

# Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

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

## *The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation (Part One): The Reformation's Accomplishments and Errors, and the End of Its Protest*

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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*.

## The Great Accomplishments of the Reformation

One cannot deny that, for all its faults (and these were of a very serious nature – see below), there were immense *blessings* which flowed from the Reformation; and to God belongs all the praise for what He accomplished for the good in those momentous times. After five centuries, all true Christians should raise their hearts and voices in worship and thankfulness for these blessings.

Above all others, we must put at the very top of the list of blessings the accurate translation of the Bible into many languages, providing the common man with the priceless treasure of God's own Word, which led to multitudes being converted to Christ. Nothing compares with this. O what mercy was shown to this sinful world by the Lord most High, in raising up men with the ability to translate the Holy Scriptures into so many languages!

But there were many other blessings as well. There were, in various quarters, many able and gifted preachers raised up to proclaim the true Gospel of Christ and expose the false "gospel" of Popery. There was the breaking of the Papacy's iron grip over much of Europe, with entire nations throwing off the Papal yoke, and the birth pangs of religious freedom in the western world – which, although it did not immediately come into being in many places where the Reformation had overturned the power of the Papacy, yet it gradually spread and took root as the years went by. There were also many political, social, scientific and technological blessings bestowed on many nations, once they overthrew the yoke of Rome. There was the paving of the way for great and wonderful progress in all kinds of fields, improving the lives of millions worldwide as the centuries went by.

If there had been no Protestant Reformation, the last five centuries would have been no different from the Dark Ages which preceded it. The Papacy would have reigned supreme, spiritual ignorance would have blanketed the world like a shroud, the Bible would have remained an unknown book to the masses, and all that is good in the progress made in science, technology, and so many other fields would never have occurred.

It was a religious and political earthquake, and the world has never been the same since.

Let us look at the effects of the Reformation in just one country, England. In the words of J.C. Ryle, a nineteenth-century Anglican bishop and a true Christian (at a time when there were at least *some* Anglican leaders who were truly converted, despite the unbiblical errors within Anglicanism):

"I do not pretend to endorse the character of all the agents by whom the English Reformation was carried out, or to approve of everything which they did.... All I do maintain is, that the whole result of the Protestant Reformation was an enormous gain to this country. And I confidently assert that England before the Reformation was as unlike England after the Reformation as black and white, darkness and light, night and day. Facts, stubborn facts, exist to prove the correctness of this assertion."<sup>2</sup>

"It would be *impossible to exaggerate* the difference there was between England in 1495 [i.e. prior to the Reformation] and the same England in 1555. In a religious and moral view, the country was turned upside down."

"Before the Reformation, one leading feature of English religion was *dense ignorance*. There was among all classes a conspicuous absence of all knowledge of true Christianity. A gross darkness overspread the land, a darkness that might be felt. Not one in a hundred could have told you as much about the gospel as we could now learn from any intelligent Sunday School child...

"Before the Reformation, another leading feature of English religion was *superstition of the lowest and most degrading description*. Of the extent to which this was carried few, I suspect, have the smallest idea.... The blind led the blind, and both fell into the ditch. In a word, the religion of our ancestors... was little better than an organised system of Virgin Mary worship, saint worship, image worship, relic worship, pilgrimages, almsgivings, formalism, ceremonialism, processions, prostrations, bowings, crossings, fastings, confessions, absolutions, masses, penances and blind obedience to the priests. It was a grand higgledy-piggledy of ignorance and idolatry, and service done to God by deputy.

"Before the Reformation another leading feature of English religion was *widespread unholiness and*

*immorality*. The lives of the clergy, as a general rule, were simply scandalous, and the moral tone of the laity was naturally at its lowest ebb.... The consequences of shutting up herds of men and women in the prime of life, in monasteries and nunneries, were such that I will not defile my readers' minds by dwelling upon them.

"I want English people to understand from what the Reformation delivered us. Before we make up our minds to give up Protestantism and receive back Popery and monasticism, let us thoroughly understand what was the state of England when Popery had its own way.... In short, unless a man can disprove the plain historical facts recorded in the pages of Fox, Fuller, Strype, Burnet, Soames, and Blunt, he must either admit that the pre-Reformation times were bad times, or be content to be regarded *as a lunatic!*"<sup>3</sup>

Yes, immense blessings flowed to the entire world from the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

## **The Great Errors of the Reformation**

However, there are some very important points, of a decidedly negative nature, to be made about the Reformation, which, alas, very few are prepared to make in our day. Our thankfulness to God for the many wonderful blessings which came to us as a result of the Reformation must not blind us to the sad but true fact that much of what occurred was decidedly unbiblical, and often quite terrible, indeed hideous. Many Protestant pastors and authors, in their desire to show what great things the Reformation accomplished, go way beyond biblical warrant and biblical bounds in praising the Reformation, for so much was *not* good, and actually harmful because it was so unbiblical.

