

# Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

*The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News*

*The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation (Part Three)*

## Rome and the Reformed Institutions

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### The Historic Protestant Institutions' Protest against Rome is Over

The 31st October 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

On this day in 1517, an obscure German monk named Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the castle door in Wittenberg, Germany – and sparked a spiritual, political and social revolution which shook the world. Within weeks the theses had been widely circulated throughout the country and then throughout Europe. Prophesied of in Scripture (Rev. 10),<sup>1</sup> the Reformation was an event which literally altered the course of history and changed the world.

It is not surprising that its 500th anniversary would be observed by Protestant institutions the world over. But the tragedy is that what should be commemorated as the time when, in the Lord's providence, a massive break was made with the diabolical Roman Papacy, is in fact being commemorated, by many of the historic Protestant institutions, as the time when that very break is being mended! When it should be being commemorated by reminding people of the false doctrines and abominable practices of the Papal system, of why the Reformation occurred, and of the great need to remain *forever separate* from that iniquitous, idolatrous and utterly antichristian religious system with its headquarters in Rome, many of the Protestant institutions are doing the very opposite. They are actually *lamenting* the break which occurred; calling it *a great tragedy*; wishing it had never happened; and doing all in their power to rush back under the wings of "Mother Rome" as fast as their spineless, biblically ignorant leaders will take them!

The remnant of the Lord's people, true Bible-believing Christians who live "without [outside] the camp" of professing Christendom, whether Papist or false Protestant (Heb. 13:13), separate not only from the Mother Harlot of Rome but from her "daughter" harlots as well (Rev. 17:5), are witnesses to *the most momentous religious reversal in all history*: the headlong rush, by the "Protestant" institutions which came into being in the sixteenth century and afterwards, to now *apologise* to Rome for ever breaking away, and to grovel at the feet of the Roman Antichrist, while they cast off every doctrinal and practical barrier standing between them and full and abject surrender to the religious system over which he presides in all his haughtiness and arrogance.

It is true, of course, that many of the blessings which were the fruit of the Reformation are still with us today, to a greater or lesser extent, in various parts of the world. But inasmuch as it gave birth to religious institutions which came to be known as Protestant, and insofar as these once *protested* against Rome, *the Reformation is now over*. As far as the historic Protestant religious institutions are concerned – whether Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, etc. – *Rome has won*.

This series of articles is not about the historical events of the sixteenth-century Reformation as such. Innumerable pieces will be written about it for the 500th anniversary, and entire books as well. They will focus on all the different facets of the mighty change which occurred in Europe five centuries ago. Certainly, the Reformation was one of the most important events in world history, and the more that it

is known and understood, the better. This series, however, is not about the *beginning* of the Reformation, or its progress; it is about the *end* of the Reformation, as far as the protest against Rome by the historic, once-Protestant institutions is concerned.

Part One in this series is entitled *The Reformation's Accomplishments and Errors, and the End of Its Protest*. Part Two is entitled *Rome and the Lutheran Institution*. We suggest that these should be read before the present article, as it will place the latter in a proper context, providing the reader with much information, by way of introduction to the present article.

## **When the *Papacy Itself* is Commemorating the Reformation, then We Know the Reformation's Protest is Over!**

The one religious institution which should want nothing whatsoever to do with Reformation commemorations and celebrations should be the Roman Catholic institution. After all, the Reformation struck the greatest blow to Papal power that it had ever experienced. The Papacy's vice-grip on Europe was broken in a number of countries. For the first time since the Papacy had assumed control of Europe centuries before, it experienced immense losses, politically and religiously.

No, the Roman Papacy should have no grounds for celebration in 2017.

*And yet...*

And yet, as unbelievable as it sounds, this very Roman Papacy, which condemned the Reformers as heretics, which has spent the past five centuries trying to destroy the "Protestant" institutions and stamp out Protestantism altogether – this very Roman Papacy *is* commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation alongside "Protestant" institutions!

Of course we know that its commemoration is designed solely to deceive. The Papacy is not *truly* commemorating it. But even so, it is astonishing that such a time has actually arrived, when the Roman Papacy could go through the motions of commemorating the Reformation, and the "Reformed" institutions could fall for it!

Who could ever have imagined that such a day would ever arrive? But it has. It beggars belief. Even Romanists are open-mouthed with astonishment at how times have changed.

What in the world is going on?

It would be more appropriate to ask: what, in the dark regions of hell, is going on? For *that* is where these astounding events were first planned, and what we are witnessing is simply the outworking, in history, of activity in Satan's underground.

