

What Did The Reformation Do For Me?

Church Association Tract 167

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Most men take an interest in politics, and in the changes that take place in our country. This shows they love their country and their freedom. You probably read what is going on in your weekly paper, but have you read about perhaps the greatest change England has ever seen, which took place 350 years ago?

The Reformation altered everything in our Country, and paved the way for further changes, and also taught us God's will.

It gave us :-

1. The Bible. All true Christians believe the Bible to be God's Word. By this we mean that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). But so late as 1500 there was no whole translation of it printed in English, and it was not till 1538 that it was sanctioned by the King, so that, though the Bishops and clergy tried hard to destroy it, we still possess it or can buy it for a few pence. What a great change that was! Before the Reformation men got their religion from their priests, and had to believe whatever they told them; but now you can see for yourselves what God teaches, and can know whether your clergyman preaches and practices what is written in God's Book. Remember, too, that every clergyman solemnly swears (*a*) that he believes all the Holy Scriptures, (*b*) that he will teach them to the people, and (*c*) that he will teach nothing as necessary to salvation but what may be proved by them. So you should search your Bible to make sure that you are taught that which is written there. When it was seen that the old Service Books were unscriptural, it was decided to bring out what was the second blessing given by the Reformation.

2. The Prayer Book. Before it was brought out in 1549 (not exactly as we now have it), the Service was all in Latin. There were prayers *to* the dead and *for* the dead, prayers to the Virgin Mary and to Angels; and men were taught to worship the "host," that is the wafer consecrated at the Holy Communion, as though it were changed into the very flesh and blood of Jesus Christ! "Seven" sacraments were taught, though Jesus Christ ordained only two—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The clergy were not allowed to marry. Men were taught that the blood of Jesus Christ did not so cleanse from all sin, but that after death all but the very holiest went for a time to a place of suffering called *Purgatory*. These things were not quite clearly abolished when the Prayer Book first came out, so in 1552 it was revised so that none of these false doctrines could even *seem* to be taught in it. If you look at *our* present Prayer Book, which was revised for the last time in 1662, you will find none of these false doctrines taught there. You will find, at the end, 39 *Articles*, and these are what our Church teaches, and *you* should see that your clergy teach only what these lay down, from Holy Scripture, as God's truth.

3. Now the *third* thing the Reformation gave us was "**Liberty of Conscience.**" We do not mean by this that a man may believe what he likes and yet be safe for Heaven, but that we have a perfect right, or rather a clear duty, to go to the Bible in order to believe what is written there. It is because our Church teaches this that she gives us that collect (2nd Advent): "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our *learning*, &c." And the one for St. Peter's Day: "Make, we beseech thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach, &c." Nothing is binding upon our conscience but what is taught in the Bible, for the Reformation bade us not shirk

the obligation of searching to see what the Scriptures taught, but to use “the candle of the Lord,” *i.e.* our reason and our conscience.

4. The *fourth* blessing the Reformation brought was **Prosperity**. Roman Catholic countries do not prosper like Protestant ones, for God has said, “Them that honour Me I will honour.” Look at England and Germany, and now look at Spain and Ireland, and see which are the prosperous pair.

But you need a word of warning, for in *our* Church a number of clergy are teaching *almost* every doctrine taught by the Church of Rome, and yet are being paid by the very Church that swept them all away at the Reformation. You have power to say you *will not* have it. At the polls you can vote against a man who will encourage these errors. You can show your children what the Bible and Prayer Book do teach, and can tell them all the Reformation has done for England. And last of all, you can join the “National Protestant League*,” which tries to preserve the purity of our Church, and the religions liberty of our nation.

(*The National Protestant League merged with the Church Association to form Church Society in 1950).