We will briefly consider the great errors of the Reformation under two heads: that the Reformation was an unbiblical attempt at reforming the Roman Papacy; and that many of the Reformers taught nothing less than modified Papist heresy, including advocating the persecution of true Christians!

### ***The Reformation was an Unbiblical Attempt to Reform the Roman Papacy***

This will come as a surprise to many, but it is true nonetheless. The great problem with the Reformation was just that: it was an attempt at *reforming* the Roman Catholic system!

To "reform" something means to amend or improve it, by the change of form and structure and the removal of faults and abuses. Thus, by definition the Reformation was a movement marked by rejection or modification of some Roman Catholic doctrines and practices, and the establishment of Protestant institutions in the place of Roman Catholicism. But to attempt to amend or improve the Romish system is to accept that it can be improved; it is in fact to accept that the Romish system is already Christian, and just needs some improvements by changing its form and structure to some extent and removing its faults and abuses.

Yet this is shocking error, which has blighted much of Protestantism for five centuries!

The Reformers, for the most part, were one-time Roman Catholic priests who became disillusioned with many aspects of the Papal system and left it, *but who were nevertheless content with various other aspects of the Papal system*. Their intention was to reform, to "clean up", the Papal system, and they failed miserably in this objective. Why?

They failed because Roman Catholicism is a false and utterly heathenish religion through and through, just as much as any other heathen religion. The stark and inescapable reality is that the Romish system *was never* Christian, *is not* Christian, and *never will be* Christian. And being an utterly false religion, it *cannot* be reformed so as to bring it into line with the Gospel, and with what a true Christian church should be. False religion cannot be reformed, nor should the attempt even be made! False religion can never be reformed; it can and must only be utterly rejected and forsaken. One cannot take a false, heathenish, antichristian religion, and *reform* it so that it becomes a Christian church! It is a sheer impossibility.

As Christians, would we seek to reform the Hindu religion? Of course not. And why not? It is because Hinduism is an entirely false religion, and cannot be made Christian no matter how many “improvements” are made to it, or how much its structure is altered, or how many “faults” or “abuses” within it are removed. One does not say to the people of the Hindu religion, “Clean up your act; reform; change a few things; and we will accept you as Christian brethren.” Nor do Christians ever say such a thing to the people of the Muslim religion, the Buddhist religion, or any other. Yet what is the difference? Rome is *as heathen* as those other religions! Yes, it uses Christian terminology – but such terminology does not make it Christian. It just makes it even more devilishly deceptive than any other false religion on earth.

The true Christian Church is a spiritual organism. The only members of it are those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and converted to Jesus Christ. It is *not* merely a case of altering this false doctrine or that one, bringing this practice more in line with biblical teaching, and – hey presto! – you have created a Christian church out of a heathen religion! The new birth, that mighty work of the Holy Spirit, *transforms* men from being dead in trespasses and sins to being alive in Christ. Salvation is a mighty *transformation* from within, not a *reformation* from without.

The Lord Jesus taught plainly that we cannot use old bottles to hold the new wine of the Gospel (Matt. 9:16-17). Biblical Christianity is not merely a working-over of the corrupt, false religion of the Jews. And in precisely the same manner, biblical Christianity is not merely “reformed” Roman Catholicism! How often we read or hear Protestant ministers make such comments as, “The Church of Christ had become corrupt, until the Reformation removed the corruptions and abuses.” No, no, a thousand times no! Roman Catholicism was *never* the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Roman Catholicism was not merely “corrupt Christianity”. It was a false religion entirely!

The Reformation was, even at its best, an attempt to put new wine into old bottles (it was frequently not even this, for the wine was not always new). It could not be done in Jesus’ day with the false religion of the Jewish religious leaders, and it cannot be done with the false religion of Rome.

In this, therefore, the Reformers greatly erred, and it shows that they did not understand the true nature of the Papal system – *that it is not, and never has been, a Christian Church at all*. Nor, alas, did they understand the true nature of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Here, then, was the heart of the problem of the sixteenth-century Reformation: so much of it was a futile, foolish, and thoroughly unscriptural attempt to reform the Roman Catholic religion. And by failing to understand the true nature of Roman Catholicism – indeed, in the case of many of them, by failing to understand the true Gospel itself – the Reformers planted the seeds of the Reformation’s own destruction, eventually. For if the Roman Catholic system merely needed to be externally reformed, then conceivably, once it had arrived at a point where its “reforms” were acceptable to the “Protestants” of the time, it could then be embraced as being of the same faith, and its members could be accepted as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And this is precisely the situation in which the historic “Protestant” institutions find themselves today! Why is it that so many Protestants, throughout the past five centuries, made the same dreadful error as the Reformers in thinking that Romanism can be reformed? And why do they make it still? It is because they have fallen for the same terrible error that Romanism is to some extent Christian. Corrupt, yes – they will admit this much; full of false doctrine and practice, yes; but at its very core, they believe it is Christian. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Has Rome reformed and become biblical? No; and as we have seen, it never can. So then, what has really happened? What has really happened is not that Rome has changed for the better, but that the “Protestant” institutions have changed for the worse! In truth, neither side understands or embraces the biblical Gospel of Christ, and both sides emphasise external, mechanical rites and ceremonies as constituting the “Gospel”.