## **Just How Far Have Things Gone? The Reformed Institutions Rush Romeward!**

It is not at all surprising that such religious institutions as Lutheranism and Anglicanism have been involved, for decades now, in ecumenical overtures, seeking by every possible means to find a way to eventually unite formally with the Papacy. These have never been soundly biblical anyway, but have always been nothing but modified "daughters" of the Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17:5). But when we see just how far *various other* Protestant institutions have gone Romeward, it becomes all too clear just how late in the day it really is.

An important point: many people wrongly equate the biblical doctrines of sovereign grace (man's total depravity; God's election of some; Christ's particular redemption of the elect; God's irresistible grace; and the final perseverance of the saints) with "Reformed" doctrine. Certainly, the historically Reformed institutions taught the doctrines of grace; but what is called "Reformed theology" is much more than these, and often much of it is very unscriptural. The truth of the doctrines of grace does not stand or fall with Reformed theology. These glorious doctrines are true because they are clearly stated in God's Word, and *not* because they were taught by the Reformers. Men call these doctrines

“Reformed”, or “Calvinism.” We simply call them biblical, for this is what they are.

## **Leaders of the *World Communion of Reformed Churches* Visit the Pope of Rome for Ecumenical Talks**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) was established in 2010 in the United States, with the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The WCRC unites about 225 “Protestant” churches in 100 countries, and thus represents something like *80 million* “Protestants”. I deliberately write the word “Protestant” in inverted commas, because these millions are Protestants in name only. A true, Bible-believing Protestant does *not* go to Rome to meet the Roman Antichrist for talks about eventual unity! But in June 2016, this is precisely what a WCRC delegation did. It visited Francis I in the Vatican, and held working meetings with Rome’s “Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity”.

Francis said to them: “Our meeting here today is one more step along the journey that marks the ecumenical movement, a blessed and hope-filled journey whereby we strive to live ever more fully in accord with the Lord’s prayer ‘that all may be one.’”<sup>2</sup>

Ah, there it is, as always: the reference to Jn. 17:21. The single verse which defines the ecumenical movement worldwide. And yet a verse which does not in any sense support this monstrous conglomeration that is forming, with the pope of Rome at its head. For when the Lord Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, *His prayer was answered*, just as all His prayers always were (Jn. 11:42)! All *true* Christians *are* one, and always will be. It is a spiritual unity, and exists between every truly regenerated and converted soul. The Lord was not praying for some structural, organisational, visible “unity” manhandled together by compromise, dialogue, give and take, and the rejection of biblical truth! He was not praying for “unity” between true Christians and Papists!

## **Reformed “Churches” Join Roman Catholics and Lutherans in Signing a Joint Declaration on Justification**

Then, in July 2017 – just a few months before the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation – the WCRC signed an ecumenical statement with the Roman Catholic and Lutheran institutions, entitled the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, for the purpose of “overcoming divisions” with Rome which had occurred from the time of the Reformation!

This agreement had originally been signed by the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran institutions back in 1999, on October 31 of that year – the date marked as the beginning of the Reformation – and signified “a common understanding of justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ”.<sup>3</sup> At the time it caused a huge stir, for it was such a crystal-clear rejection of the truth of justification by the Lutheran institution. Then in 2006, the Methodist institution jumped aboard as well.<sup>4</sup> And in July 2017, the WCRC representatives signed it too, to be followed, it was hoped by all involved, by the Anglican institution in October 2017.

When the WCRC representatives signed, it was “to pledge their agreement that Christians of all denominations have more in common than the initial question that separated them in the beginning: faith or works.”<sup>5</sup>

Error No. 1: that Roman Catholics are to be received as Christians. Error No. 2: that “Protestants” who sign such a wicked declaration are to be received as Christians. Error No. 3: that Roman Catholicism is a denomination. It is in fact an entirely false religion. Error No. 4: that Christians have more in common than whether justification is by faith or works. *True* Christians have nothing in common with Papists. Justification is, and always has been, by faith alone (Rom. 5:1), and not by works at all. Rome says it is by faith and works. This is not some side issue. This goes to the very heart of what the Gospel of Christ is.

