WORLD HISTORY INSTITUTE

A Biblical Worldview To Win The Future

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The Ultimate Liberator: Release the Scriptures!

How many people know that nearly 500 years ago one of the most pivotal events and the greatest invention of the last millennium were united to create the modern world? For a thousand years, the primary liberating force in history, the Bible, was in Latin only. It was forbidden fruit to everyday people.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a German priest, posted his 95 theses to the door of his church in Wittenberg, Germany. On that day, Luther stood mostly alone, challenging the questionable abuses of the Catholic church at the time. He declared the preeminence of God's Word over "all" and emphasized the right of every individual to read the Bible for themselves. Johannes Gutenberg's newly invented movable type printing press made it possible for Luther's German translation of the Bible to be printed in the common language of the people for the first time in human history. Within a few decades, other Europeans caught the vision and translated the Bible into their own languages using the same technology. Never again would an elite group be able to lock up the eternal source of truth.

Luther's translation of the Bible and its clear teaching of the "priesthood of all believers" spawned a cultural revolution in Germany. Calvin's Geneva soon followed and became a learning juggernaut and the cradle of civil and religious liberty for the world. John Knox enlightened and trained an entire generation of Scots, bringing them from tribal ritualism to a powerful, biblical view of life and liberty - all within a twenty-year span! These early pioneers of the Reformation fought state tyranny, massive illiteracy, and poverty that rival any of our problems today. They left us a great legacy to replicate.

Noah Webster, the Founding Father of American Education, knew that the success of our entire society - and even the preaching of the Gospel - was dependent upon proper family education. He said, "The foundation of all free government and of all social order must be laid in families and in the discipline of youth...The education of youth, is an employment of more consequence than making laws and preaching the gospel, because it lays the foundation on which both law and gospel rest for success..."

After Darkness, Light by Pierre Antoine Labouchere, c.1852

It is a press, certainly, but a press from which shall flow in inexhaustible streams. Through it, God will spread His Word. A spring of truth shall flow from it: like a new star it shall scatter the darkness of ignorance, and cause a light heretofore unknown to shine amongst men. - Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the movable type printing press

MARTIN LUTHER'S LEGACY

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Martin Luther's 95 Theses by Ferdinand Pauwels, 1872

All of our Founders recognized the importance of a biblically founded moral education. America's first president, George Washington, said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Our second president, John Adams, said: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

George Washington, George Mason, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and most of our Founders obtained their basic education in the home, often supplemented by a tutor (usually a pastor). Dr. Lawrence Cremin, a leading colonial scholar, writes that Europe was amazed at the quality of education in the American wilderness, most of it home education. He states:

"At the time of the Declaration of Independence, the quality of education had enabled the colonies to achieve a degree of literacy from 70% to virtually 100%. This was not education restricted to the few. Modern scholarship reports the prevalence of schooling and its accessibility to all segments of the population."

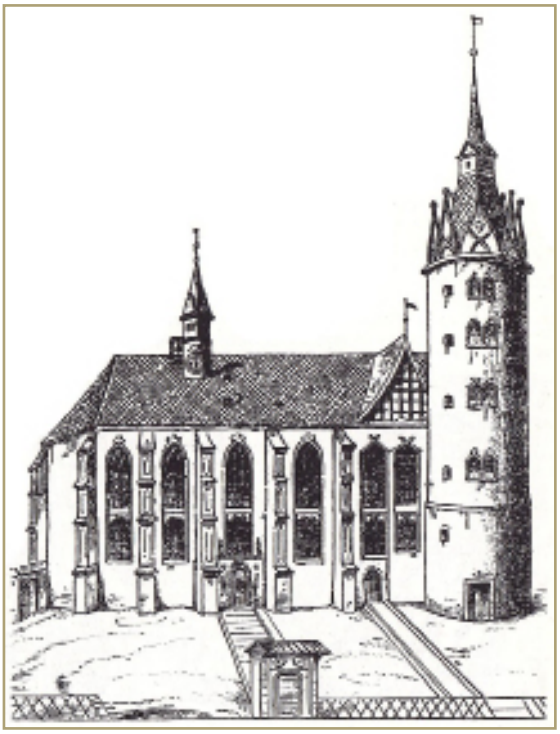
Moses Coit Tyler, historian of American literature, indicates the colonists' "familiarity with history... extensive legal training... lucid exposition of constitutional principles, showing, indeed, that somehow, out into the American wilderness had been carried the very accent of cosmopolitan thought and speech." When the American state papers arrived in Europe... they were found to contain "nearly every quality indicative of personal and national greatness."

America's legacy of freedom and education is founded firmly on the principles of the great Reformation. Our first settlers were heirs of the Reformers. They were deeply committed to teaching their children to read and think so they could understand the Scriptures for themselves and learn of God's word. The first schools in America were created to eliminate illiteracy and promote a knowledge of Scripture. They knew that illiteracy in Europe had allowed many civil abuses and tyranny to occur under the cover of a Christian banner.

OUR REFORMATIONAL ROOTS

The 1647 law setting up schools in Massachusetts certainly did not remove God from the curriculum. To the contrary, it was called the "Old Deluder Satan Law" which began: "It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of Scripture, as in former times...it is therefore ordered...(that) after the Lord hath increased [the settlement] to the number of fifty householders, (they) shall then forthwith appoint one within their town, to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read...and...to instruct youths, so they may be fitted for the university."

The first 108 universities founded in America were started primarily to train ministers in the Word of God - including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and William and Mary. It was the Bible, not the Renaissance, that taught "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."



This October 31, let's remember and thank God for Martin Luther and his fellow Reformers who laid their lives on the line for God's truth five centuries ago. May this fall be a time not only of remembering but also of repenting, as we lament that, since the late 19th century, Christians have largely turned over the education of our youth to secular progressives. They are being led away like sheep for the slaughter. They have forgotten the Reformation: the unleashing of the Bible for the first time in 1,000 years!

May the Lord awaken us as American believers to a new Reformation of our lives and culture to the liberating truths of God's Word. The strategy of reform and liberty always begins with God's priorities as seen in the Shema of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-10. It starts with sincere personal faith and moves to the training of our children and loving our neighbors. God then blesses such faith by bringing prosperity and freedom. That is what happened in the first Reformation. Luther's bold declarations challenge us even now to rise up and stand no matter the cost:

"I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place their child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt."

"The strength and glory of a land does not depend upon its wealth, its defenses, its great houses, its powerful armaments, but on the number of its gracious, serious, kind and wise citizens."

-Dr. Marshall Foster 1945 - 2022

Schlosskirche Wittenberg
Lucas Cranach the Elder, 16th century

The Reformation is the single strongest set of ideas that has made the modern world.
- Os Guinness (Political Freedom and Christian Freedom Podcast, July 10, 2018)

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