*It is also the reason why so much of Protestantism has been willing to embrace the ecumenical movement!* For if Romanism is believed to be Christian, albeit corrupted, then there is always hope for it. It may yet repent, and be changed for the better! Indeed, there have been Protestants who have

actually expressed such a view in their writings.

Alas, this is a lie from the pit. Romanism is a satanic religion, completely and utterly antichristian. It cannot be reformed, and moreover, *it is sinful even to try*.

### ***Many of the Reformers Taught Modified Papist Heresy, and the Persecution of True Christians***

Far too much undeserved praise has been lavished on many of the Reformers, including the most important leaders among them. They have been lauded as eminent examples of Christlikeness, when in truth, as becomes crystal clear when their lives and doctrines are *honestly* examined, they were all too often merely modified Papists; *reformed* Papists. And the religious institutions they founded naturally followed their erroneous teachings.

Before examining this aspect of the Reformation, it is very important to establish (for the benefit of many Christian readers who have been kept in the dark about it) that Protestantism did not begin with the Reformation. There were Bible-loving Protestants during all the centuries *before* the Reformation, although they were not known by that term then. They remained separate from the Roman Catholic institution and protested against its devilish doctrines and practices. Christ has always had His Church upon earth, just as He promised (Matt. 16:18), but it was not the Papacy! Christ's true Church remained separate from Rome, persecuted by it but witnessing against it. And when the Reformation occurred, these pre-Reformation Protestants (as we may call them) did not, for the most part, join the "Reformed" denominations which sprang into existence at that time. These Christians were certainly not Papists, but they were not Reformers either, and they were attacked by *both* sides as "heretics"! Yes, it was not just Papists who persecuted Bible-believing Christians in those times. Persecution came from the historic "Reformed" institutions as well.

This is an aspect of Church history which is hardly known to the majority of Protestants today, and has received comparatively little attention from Protestant historians. Far too many historians and others would rather brush it under the carpet.

Many Protestant historians leave one with the impression that prior to the Reformation, the "Church" of Rome was the Christian Church on earth. This is a terrible falsehood, and it plays right into the hands of Rome! For Rome loves to claim that before the Reformation there was only "one Church" (meaning itself). It is a lie. Roman Catholicism was *never* Christian. But all through history there were true churches of God, existing separately from the Papacy, being persecuted by it, and utterly rejecting its claim to be Christian.

These faithful churches kept the light of the true faith shining in those terrible Dark Ages. They are prophesied of in Revelation 11.<sup>4</sup> They were called "heretics" by both Papists *and* Reformers! And they were called various other names as well: Waldensians, Albigenses, Anabaptists, Donatists, and many others. Yet these were Protestants before the Reformation, and their history is even more thrilling than that of the Reformation itself – and very often far more to the glory of God. Not for them any "State Church" monstrosity, nor any lying and damnable heresy of baptismal regeneration, nor a merely modified doctrine of the mass, nor the ignoring of the need for sanctification, for personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, nor any persecuting spirit – all these errors were found within the "Reformed" institutions, to a greater or lesser degree; but the simple faith of the New Testament Church, of sheep living separate from goats, of worshipping God according to the Scriptures, of living separate from the world, and as harmless as doves.

Speaking personally, we identify with these Christian churches far more than we do with those which emerged during the Reformation. They were neither Papists nor Reformers, and they recognised in the Reformed "State-Churches" merely smaller versions of the Papist "State Church"; daughters of their Mother (Rev. 17:5). We follow in their steps. Although we rejoice to call ourselves Protestants, because we protest against the Papacy and all its errors, we do not trace our beginnings to the Protestant Reformation, but rather we are part of the protesting Church of Jesus Christ which has

existed upon earth since apostolic times, just as our Lord predicted it would (Matt. 16:18). We see in the teachings and practices of those faithful churches of pre-Reformation times the *true* spirit of New Testament Christianity. We see in them our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But knowing these things about the Reformers, let not the mistake be made of rejecting the doctrines of sovereign grace and other biblical truths just because the Reformers taught them! Some fall into this foolish error. We have had people say to us, “But how can you believe in predestination and election? The Reformers taught these things!” But these doctrines are not true because the Reformers taught them; they are true because they are *biblical*. The doctrines of grace (commonly but wrongly called “Calvinism”) are precious biblical truths. John Calvin and the others taught many true things. But we follow Christ – not Calvin, or Luther, or anyone else. *Bible Protestants have no popes – not even “Protestant” ones!*