Deliberately, it was signed by the WCRC delegates at a “church” in Wittenberg, Germany – the place

where Martin Luther had nailed his 95 Theses. This site was deliberately chosen for its deep symbolic significance. The message being sent was clear: what began in this place five centuries ago has now been overcome. And in fact, this was explicitly confirmed by the WCRC, which said in a press release: “The declaration stated that mutual condemnations pronounced by the two sides during the Reformation do not apply to their current teaching on justification.”<sup>6</sup>

Think about this. Let it sink in. The doctrine of justification is at the heart of the Gospel. The biblical doctrine, and the Papacy’s teaching about it, are worlds apart. And yet now these “Reformed churches” have come out and said that the “current teaching on justification” means that the condemnations issued by Protestants against Roman Catholicism for its false teaching on this essential doctrine of the faith no longer apply!

According to the agreement, Romanists and Protestants “are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.” Which institutions, then, have changed their doctrine? Not the Papacy, for sure – it continues to teach its heretical doctrine on justification just as it has always done, and as defined in the official documents of the Council of Trent of the sixteenth century. No, *Rome* has not changed; it is the “*Protestant*” institutions which have shifted their position! They have rejected what their very own confessions of faith have stated for centuries, just so that they can find common ground with Rome!

Elaborating further, the Joint Declaration said: “It [the agreement] does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnation.”<sup>7</sup>

Let us see how it is able to arrive at this consensus:

The Declaration defines justification as “the forgiveness of sins... liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom. 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom (Rom. 5:1ff.). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body... All this is from God alone, for Christ’s sake, by grace, through faith in ‘the gospel of God’s Son’ (Rom. 1:1-3).”

There is much in the above statement that is unscriptural; more than can be adequately dealt with in the present article. Just to take up one point, very briefly: the statement says justification “occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body”. This is a falsehood. The Holy Spirit is not received in baptism – this is Papist doctrine, not biblical doctrine!

Then follows yet another unscriptural statement: since those who are justified “fall into sin... they must constantly hear God’s promises anew, confess their sins (1 Jn. 1:9), participate in Christ’s body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God.” *Participate in Christ’s body and blood?* Although such language can be distorted so as to make it sound like it fits with what Scripture teaches, in truth this language is a neat, concise declaration of the Papist doctrine of the mass, which is a hellish lie! For Papists believe that they eat the very body of Christ, and drink His actual blood. If the “Reformed” who signed this document could accept a statement like this without proper clarification, it just demonstrates how far they have already fallen for Roman Catholic heresy.

When this document was signed by the general secretary of the WCRC, along with Roman Catholic, Lutheran World Federation and Methodist World Council representatives, the congregation at Wittenberg’s *Stadtkirche* (Town Church) broke into spontaneous applause.<sup>8</sup> They were thrilled! They thought this was the most wonderful thing. But it was an appalling thing, a shocking rejection of biblical truth and the embracing of heresy. Well might those wolves in sheep’s clothing applaud, for biblical truth is being eroded before their eyes, just as they desire. But no true Christian could ever rejoice at such a betrayal of the Gospel.

The Roman pope himself was ecstatic, of course, calling it “a new phase of friendship and co-operation in the service of justice and peace in our human family”, and “an eloquent sign of our

commitment to continue together, as brothers and sisters in Christ, on the path from conflict to communion, from division to reconciliation.”<sup>9</sup> What he did *not* say was that the friendship, communion and reconciliation would only last as long as the “Protestant” bodies remained subservient to Rome, and as long as they understood that this “communion” was only on Rome’s terms, not theirs, at all times.

Romish bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the “Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity”, who was part of the Romish delegation sent to Wittenberg for the ceremony, correctly said: “Catholics and most of the historical Protestant Churches now agree on the essence of justification, so we have a much stronger basis on which to build our spiritual and ecclesial relationship.”<sup>10</sup> Yes, they now agree, having reached a mutual understanding on the doctrine of justification; but this mutual understanding is of the false and Popish doctrine, not the true one. Rome has not budged one iota from its own heretical doctrinal position. It is the *Protestant* institutions which have changed, rejecting the biblical truth, rejecting five centuries of separation from the false “Church” of Rome, and embracing the devil’s own lie and the devil’s own religion.

