

# The Reformation was Almost Crushed 470 Years Ago

*500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation October 31<sup>st</sup>*

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This coming October 31<sup>st</sup> marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. On that day 500 years ago – October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517 – Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. All of Europe would be transformed.

What many people don't know, however, is that just 30 years later the Reformation was nearly extinguished and annihilated.

When Martin Luther died in 1546, Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, imposed his infamous *Augsburg Interim* in an attempt to smash the Protestant Reformation. The Interim brought all the Protestant lands back under Roman Catholic rule, belief, and practice.

Only one city defied – the outlawed Magdeburg.

The pastors of Magdeburg issued their *Confession and Defense of the Pastors and Other Ministers of the Church of Magdeburg* on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1550.

Five months after the Confession was issued, Charles V's forces marched on Magdeburg. The people of Magdeburg burned everything outside the city walls and closed the city gates. The siege of Magdeburg had begun.

After 13 months of battle, 4000 of Charles' men lay dead along with 468 Magdeburgers. And Charles withdrew. The Magdeburgers would be able to continue to practice their Christian faith.

If not for the interposition of the magistrates of Magdeburg, the Reformation may well have been just a blip on the radar screen of human history.

This historic Confession is now known as the Magdeburg Confession.

The Lord used the suffering and persecution of Christians in Magdeburg to forge what is known as the doctrine of the lesser magistrates.

The Magdeburg Confession was the first time the doctrine of the lesser magistrates was formalized. The lesser magistrates doctrine teaches that when

the higher-ranking civil authority makes unjust or immoral law, policy, or court opinion – the lesser or lower-ranking civil authority has both the right and the duty not to obey the higher authority, and if necessary to actively resist the superior authority.

The Confession was signed by the nine pastors of Magdeburg. The Confession is rich in Scripture and history which the pastors appealed to in establishing the doctrine. The pastors call the idea that men are to always obey the civil authorities “an invention of the devil” and declare that “divine laws necessarily trump human ones.”

They detail four levels of tyranny and a proper response to each.

The Confession impacted other of the Reformers, including John Knox, Theodore Beza, Philipp Mornay, and Christopher Goodman who all wrote further on the doctrine. The repercussions of the Magdeburg Confession were felt throughout Western Civilization all the way to the founding of America as a nation.

For over 460 years, the Magdeburg Confession has existed only in Latin and German. Now English-speaking people can read it for themselves. The first-ever English translation was published in 2012.

Though penned long ago, the Confession needs application even in our day. Tyranny has once again raised its ugly head. The interposition of the lesser-ranking civil authorities is necessary in our day. May they do right by Him.

You can learn more by going to the website [MagdeburgConfession.com](http://MagdeburgConfession.com).

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*You can obtain The Magdeburg Confession at Amazon.com or by going to the website [www.MagdeburgConfession.com](http://www.MagdeburgConfession.com) or [www.LesserMagistrate.com](http://www.LesserMagistrate.com).*