Although many Protestants act as if it is, it is not an assault on biblical truth when we criticise the very unbiblical nature of much of the teaching of Luther, Calvin and other Reformers. At the time of the Reformation itself, many Christians did so, often vigorously – those who were not part of the false “State Churches” which were born at the Reformation, but part of that long line of churches through the centuries who had upheld the true faith when all the rest of Europe was Papist. These believers were more true to the Scriptures than many Protestants today, who do not seem to grasp the fact that if they had lived during the Reformation, and yet denied such heresies as baptismal regeneration, the alliance between State and “Church”, etc., they would have found themselves at the receiving end of strong verbal attacks from the Reformers – and sometimes far worse than mere verbal attacks! Baptists today, for example – who reject baptismal regeneration and hold to believers’ baptism, observe the Lord’s supper as an ordinance and not as some mystical “sacrament” not far removed from the mass, and hold firmly to the necessity for a regenerated church membership and reject any “State Church” concept – would have found themselves facing charges of heresy, which was punishable by death, in countries or city states where a Protestant “State Church” existed, no less than in any Papist state! And yet they laud the Reformers today, despite the great gulf that really exists between them.

Many years ago as a young Christian, when I was writing to a Roman Catholic priest, seeking to share the Gospel with him, I mentioned Luther; and in his reply to me he said that Luther was far closer to the Roman Catholic institution than many realised. This shocked me at the time, so I began to examine the lives, teachings, and practices of the Reformers; and it soon became very evident that that priest of Rome was, sadly, all too correct. As unpalatable as it is to many Protestants, the undeniable reality is that many of the Reformers were merely “reformed” Papists in much of their doctrine and practice.

Most of them proclaimed virtually the same errors (in a somewhat modified form) regarding baptismal regeneration;<sup>5</sup> they held to the same horrible “State Church” concept as Rome, meaning that to them the “Church” was co-extensive with the State and therefore every citizen was to be a member of the “Church” whether converted or not; they retained the same persecuting spirit as the Papists, insisting that all within each “Protestant” land should belong to the “Church” or be persecuted; failing to grasp the truth of Jn. 18:36, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, they believed that heresy should be punishable by the civil magistrate and even at times with the death penalty; etc., etc. Yes! As shocking as this may be to many modern-day Protestants who have seldom been taught the full truth about the Reformation, a great many of the leading Reformers taught (just like the Papists!) that those they deemed “heretics” should actually be *put to death* by the civil powers (for they believed the “Church” and the State were co-extensive and thus two arms of the same body)! Luther; Calvin; Melancthon; Zwingli; Beza; Bullinger; Bucer; etc. – *all*, to a man, taught this shocking and abominable doctrine – and a number of them saw to it that it was carried out in practice!<sup>6</sup>

For a time the pre-Reformation Protestants thought they had found in Luther and the other Reformers kindred spirits; but it quickly became evident to them that this was not in fact the case, and that the Reformers were far closer to Rome than to the biblical understanding of a true Christian church, the proper place and meaning of baptism and the Lord’s supper, and holiness of life. And so they separated from them, deeply disappointed at what they had seen. The Reformers “accepted the



proffered arm of the civil rulers”, which caused “groans of disillusionment”<sup>7</sup> from those faithful Christians who had remained separate from Rome as their fathers had done through the centuries. Why do we not hear widespread groans of disillusionment today? So few modern-day Protestants possess the same insight, informed by the Scriptures alone.

In a manifesto, these professing Christians summed it up very well when they stated: “In 1519 Martin Luther began to write against the frightful abominations of the Babylonian Harlot and to disclose all her wickedness.... yes, as with thunderclaps to bring it all down.... But as soon as he joined himself to the secular rule, seeking protection there against the cross... then it went with him as with a man who in mending an old kettle only makes the hole bigger, and he raised up a people altogether callous in sin.”<sup>8</sup>

We could examine the other false teachings of the Reformers, relating to baptism, the Lord’s supper, etc. But we will confine ourselves to just two, both of which stem from their false doctrine that the “Church” should be co-extensive with the State: their rejection of the obligation to have a holy Church, and their doctrine of the persecution of “heretics”.

Let us confine ourselves to what Luther said about the need for a holy Church. For any true Christian, this is perfectly obvious: the true Church of Christ is called to be holy; its members must be holy. But Luther said:<sup>9</sup>

“From the beginning of the Church heretics have maintained that the Church must be holy and without sin.” Heretics? These were not heretics, but true Christians!

“Because they saw that some in the Church were the servants of sin they denied forthwith that the Church was the Church, and organized sects.... This is the origin of the Donatists and the Cathars... and of the Anabaptists of our times.” To deny the name of “Church” to a congregation of goats is not heresy, but biblical!

