

# **The Protestant Revolution:** **Analyzing the Impact of History's Greatest** **Revival Since Paul**



**The purpose of this project is to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the events known to history as the Protestant Reformation. All the notes in this booklet were presented at Grace Life Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI the weekend of October 20-22, 2017. Unless otherwise noted all scripture, references are taken from the King James Bible.**

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## Lesson 1

### Laying the Egg for Luther to Hatch: Understanding the Precursors to Luther's Revolt

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#### The Beliefs and Activities of John Wycliffe & The Lollards

- John Wycliffe was born in the 1320's in England and is often referred to as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." His followers were called Lollards from a Dutch word meaning mumblers. (Van Neste and Garrett, 12)
- Wycliffe's views included the following:
  - He taught salvation by grace through faith. (Miller, 460)
  - He denied the irresponsible authority of Popes and Kings. (Broadbent, 111)
  - He denied transubstantiation. (Broadbent, 111)
  - He translated the scriptures into English. (Broadbent, 111)
  - He refused to appear before the Pope when summoned. (Broadbent, 113)
  - In short, Wycliffe was a Protestant before the name existed.
- Wycliffe became the leader of those favoring reform of the church.
  - "Although the people were then all Roman Catholics, there were many who favoured reform; these were called Wycliffites," (Miller, 462)
  - "Every second man you meet in the way," said a bitter adversary, "is a Wycliffite." (Miller, 466)
- "About the year 1366 a controversy had arisen between Urban V. and Edward m. in consequence of the renewed demand of an annual tribute of one thousand marks, which King John had bound himself to pay to the Roman See, as an acknowledgment of the feudal superiority of the Roman pontiff over the kingdoms of England and Ireland. The payment of this ignominious tribute had never been regular, but it had been entirely discontinued for thirty-three years. Urban demanded payment in full of the arrears. Edward refused, declaring himself resolved to hold his kingdom in freedom and independence. The parliament and the people sympathized with the king. The arrogance of the pope had created great excitement in England; both houses of parliament were consulted; the settlement of the question interested all classes, even all Christendom. Wycliffe, who was already one of the king's chaplains, was appointed to answer the papal arguments; and so effectually did he prove that canon, or papal law, has no force when it is opposed to the word of God, that the papacy from that day to this ceased to lay claim to the sovereignty of England. The arguments of Wycliffe were used by the lords in parliament, who unanimously resolved to maintain the independence of the crown against the pretensions of Rome." (Miller, 461)

- “Percy demanded a seat for Wycliffe. Courtenay now gave way to his anger, and exclaimed in a loud voice, "He must not sit down, criminals stand before their judges." (Miller, 462)
- “Nineteen articles of accusation against him were submitted to Gregory XI. In answer to these accusations, five bulls were despatched to England, three to the archbishop, one to the king, and one to Oxford; commanding inquiry into the erroneous doctrines of Wycliffe. The opinions charged against him, were not against the creed of the church, but against the power of the clergy.” (Miller, 463)
- “Wycliffe was cited a second time to appear before the same papal delegates [ ] But scarcely had the proceedings been opened, when a message was received from the young king's mother — the widow of the Black Prince — prohibiting them from proceeding to any definite sentence. ‘The bishops,’ says Walsingham the papal advocate, ‘who had professed themselves determined to do their duty in spite of threats or promises, and even at the hazard of their lives, were as reeds shaken by the wind, and became so intimidated during the examination of the apostate, that their speeches were as soft as oil, to the public loss of their dignity, and the damage of the whole church. [ ] Thus this false teacher, this complete hypocrite, evaded the hand of justice, and could no more be called before the same prelates, because their commission expired by the death of the pope Gregory XI.’” (Miller, 463-464)
- “No person has expressed a juster sense of the influence of Wycliffe's Biblical labours than Dr. Lingard, the Roman Catholic historian. Thus he writes, ‘He made a new translation, multiplied copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his poor priests recommended it to the perusal of his hearers. In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men were flattered with the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines insensibly acquired partizans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated; and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution, which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe.’” (Miller, 466)
- “Down to the beginning of the fifteenth century there had been no statute law in England for the burning of heretics. In all other parts of Christendom the magistrate, as under the old Roman imperial law, had obeyed the mandate of the bishops. England stood alone: without a legal warrant no officer would have executed the ecclesiastical criminal. ‘In all other countries,’ says Milman, ‘the secular arm received the delinquent against the law of the church. The judgment was passed in the ecclesiastical court or that of the Inquisition; but the church, with a kind of evasion which it is difficult to clear from hypocrisy, would not be stained with blood. The clergy commanded, and that under the most awful threats, the fire to be lighted and the victim tied to the stake by others, and acquitted themselves of the cruelty of burning their fellow-creatures.’ But the end of this honourable distinction for England was come. The obsequious Henry, to gratify the archbishop, issued a royal edict, ordering every incorrigible heretic to be burnt alive. The lying tongues of the priests and friars had so industriously circulated reports of the wild and revolutionary purposes of the Lollards, that Parliament became alarmed and sanctioned the King's decree. In the year 1400 "the burning of heretics" became a statute law in England. ‘On a high place in public, before the face of the people, the incorrigible heretic is to be burnt alive.’” (Miller, 468)