This exulting bishop said: “we are saved by grace, but that requires that we show our changed relationship to God in good works.” But this is *not* Rome’s true teaching, and he therefore lied. Rome categorically teaches that *salvation itself* is by works – not that salvation is by grace and then *proved* by good works. A great many quotations could be given from Roman Catholic sources to prove this, but here are just a few, taken from the Council of Trent, which is still accepted 100% by the modern Roman Catholic institution as setting out official Romish doctrine. On the Popish sacraments, Trent declared: “If anyone saith that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation... and that without them, or without the desire thereof men obtain of God through faith alone the grace of justification... let him be anathema.”<sup>11</sup> And on the doctrine of justification, Trent declared (emphases added): “Wherefore, no one ought to flatter himself up with faith alone, fancying that by faith alone he is made an heir, and will obtain the inheritance”.<sup>12</sup> “And for this cause life eternal is to be proposed to those *working well* unto the end and hoping in God, both as a grace mercifully promised... and as a reward which is according to the promise of God Himself, *to be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits*... we must believe that nothing further is wanting to the justified to prevent their being accounted to have, *by those very works* which have been done in God, fully satisfied the divine law according to the state of this life, *and to have truly merited eternal life*”.<sup>13</sup> “If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified... let him be anathema.”<sup>14</sup> “If anyone saith that... the said justified, by the good works which he performs... does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life, and the attainment of that eternal life... let him be anathema.”<sup>15</sup>

And yet Farrell slipped up and contradicted himself, thereby revealing the lie which Rome is now promoting! For although he said (as quoted above), “we are saved by grace, but that requires that we show our changed relationship to God in good works”, he went on to say: “We now have a situation where on the fundamental question that separated us in the sixteenth century, which was Catholics insisted on good works as a sign of faith, as necessary for salvation, and Protestants said no, no, no, it’s only the grace of Christ. We have the same substantial understanding of what it is that happens when Christ saves the sinner. This is the whole point. So we have a very central point of our faith that we thought we disagreed on but now we realize that in the substance, we agree.”<sup>16</sup>

Note his words! On the one hand he said we are saved by grace, and that works simply demonstrate this (and then he sounds like a Bible Protestant); but on the other hand he said Roman Catholics insisted on works as *necessary to salvation!* He cannot have it both ways. It is one or the other. They are mutually exclusive. And it is the second quotation which expresses Papist doctrine, not the first. The first was to pull the wool over the Protestants’ eyes.

Now consider the rest of what he said, as quoted above. In this Popish bishop’s statement we see the subtlety of the serpent himself. He lied outright. In the first place, although the doctrine of justification was one of the fundamental questions separating Protestantism from Romanism, it was not the only one. There were many others. In the second place, Protestants and Papists did not merely

*think* they disagreed on justification, as Farrell said; they *knew* they did. And as shown by the quotations from the Council of Trent given above, the Papists anathematised all Protestants for teaching that justification is by grace through faith alone. This teaching of Trent is still the teaching of Rome today! Farrell, then, was lying through his teeth.

He also said: “As you can see there is a very important growth in communion about the substantial question of how Christ saves us. It’s very important. It means we can no longer think of each other as separate and distant.”<sup>17</sup> Another lie on his part – for it was only a few years ago, under Pope Benedict XVI, that a papal document declared Protestant churches could “not be considered true churches”!<sup>18</sup> Are they then separate, or are they not? Officially, they are. Officially, they are not even true churches as far as Rome is concerned. But for deceitful ecumenical purposes, this aspect of Popish teaching is usually swept under the rug, or played down, and they speak of “no longer being separate”. Lies on top of lies.

## **Conclusion: the Mainline Reformed Institutions’ Protest against Rome is Over**

In light of the above, as well as what we have covered in the previous articles in this series, it is not surprising in the least that Rome was convinced that, “By October [2017], all of the main historical Christian Churches of the West, who were involved in the divide [in the sixteenth century], will be in agreement on this issue.”<sup>19</sup> Apart from calling them “Christian Churches”, this is a true statement.

Yes indeed, the mainline “Reformed” institutions’ protest against Rome is over. The wayward daughters have returned to their Mother (Rev. 17:5).

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### ***ENDNOTES:***

1. *The Book of Revelation: Chapter 10* (five sermons, in MP3 and CD format), by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries. Available from our website.
2. *Rome Reports*, June 10, 2016. [www.romereports.com](http://www.romereports.com).
3. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.
4. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.
5. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.
6. *The Christian Post*, July 10, 2017. [www.christianpost.com](http://www.christianpost.com).
7. *The Christian Post*, July 10, 2017.
8. *The Christian Post*, July 10, 2017.
9. *Zenit.org*, July 15, 2017.
10. *The Christian Post*, July 10, 2017.
11. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Decree on the Sacraments, Canon IV. Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, Illinois, 1977.
12. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Decree on Justification, Chapter XI.

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13. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Decree on Justification, Chapter XVI.
  14. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, On Justification, Canon IX.
  15. *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, On Justification, Canon XXXII.
  16. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.
  17. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.
  18. *Rome Still Claims to be the One True Church*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries, 2007. Available from our website.
  19. *Rome Reports*, July 15, 2017.

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