“All these cry out in angry chorus that the true Church is not the Church because they see that sinners and godless folk are mixed in her and they have separated from her.” Those who separate from such a “Church” are 100% correct! Church membership is to be a regenerate church membership, demonstrated by holiness of life. And where this is not found, separation is commanded and is obligatory (e.g. 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rev. 18:4,5), for it is separation from a *false* “church”, not from the true one. True Bible-believing Protestants today would rightfully shun such a “church” as Luther described. Why, then, does Luther get such high praise today as a great Christian leader and wonderful Bible teacher?

“The greatest comfort of all is the knowledge that they [the “sinners and godless folk” whom Luther spoke of] do no harm but that we must allow the tares to be mixed in.” The reason for such unbiblical nonsense is that Luther, like almost all the Reformers, saw the Church as co-extensive with society. Whereas biblically, the Church is *separate* from the world. His reference to the tares just reveals his ignorance of the truth of Scripture on this point: in the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus plainly said, “The field [where the tares are sown] is the *world*” (Matt. 13:38) – not the Church. In the *world*, believers and unbelievers live together; but the Church is only for believers.

Luther also stated: “When they [those he termed Anabaptists] observe us [his Lutherans] and the offences with which Satan perverts our congregations then they deny that we are a Church.”<sup>10</sup> They were right! Yet Luther was prepared to overlook the satanic influence in his own congregations – an influence he admitted was there! Those sixteenth-century Christians opposed Lutheranism strongly because they saw it was not biblical. Yet who among Protestants today is willing to take the same stand?

In yet another place, Luther added still further to his error on this point. He said (emphases added): “Doctrine and life are to be distinguished, the one from the other. *With us conduct is as bad as it is with the papists.* We don’t oppose them on account of conduct. Hus and Wyclif, who made an issue of conduct, were not aware of this... but to treat of doctrine, that is to really come to grips with things.”<sup>11</sup> When will today’s Protestants take heed to this? Luther was the one teaching heresy here, not those he opposed! He emphasised doctrine to the virtual exclusion of holy conduct – yet the Bible emphasises both. They are two sides of the same coin. A man who has sound doctrine but unholy

conduct is not a Christian, any more than a man who appears holy in conduct but holds to doctrinal heresy. To actually state that essentially he did not care that Papists *or Lutherans* lived unholy lives! What outright false doctrine this is!

Now let us examine the Reformers' doctrine of the persecution of those they deemed to be "heretics".

Here is an example of what Luther wrote of those Christians who were outside his Reformation, those "Protestants from before the Reformation", who held Christian meetings in private homes and appointed their own men as their pastors without submitting to the Lutheran religious system (emphasis added): "[They] are in no case to be tolerated.... These are the thieves and murderers of whom Christ spoke in John 7, persons who invade another man's parish and who usurp another man's office, a matter not bidden them but rather forbidden. And a citizen is obliged... before he listens to [the "heretic"] or lets him teach, to inform his civil magistrate as well as the [Lutheran] pastor whose parishioner he is.... They must neither be tolerated nor listened to, *even though they seek to teach the pure Gospel*, yes, even if they are angelic and simon-pure Gabriels from heaven....Therefore let everyone ponder this, that if he wants to preach or teach let him exhibit the call or the commission that drives him to it or else let him keep his mouth shut. If he refuses this then let the magistrate consign the scamp into the hands of his proper master – whose name is *Meister Hans*"<sup>12</sup> – this being a euphemism for the *hangman*!

Here is another example: Luther put his name to a recommendation submitted to Philip of Hesse which stated: "princes and civil authorities have the power and the duty to abolish unlawful cults and to establish orthodox teaching and worship.... Princes must not only protect the goods and the physical being of their subjects but their most essential function is to promote the honour of God, to repress blasphemy and idolatry. That is why in the Old Testament the kings... put false prophets and idolaters to death. Such examples apply to the function of the princes."<sup>13</sup> Significant indeed that they could only point to Old Testament kings doing this, and not to anything in the New Testament! The doctrine of Luther and other Reformers on this matter was utterly contrary to that of the New Testament. Church discipline requires excommunication, that is, putting an unrepentant offender out of the church. It does *not* require the death penalty! Lutheranism was nothing but Popery at this point.

Now let us hear John Calvin, who most certainly believed "that it is the duty of the *regnum* to put heretics to death. He wrote: 'Whosoever shall now contend that it is unjust to put heretics and blasphemers to death will, knowingly or unknowingly, incur their very guilt. This is not laid down on human authority; it is God that speaks and prescribes it as a perpetual rule for the Church.'"<sup>14</sup> His active support for the murder of Servetus is well-known, and cannot be excused on any grounds whatsoever; he declared, "If ever he [Servetus] comes to the city and my authority then counts for aught, I will never let him get out of the city alive."<sup>15</sup> It is true that Servetus really was a heretic; but even so Calvin's teaching and conduct were utterly contrary to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament, and furthermore his teaching on the death penalty for heresy was something he believed was equally applicable to those called Anabaptists, etc. It is also to be noted that this terrible deed (the killing of Servetus for heresy) was fully endorsed and praised by other Reformers, such as Melancthon, who congratulated Calvin! And Calvin, assisted by Beza, continued to firmly defend the burning of heretics thereafter.