- In 1382, Wycliffe finished his translation of the Vulgate into Middle English. In 1384, Wycliffe died of natural causes. Thus, Wycliffe died before English law was changed to authorize the burning of heretics. In 1428, upon the direction of Rome, Wycliffe's bones were disinterred, burned and thrown into the Swift River.
- The martyrdom of William Sawtre for denying transubstantiation was followed by thirty-nine Lollard leaders being executed. Then a law was passed that whoever read the Scriptures in English should forfeit land, chattels, goods and life, and be condemned as a heretic to God, an enemy to the crown, and a traitor to the kingdom; that he should not have any benefit of sanctuary; and that, if he continued obstinate, or relapsed after being pardoned, he should first be hanged for treason against the king, and then burned for heresy against God. (Broadbent, 114-15)
- “Encouraged by the royal countenance [Henry IV], the clergy drew up the well-known Constitutions of Arundel, which forbade the reading of the Bible and the books of Wycliffe, asserting the pope to be ‘not of pure man, but of true God, here on the earth.’”(Miller, 469)
- “In the year 1395 the followers of Wycliffe boldly petitioned Parliament to ‘abolish celibacy, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, offerings to images, auricular confession,’ and many other popish abuses, and then nailed their petition to the gates of St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey.” (Miller, 467)
- The Lollards’ petition is referred to as The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards. (Van Neste and Garrett, 11)
  - The Twelve Conclusions are doctrinally consistent with later 16<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant thought.
  - The Twelve Conclusions specifically call for the REFORMATION of the Holy Church of England. (Twelve Conclusions, Preface)
  - The Lollard movement has come to be known as the “Premature Reformation.” (Van Neste and Garrett, 12)
  - Ecc. 1:9—The thing that hath been, it [is that] which shall be; and that which is done [is] that which shall be done: and [there is] no new [thing] under the sun.
    - There is nothing new under the sun. There have always been people that believed the truth.
  - Ecc. 9:15—Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.
    - The wise saints of time past are mostly forgotten. Just because their footprints cannot currently be located in history does not mean that they were not there.

- “While it may be difficult to trace the medieval origins of some Protestant beliefs, the concept that the pope is antichrist is so thoroughly pervasive in Lollard writing that its influence upon later Reformation polemic is hard to deny.” (Van Neste and Garrett, 21)
- In response to papal claims of authority based on their supposed succession to Peter, the Lollards frequently cited Paul’s rebuke of Peter in Galatians. In fact, the Lollards held that Paul’s apostolic authority exceeded that of Peter. (Van Neste and Garrett, 22-23)
- “The Bishop of Lodi in the council of Constance, A.D. 1416 — a year before the martyrdom of Cobham, and thirty-six years after the translation of the Bible — declared that the heresies of Wycliffe and Huss were spread over England, France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, and through all Bohemia. Thus a bitter enemy is unconsciously, or unintentionally, the witness of the influence and the inextinguishable vitality of the good seed of the word of God.” (Miller, 473)

