Zealous Reformation Spirit (Jude 1-13)**".
4. Next Sunday, Rev Tang Tuck Keong will preach on "**The Body of Christ & Fellowship (Heb 10:19-25)**", continuing the quarterly series on "*The Nature and Duties of the Body of Christ*".
5. Sunday School classes after the worship service are as follows:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith - Pastor
 - Special Class "What is the Gospel" - Joseph
6. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on Kingdoms, Covenants and Canon of the Old Testament and the Parables of Jesus. Join us for a time of profitable learning. [Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode:625551]
7. Pray for the **India Mission Team (Pastor, Angie, Dn Paul Tan, Eld Jeffrey, Sis Peng Ha)** as they minister at New Covenant BPCI (Ps Babu) and Calvary Reformed Church (Ps Lazarus) in **Bangalore** and CALM Church (Ps John Caleb) in **Hyderabad** from **31 Oct to 11 Nov 2023**.
8. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. [Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode:218178]
9. We need willing hands and hearts to assist in the weekly cleaning of the premises. Do let Dn Yue Kay if you are available to serve in this area.
10. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB Account 392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.