Modern-day Protestants put forward all kinds of excuses for Calvin's shocking doctrine and behaviour in this matter. But there were Protestants at that very time who were brave enough to oppose Calvin, and moreover to do so with very strong language! Pieter Bloccius of the Netherlands wrote: "They who recommend that heretics be put to death *show that they are not truly regenerate*, men who would be more blessed if they would seek out a hundred passages from the New Testament dealing with love. He who persecutes heretics seeks only to destroy.... now men who belch forth books advocating the killing of heretics want to pass for Christians; this you have not learned from Christ, who rebuked his vengeful disciples."<sup>16</sup> This man was prepared to go so far as to say that the Reformers who taught such a hideous doctrine as the burning to death of heretics were not even truly



regenerated! Yet today those men are upheld as the finest examples of Christians in all of Church history. What is wrong with this picture?

Calvin whined that many severely criticised him for his stance on heresy and its punishment in the light of the Servetus affair. He showed no repentance for it, but rather a very hardened heart. To a friend he wrote, “Dogs bark at me from all sides. I am being called a heretic. Whatever of slander they can invent is hurled at me. Actually the unfriendly ones and the critical in our own camp attack me even more fiercely than do they of the papal company. Surely I have not deserved this at the hand of the Church!”<sup>17</sup> Actually, he most certainly deserved it. The tragedy is that more voices were not raised against him. And as for him teaching heresy? In advocating the persecution of those deemed “heretics” by the Reformers, Calvin declared his own heresy on the matter.

Another quotation, this time from the Reformer Bucer: “It is the magistrates’ duty not to tolerate that anyone assails openly or riles the doctrine of the Gospel.... he is also not to be tolerated in a Christian republic who refuses to be taught the things pertaining to the Kingship of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> The absolute opposite of the truth of the New Testament! And it stems from the false belief of the “Church” being co-extensive with the State: a “Christian republic.”

And a statement from the Reformer, Theodore Beza: “After God had launched Christianity by unarmed apostles He afterward raised up kings by whose wisdom He intended to protect His Church.... They [the “heretics” in the Reformers’ eyes] do not like it that civil laws are enacted against their wickedness, saying that the apostles have asked no such thing of kings – but these men do not consider that those were different times and that all things agree with their own times.... When we invoke lawfully and divinely instituted protection against stubborn and incorrigible heretics we only do what the Word of God and the authority of the holy prophets assert.”<sup>19</sup> Different times they were indeed – and it was the apostolic times which were the purest, whereas the Reformation era was far from that purity!

To those who would seek to put a good spin on these things, we would ask, simply, that they imagine the following scenario. Imagine if the historic Protestant institutions still claimed this right today, and persecuted those who believe that a true church of God must only have a regenerate membership and be separate from the State. Imagine, for example, if a Lutheran or Reformed “Church” today demanded that, say, Baptists join them or be handed over to the civil powers for execution! What would a Christian today believe about a Protestant minister in a church down the road from his own, who sought to burn him alive? The answer is obvious. And yet these shocking facts have been brushed over, ignored, or whitewashed by countless Protestant historians, theologians and ministers, just because they were committed way back in the sixteenth century.

On those rare occasions when they can even be brought to acknowledge the truth about many of the Reformers, they will often excuse it all by saying, “Oh, but we must remember they were a product of their times.” This excuse is absolute nonsense! Paul, Peter and John were “products of their times” as well, but they did not permit those times to influence them in their doctrine and behaviour. *And*, furthermore, as pointed out above, there were Christians, and Christian churches, in Europe at that time, those “Protestants before the Reformation”, who had lived lives separate from the worldliness and the false religion all around them *for centuries*. They were “products of their times” as well, but they read the Scriptures and heard the voice of the Lord speaking in them, and they obeyed and gave glory to God by holy lives, lived in accordance with the Gospel of Christ, which teaches categorically that the Church is to be separate from the State, and *never* to persecute (Lk. 9:52-56). The Gospel, when received from the heart, brings about a radical change in everyone who embraces it. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). This verse of Scripture is sufficient in itself to answer any such excuse made for the false doctrines and wicked practices of many of the Reformers.<sup>20</sup> Many others could be given.

That, then, was a brief examination of the great accomplishments, and the great errors, of the Reformation.