### **The Beliefs and Activities of Jon Huss and the Bohemian Brethren**

- Jerome of Prague heard Wycliffe in Oxford and carried his teaching back home to Bohemia, in what is now the Czech Republic. As a result of this, a theological doctor and preacher in Prague named Jan Huss became a follower of this doctrine. Huss’s spiritual descendants are known as the Bohemian Brethren. (Broadbent, 115)
- The Pope, through the Archbishop of Prague, excommunicated Huss and had Wycliff’s writings publicly burned, but the king of Bohemia, the nobility, the University, and the majority of the people supported Huss and his teaching. (Broadbent, 116; Miller, 477)
- The Council of Constance opened in 1414 and lasted for 3.5 years. It drew together an extraordinary assemblage of ecclesiastical dignitaries and of the princes and rulers of the various states, besides a vast throng of people of all kinds. (Broadbent, 116)
- “Another object of the Council was to combat the teachings associated with the names of Wycliff and Huss. Huss was invited to be present and the Emperor Sigismund gave him a safe conduct, assuring him of security from molestation if he would come. Relying on the Emperor’s word, he came to Constance in time for the opening of the General Council, willing to use the opportunity of expounding the doctrines of Scripture before such a company. But, in spite of the Imperial promise, he was seized and cast into a foul dungeon on an island in the lake. To justify this action the Council promulgated a solemn decree (1415), claimed as a decision given by the Holy Spirit and infallible, forever binding, that the Church is not bound to keep faith with a heretic.” (Broadbent, 116)
- “He arrived in Constance earlier than the emperor, and was immediately brought before the pope, John XXIII., for examination. His doctrines were well known, a long list of charges was brought against him; and as he refused to retract them, he was thrown into prison on a charge of heresy, notwithstanding the safe-conduct of the emperor. And in order to justify their flagrant breach of honour and pacify Sigismund, they passed a decree that no faith ought to be kept with a heretic. Loud complaints were sent to the emperor from Bohemia. He received the first intimation of the imprisonment of Huss with indignation, and threatened to break open the prison. But on reaching Constance he was plied with arguments from the canon law, urging that the civil power did not extend

- to the protection of a heretic, and the treacherous priests absolved him from all responsibility.” (Miller, 478)
- “Huss was also charged with being ‘infected with the leprosy of the Waldenses.’ Under these two general heads, Wycliffism and Waldensianism, a vast number of special charges, grossly offensive to the hierarchy, were contained.” (Miller, 479)
  - The accusation of being “infected with the leprosy of the Waldenses” and of having preached Wycliffite doctrines shows that the unity of the truth held in these various circles was recognized by their enemies. (Broadbent, 116-17)
  - “He was stripped, one by one, of his sacred vestments, the cup was taken from his hand, the tonsure was obliterated by the scissors, a paper crown, daubed over with demons, was placed on his head, and with the superscription, Heresiarch. The prelates then piously devoted his soul to the regions of eternal woe. "We devote thy soul to the infernal demons," said the prelates. [ ] In the most awfully solemn mockery and daring hypocrisy, the false church thought to rid itself of the stain of blood by declaring Huss to be cut off from the ecclesiastical body, released from the grasp of the church, and consigned as a layman to the vengeance of the secular arm. [ ] On reaching the place of execution, he kneeled down, prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies, and commended his soul into the hands of Christ. (Miller, 482)
  - “The heresy of Huss and Jerome has never been clearly defined. They seem to have retained to the last their early impressions of transubstantiation, the worship of the saints and the Virgin Mary.” (Miller, 485)
  - “A bull was issued at the Emperor's request, summoning the faithful to rise for the extirpation of Wycliffism, Hussism, and other heresies, and promising full indulgences to those who should take part in the enterprise either personally or by substitute.” (Miller, 487)
    - Est. 3:13—And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, [even] upon the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and [to take] the spoil of them for a prey.
  - Huss’s spiritual descendants, the Bohemian Brethren, experienced periods of toleration and outright persecution and sometimes were forced to hide in the mountains and forests. (Broadbent, 121)
  - In the 1460’s, they selected one of their brethren by lot to send the Waldensian bishop Stephen in Austria for ordination. “They did not consider this ordination as essential, but desirable; they thought that the Roman Church at the time of Sylvester had lost any Apostolic succession there might ever have been, but that if any still existed it must have been among Cathars, Paulicians and Waldenses that it had been preserved.” (Broadbent, 122)
    - This is a complete rejection of the authority of the Roman Church.

- The Bohemian Brethren expressly did not condemn the elect among the Romans. (Broadbent, 122)
- “About the year 1470, they published in the Bohemian language a translation of the whole Bible. This is the second translation upon record of the Bible into one of the European tongues.” (Miller, 490)
- The works produced by the brethren at this time and their use of the printing press far exceeded what was done by the much more numerous Roman Catholic party. Hymn-writing and music flourished among them. (Broadbent, 123)
- “Luther, for his part, was doubtful about the Brethren, but in 1520 he wrote to Spalatin: ‘Thus far I have, although unconsciously, proclaimed all that Huss preached and maintained; Johann Staupitz did unconsciously maintain the same—in a word, we are all Hussites, without having known it; Paul and Augustine themselves are Hussites—in the full sense of the word! Behold the horrible misery which came over us because we did not accept the Bohemian doctor for our leader....’” (Broadbent, 123-24)
  - Luther was initially doubtful about the Bohemian Brethren. He had been taught and had accepted the slanders told about them. The vast majority of organized religion always views Bible believers in this way.
  - Luther’s doctrine is not new with Luther. He was preaching what Bible believers had always believed.

### **Setting the Stage for Luther’s Revolution**

- Three developments set the stage for Luther’s Revolution: 1) the Renaissance, 2) the Printing Press, and 3) Erasmus and the *Textus Receptus*.

#### *The Renaissance*

- **“Renaissance** French “Rebirth” Late medieval cultural movement in Europe. The Renaissance brought renewed interest in Classical learning and values to Italy and subsequently the rest of western and central Europe from the late 13th to the early 17th century. Attracted by the values and rhetorical eloquence of ancient writers, figures such as PETRARCH, GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, and LORENZO VALLA rejected medieval SCHOLASTICISM in favour of human-centred forms of philosophy and literature. In northern Europe, DESIDERIUS ERASMUS cultivated Christian HUMANISM, and writers such as FRANÇOIS RABELAIS and WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE produced works that emphasized the intricacies of human character. Inspired by ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance painters and sculptors took the visible world for their subject and practiced according to mathematical principles of balance, harmony, and perspective. The new aesthetic found expression in the works of Italian artists such as LEONARDO DA VINCI, SANDRO BOTTICELLI, RAPHAEL, TITIAN, and MICHELANGELO, and the Italian city of Florence became the centre of Renaissance art.” (Britannica, 1619)
  - The Renaissance was a rejection of the then prevailing view of scholasticism and a reexamination of what was accepted truth.

- The Renaissance was a return to the ancient writings. “Its basic method can be summed up in the Latin slogan *ad fontes*, which can be paraphrased as ‘back to the sources!’” (McGrath, 30)
- The Renaissance offered liberty of thought across a broad range of disciplines in that it ranged from Erasmus’s Christian Humanism to Shakespeare’s writings to Italian art. (Britannica, 1619)

### *The Printing Press*

- Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press around 1440.
- “Recent scholarship has stressed the critical role of the new technology of reusable type in the dissemination of new ideas across Europe, whether those ideas were Protestant or humanist. Without the advent of printing, there would have been no Reformation, and there might well have been no Protestantism either.” (McGrath, 25)

### *Erasmus and the Textus Receptus*

- Near the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Jerome produced the Vulgate, a translation of the scriptures into Latin, that was widely viewed as authoritative for the next millennium. (Miller, 459)
- “Down to the days of Reuchlin and Erasmus the Vulgate was the received text. Greek and Hebrew were almost unknown in the West.” (Miller, 459; Miller, 499)
  - Thus, access to the Received Text was extremely limited.
- “Erasmus bent all his great mental powers, and all his laborious studies, to the preparation of a critical edition of the Greek Testament. This work appeared at Basle in 1516, one year before the Reformation, accompanied by a Latin translation, in which he corrected the errors of the Vulgate. This was daring work in those days. There was a great outcry from many quarters against this dangerous novelty. [ ] The Vulgate could no longer be of absolute exclusive authority; the Greek was its superior not only in antiquity, but yet more as the original text.” (Miller, 500)
  - Just as the secular thinkers returned to the ancient writings, Erasmus compiled the Greek New Testament.
  - This is a return not simply to the Greek language in which the New Testament was written but also to the text that the early church would have recognized as authoritative, the *Textus Receptus*<sup>1</sup>.
- “[E]ducated lay men and women, whom Erasmus regarded as the church’s most important resource. The future of the church, Erasmus argued, rested on the emergence of a biblically literate laity.” (McGrath, 25)

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Textus Receptus” was not utilized until 1633, but Erasmus’s chosen text was consistent with what would subsequently come to be known as the Textus Receptus or Received Text.

- Erasmus's New Testament was foundational to achieving the goal of a biblically literate laity.

**Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.**

- It is a scriptural concept that one plants and another waters (1Corinthians 3:6-9). David made preparations so that Solomon could subsequently build the temple (1Chronicles 22:5, 14-19). Human labor is largely dependent on what has gone before. All advanced technology that we have today is based on prior technological achievements that required significant effort.
- "Reuchlin and Erasmus gave the Bible to the learned; Luther gave it to the people." (Miller, 501)
  - Erasmus performed the necessary groundwork of compiling the correct Greek text. This is the foundation for Tyndale's English Bible, Luther's German Bible, etc., which made the word of God available in the vernacular tongues.
  - Since God's word does not return unto him void but accomplishes that which he pleases (Isaiah 55:11), the translation of the word of God into the vernacular tongues was the most enduring and impactful consequence of the Reformation.

## Lesson 2

### Martin Luther and the Protestant Revolution: Why Luther's Reformation Was Really a Revolution

Bryan C. Ross

#### Reformation or Revolution?

- The event commonly known as the Protestant Reformation is more accurately termed a “revolution” according to noted historian Jacques Barzun. Barzun states:
  - “The Modern Era begins, characteristically, with a revolution; it is commonly called the Protestant Reformation, but the train of events starting early in the 16C and ending—if indeed it has ended—more than a century later has all the features of a revolution. I take these to be: the violent transfer of power and property in the name of an idea.” (Barzun, 3)
- In modern times, Western society uses the term revolutionary too loosely. Whenever a new technology, gadget, or practice hits the market that changes our domestic habits or makes life a little easier, the culture screams revolutionary! Unfortunately, this liberal use of the word has detracted from its true meaning. When something is truly revolutionary it changes more than our personal habits or a widespread practice. True revolutions give culture a new face. (Barzun, 3)
- According to Barzun, it is incorrect to view the Protestant Revolution as merely religious in nature,
  - “To call the first of the four revolutions religious is also inadequate. It did indeed cause millions to change the forms of their worships and the conception of their destiny. But it did much besides. It posed the issue of diversity of opinion as well as faith. It fostered new feelings of nationhood. It raised the status of the vernacular languages. It changed attitudes toward work, art, and human failing. It deprived the West of its ancestral sense of unity and common descent. Lastly but less immediately, by emigration to the new world overseas, it brought an extraordinary enlargement of the means of West and the power of its civilization.” (Barzun, 4)
- Protestant theology provided the philosophical justification for the formation of new political structures that would break with Roman Catholicism and assert their own autonomy. The new religious ideas that were being articulated by Martin Luther and others gave the German princes an ideological justification for breaking with the Roman Catholics and increasing their own power. The net effect of these changes was that, as advertised by Barzun, the cultural and political landscape of Europe was permanently altered.
- At the dawn of the sixteenth century the church in the West had successfully weathered many of the storms that besieged it during the Middle Ages. While Islam continued to spread in Africa and Asia, Western Christendom remained loyal to Papal authority despite a series of challenges during the Renaissance. (Price and Collins, 130) On the eve

of the Protestant Revolution two phenomena were already at work within European society.

- First, in order to replenish their coffers, the Church began to sell indulgences, as a means of divine favor for the afterlife in order to shorten one's stay in purgatory. Many, including the Dutch humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus, viewed the sale of indulgences as well as many of the Church's other practices as immoral. As the foremost theological scholar of his day, Erasmus penned many books that became popular, in which he skillfully utilized satire to attack the poor state of the Church. Consequently, it has commonly been stated with regard to the emergence of the Protestant movement, that "Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it." (Price and Collins, 130)
- Second, combined with the popular spiritual unrest that was burgeoning throughout Europe in the early sixteenth century, political tensions were also emerging. Many of the European monarchs sought to control their own national churches and resented not having dominion over church lands. As a result, these rulers presented a growing challenge to the authorities in Rome. Europe was now spiritually and politically primed for revolution. All that was missing was the spark that would ignite the flames. (Price and Collins, 130)