We must now jump ahead to the present day, and to the situation as it is found in the year 2017: the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

## **The Situation Today: Many Protestants View the Reformation as a Tragedy, and “Unity” with Rome as All-Important**

Today, as far as the vast majority of “Protestant” denominations are concerned, *the Reformation, as a protest against Rome, is dead*. Five centuries after it began, and despite the great blessings which flowed to the world from it, it is all but over. Most so-called Protestant “churches” are Protestant in name only; nothing more. They have no true Gospel to preach, and thus see no reason to protest against the lies of the Papacy. The rush Romeward is very far advanced and seemingly unstoppable. Popery is again triumphantly marching across the world, absorbing Protestant denominations step by step into its fold, and silencing all that remains of any protest against it.

“The Reformation was a blow to the world aspirations of the Vatican. Since the Reformation, Rome has had one main task to complete: the destruction of the Protestant Reformation.”<sup>21</sup> “All the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church since [the Reformation] have been directed to the work of Counter-Reformation – to re-establish the political and social order of pre-Reformation times... The political and social order that resulted from the Reformation, both in Europe and America, is regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as pagan and anti-Christian.”<sup>22</sup>

Rome has been all too successful. The Jesuits have all but won. Today, a triumphant Papal system is smirkingly exulting in the end of Protestantism. “The Reformation is dead!” is the cry from Rome, and also from many “Protestant” institutions. Only a very small truly Protestant remnant remains, anywhere in the world.

## **How the Reformation’s Protest was Overcome**

When the Protestant Reformation broke out in the early sixteenth century and began to shake the Papacy to its foundations, that evil system realised that it had to begin fighting back immediately, and fighting hard. No quarter was to be given; ruthlessness was essential.

The Jesuit Order was established, in the sixteenth century, for the very purpose of fighting back and destroying Protestantism. The Jesuits have been at the very forefront of the assault on Protestantism ever since then. Many were the tactics adopted to utterly defeat the Reformation, and to bring all men back under the wings of “Holy Mother Church”, as the Papacy so arrogantly refers to itself. A major tactic was the long-term plan for Jesuit secret agents to infiltrate every Protestant institution, in the guise of Protestant ministers: to wheedle their way into Protestant pulpits as pastors; to take over Protestant seminaries as lecturers; and gradually, to turn the Protestant institutions away from anything biblical and towards Romanism. It would be subtle; it would be slow and gradual; but it would be relentless, and it *would* succeed. Failure was not an option.

A much larger work than the present article would be needed to trace how the Jesuits actually accomplished this within the various Protestant religious institutions during the past five centuries. We have covered aspects of this in other works, in particular *Satan’s Seat*<sup>23</sup> and *The Jesuits: the Secret Army of the Papacy*,<sup>24</sup> and we refer the reader to these books. But suffice it to say that they were eminently successful. And for evidence, all we have to do is look all around us: the massive Romeward Movement (otherwise known as the Ecumenical Movement); the utter rejection of whatever sound doctrine may have existed in the historic, once-Protestant denominations; the embracing of one heresy after another. And today we are witnessing the tragedy of seeing the once-Protestant institutions prostrating themselves at the feet of the pope of Rome, rejecting all that was good and wonderful which emerged from the Reformation. Their craven submission to the pope of Rome is all the evidence we need that the Jesuit Counter-Reformation has succeeded. After 500 years, it has succeeded.

Without a doubt, the Ecumenical Movement has been the greatest tool Rome has used, in modern times, to destroy the protest of the Reformation. It has successfully convinced the major “Protestant” denominations (for so long infiltrated by Jesuit agents) that it is a true Christian church, just like them, and that all “churches” should come together and unite under “Mother Rome”. Many decades of this kind of ecumenism, this utterly false movement towards a spurious and unbiblical “unity”, have paid off.

Even so-called “Evangelicals” (in name only; in reality they are “New Evangelicals”) have often been at the very forefront of the Ecumenical Movement! Billy Graham is the most prominent of all;<sup>25</sup> but he is by no means the only one, and what passes for “Protestantism” today is riddled with wolves in sheep’s clothing. Here are just two examples (hundreds could be given, nay thousands) of supposed “Evangelicals” who viewed the Reformation as a tragedy that should be relegated to history:

In 1977, at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress held in Nottingham, England, David Watson declared that the Reformation was “*one of the greatest tragedies that ever happened to the Church.*”<sup>26</sup> In saying such a thing, this man was declaring that the mediaeval Roman Catholic institution, the Papacy of the Dark Ages, was a true Church, and that it was an immense tragedy that the momentous events of the sixteenth century had ever occurred. With men like this in the pulpits of “Protestant” institutions, what hope was there? Once “Protestants” could make statements like this, Rome knew it had won.