### **Luther Sparks a Revolution**

- When Martin Luther posted his Ninety Five Theses on the door of All Saints' Church at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, that last thing he wanted to do was to break up the Catholic Church and divide the world into warring camps. Rather, Luther sought to elicit the truth about the sacrament of penance which was a timely question given the current sale of indulgences that was occurring within the Church. (Barzun, 4-5)
- Despite receiving virtually no attention, debate, or discussion within the academic community of the University of Wittenburg, Luther's ideas would strike a popular cord. Using the newly invented moveable type printing press invented by Guttenberg, Luther's Ninety Five Propositions were soon printed and widely circulated throughout Germany in the vernacular tongue in a matter of weeks. The results were astounding. (Schaff, 156)
- The wide distribution of Luther's theses set Europe ablaze, as men realized that a voice had at last been raised to utter what most felt, that the whole system of indulgences was a fraud and had no place in the Gospel. (Broadbent, 161)
- Bearing the title "Disputation to explain the Virtue of Indulgences," Luther's theses are surprisingly Catholic in tone and doctrine. Noted church historian Philip Schaff makes the following observations with regard to Luther's propositions:
  - "They are no protest against the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church, or any of her doctrines, not even against indulgences, but only against their abuse. They expressly condemn those who speak against indulgences, and assume that the Pope himself would rather see St. Peter's Church in ashes than have it built with the flesh and blood of his sheep. They imply belief in purgatory. They nowhere mention Tetzal. They are silent about faith and justification, which already formed the marrow of Luther's theology and piety. He wished to be moderate,

and had not the most distant idea of a separation from the mother church.”  
(Schaff, 157)

- Too heavily immersed in Italian and European politics, Pope Leo X took little more than a casual notice of Luther’s propositions that had been forwarded to him, considering them a relatively unimportant debate among monks. However, by the summer of 1518, Luther had been summoned to Rome by the Pope to answer the charges of heresy and contumacy. Through the good offices of the Elector of Frederick, the hearing was transferred to Germany in connection with a meeting of the imperial Diet at Augsburg. (Latourette, 709)
- Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas de Vio of Gaeta), represented the Pope at the German Diet where Luther was interviewed three times. The Cardinal demanded that Luther retract his errors and submit to the authority of the Pope. Luther refused to acquiesce declaring that he could do nothing against his conscience and that one must obey God rather than man, arguing that the scriptures were on his side. (Schaff, 172-173)
- Cajetan, in turn, threatened Luther with excommunication, having already the papal mandate in his hand, and dismissed him with the words: “Revoke, or do not come again into my presence.” Clearly at an impasse with the Church authorities and, with the aid of his friends, Luther escaped from Augsburg, but not before leaving an appeal with Cajetan to the Pope himself. On 28 November 1518, Luther formally appealed to the Pope for a general council and thus anticipated the papal sentence of excommunication. (Schaff, 173-175)
- Ideas are only revolutionary if they are embraced by the majority of society. Luther’s use of the vernacular language was critical in fostering a revolutionary spirit amongst the common people within Germany.
- Perhaps perceiving that the writing was already on the wall in terms of his future within the Catholic Church, Luther abandoned the bland approach of the theses and began a direct assault upon the Roman Church. “In 1520, he boldly stated his position in five tracts which are often regarded as the primary expositions of his distinctive convictions.” Turning to the German populace for popular support, all five of these tracts were published in the vernacular languages and therefore enjoyed wide circulation. (Latourette, 709)
- The first tract entitled *Sermon on Good Works*, was published in May. In it, Luther articulated his position on justification being by faith alone resting in the merits of Christ. Moreover, Luther’s first tract sought to debunk the Catholic belief that power to forgive sins resided in the sacraments being administered by the church. (Latourette, 710-711)
- The publication of, *To the Christian Nobility of the German nation Respecting the Reformation of the Christian Estate*, in September, “called on princes to correct the abuses within the church, to strip bishops and abbots of their wealth and worldly power, and to create, in effect, a national German Church.” (Shelley, 241)
- As such, Luther’s address to the German nobility contained his most scathing assessment of the Roman system thus far. He argued that the Roman Church had erected three walls in its defense which had caused Christianity to suffer. The first wall Luther sought to

topple was the superiority of Popes, bishops, priests, and monks over the laity whom He identified as being princes, lords, artisans, and peasants. Rather, Luther argued that all Christians are consecrated priests by baptism, and that the only difference amongst Christians is one's office. He thus sought to sweep aside the principle which exempted clergy from the jurisdiction of civil authorities. The second wall that Luther attempted to scale was the Papal claim to have the exclusive right to interpret the Scriptures. Thirdly, Luther used the famous Council of Nicaea to question the Pope's authority to summon councils and confirm their acts on the grounds that it had been called by Emperor Constantine a secular authority. Furthermore, he condemned the luxury of the Popes and Cardinals and challenged their authority in domestic matters by suggesting that, when a Pope caused an offence to Christendom, temporal rulers ought to have the authority to summon him to a council. (Latourette, 710)