Another prominent “Evangelical” figure (again in truth a “New Evangelical”) working for this satanic “unity” was the well-known J.I. Packer. He wrote: “Do I see renewal in the Roman Catholic Church? As a Protestant for whom major elements of official Catholicism represent Christianity skewed, I reply that I do. It is as these... streams of renewal continue to flow, and hopefully converge, that *the Catholic Church will give most to the rest of Christendom.*”<sup>27</sup> That a man claiming to be an “Evangelical” could even make such a statement truly reveals the shocking state of things in our times.

Another major tool to destroy Protestantism has been the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. This has been, and is, a powerful uniting force for “Protestants” and Papists. How so? Well, when millions on both sides claim to have experienced the “baptism in the Spirit”, accompanied with what they wrongly claim to be “speaking in tongues” and “prophesying”; when both sides downplay the Bible and exalt “signs and wonders” and “new revelations” in its place; when the so-called “Protestant” side openly mocks doctrine and exalts “love” and “unity”, and the Papist side smiles and nods in approval even while constantly emphasising its own doctrine and stating it will never abandon it; then it is very plain how the Charismatic Movement is a *bridge to Rome* for the multiplied millions of Pentecostal/Charismatic “Protestants”.

In New Orleans, USA, in 1987, the Charismatics declared: “We knocked the giant (of Protestantism) down in 1977 in Notre Dame; we must now chop off his head in 1987 so that disunity among Roman Catholics and the denominations will never appear again.”<sup>28</sup> Charismatics love to claim that they possess the Holy Spirit in a special way, and that He gives them revelations, tongues, prophecies and visions. There are many reasons which could be given to show that this is a lie, but in the context of the rush Romeward, here is the only one which needs to be mentioned now: God the Holy Spirit never leads His true people further into error (Jn. 16:13)! And yet this is precisely where the Charismatic Movement has gone: ever deeper into greater and greater error, including into increasing “union” with the false religion of Rome. Truly, the Holy Spirit is *not* the spirit at work within it. It is influenced by lying spirits, and especially by the spirit of Antichrist (1 Jn. 4:3).

Still another tool to destroy Protestantism has been Reconstructionism. Just like their Papal brothers, Reconstructionists believe the world was better off before the Reformation, when Europe was united under a single “Church”: the “Catholic Church”. They long to see those days return. To this end, Reconstructionists, “Kingdom Now” and “Dominion Theology” theologians proclaim doctrines which come straight out of Jesuitism and mediaeval Roman Catholic theology, but with a “Protestant” twist. These “Protestants” are more than halfway into the Papist camp already, and are leading multitudes of others along the same path.

The above has been a very brief examination indeed. Much more could be said about how the Reformation, as far as its protest against Rome is concerned, has been destroyed.

## **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.

God willing, this will be the subject of the second article in this series.

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## ENDNOTES:

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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. *What do We Owe to the Reformation?* by J.C. Ryle. Reprinted by the Protestant Truth Society, London.
3. J.C. Ryle, as quoted in *Papal Theonomy and America Today*, by Ronald Cooke, pg.32. Published by Ronald Cooke, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, 1996.
4. *The Book of Revelation: Chapter 11* (fourteen sermons, in MP3 and CD format), by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries. Available from our website.
5. See *Born Again Through Baptism? Lutheran Teaching Compared with the Bible* (tract), by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries. Available from our website.
6. See, for example, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, and *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, both by Leonard Verduin. Published by the Christian Hymnary Publishers, Sarasota, Florida, 1991 and 1992 respectively.
7. *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 36.
8. *Die Aelteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*, edited by A.J.F. Zieglschmidt, pg. 42, Ithaca, New York, 1943; as quoted in *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 37.
9. *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 107.
10. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 168.
11. Luther's *Werke*, St. Louis Edition, Vol. I, pg. 296; as quoted in *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 108.
12. Luther's *Werke*, St. Louis Edition, Vol. V, cols. 720ff.; as quoted in *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 108.
13. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 195.
14. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 206.
15. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 207.
16. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 209.
17. *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, pg. 209.
18. *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 77.
19. *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, pg. 83.
20. Only very occasionally do we read of Protestant historians facing up honestly to these unpalatable facts about many of the Reformers. One such historian was Leonard Verduin, author of *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* and *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*.
21. *Papal Theonomy and America Today*, pg.32.
22. *Behind the Dictators*, by L.H. Lehmann, pg. 20. Agora Publishing Company, New York, 1942.
23. *Satan's Seat*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries, Fifth Edition 2013. Available from our website.
24. *The Jesuits: the Secret Army of the Papacy*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries, 2012. Available from our website.
25. *Billy Graham: Serving the Papal Antichrist* (lectures available in MP3 and CD format), by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries. Available from our website.
26. *Ecumenism*, by Michael de Semlyen, pg. 6. Dorchester House, England, 1990.
27. *Papal Theonomy and America Today*, pg.34.
28. *Rome and the Bible-Believer*, by Alan Cairns, pg. 2, 1987. Quoted in *Papal Theonomy and America Today*, pgs. 33-34.

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