- Before 1520 the average press run of a printed book had been about one thousand copies. In contrast, printers produced four thousand copies of Luther's *To the Christian Nobility*, and were completely sold out in only a couple of days with thousands more soon to follow. Meanwhile as Luther's pamphlets were selling so rapidly, his personal drama riveted all onlookers. (Reyraud, 137)
- In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther assaulted the church with a caustic ferocity suggesting that Rome's sacramental system held Christians captive. "He attacked the papacy for depriving the individual Christian of his freedom to approach God directly by faith, without the mediations of priests, and he set forth his own views of the sacraments." To be valid, Luther asserted that a sacrament had to be instituted by Christ and be exclusively Christian. Using these parameters Luther disposed of five of the seven Roman Catholic sacraments. Maintaining only Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Luther placed these within the community of believing Christians rather than in the hands of the priesthood. "As a result, Luther brushed aside the traditional view of the Church as a sacred hierarchy headed by the pope and returned to the early Christian view of a community of Christian believers in which all believers are priests, called to offer spiritual sacrifices to God." (Shelley, 241)
- In November of 1520, Luther penned *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, and addressed it to the Pope. This tract's most famous line reads, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone." (Schaff, 221) By this Luther meant that, since justification is by faith alone and cannot be earned by good works, he who has this faith is freed from the bondage to the law and from seeking to earn salvation by works. (Schaff, 222) Not to be misunderstood, he did not discourage good works but believed that the inner spiritual freedom that comes from the certainty found in faith should lead all true Christians to perform good works. (Shelley, 242) Plainly stated, Luther wrote, "Good works do not make a man good, but a good man does good works." (Latourette, 715) Thus on the eve of his excommunication, now virtually insured as the result of his 1520 writing campaign, Luther removed the necessity of monasticism by stressing that the essence of Christian living lies in serving God in one's calling whether secular or ecclesiastical. (Shelley, 242)
- Alister McGrath, the renowned University of Oxford professor of Historical Theology and author of *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution*, has summarized four principles of Luther's religious reforms that gave birth to the religious and political revolution that was to follow:

- The first principal, according to McGrath, is the belief that the Bible is the ultimate foundation of all Christians' faith and practice. Often referred to as the doctrine of Sola Scriptura, this doctrine contends that "the Bible was central to the life and thought of the church, as it was to the personal devotion of the individual Christian."
  - Second, desiring to break from the clerical and academic monopoly of the priesthood over the Scriptures, Luther maintained that the text of the Bible and all preaching based upon it should be in the vernacular everyday language of the people.
  - Next, Luther asserted that salvation is a free gift of God received by faith; totally separate from the requirements and sacraments of the Roman Church.
  - Fourth, he argued that there is no fundamental distinction between clergy and laity. The doctrine, commonly known as the Priesthood of all Believers, had tremendous implications. Congregations of believers were free to select their own pastors and teachers in addition to clergy being allowed to marry. (McGrath, 56-57)
- In summary, Luther's reforms were not a piecemeal demand for change; his fundamental conviction was that the church of his day had lost sight of some fundamental themes of the Christian gospel.

### **Worms, Wartburg, and the German Bible**

- Late in 1520, Pope Leo X issued a decree threatening Luther with excommunication unless he recanted the views expressed in his series of five tracts. (Beck, 490) On 10 December 1520, Luther responded by casting the bull (Papal order) calling for his recantation and all of the Church's laws onto a roaring bonfire in front of a huge crowd. (Schaff, 248)
- By this time, it was clear to Roman authorities that Luther was more than a fly by night agitator; Papal supporter, Jerome Aleander, recorded the popular attitude in Germany prior to the Diet of Worms. He wrote:
  - "All Germany is up in arms against Rome. All the world is clamoring for a council that shall meet on German soil. Papal bulls of excommunication are laughed at. Numbers of people have ceased to receive the sacrament of penance. . . Martin is pictured with a halo above his head. The people kiss these pictures." (Durant, 359)
- The excitement was fanned by a whirlwind of anti-Papal pamphlets; a wagon, Aleander mourned, would not hold all these scurrilous tracts. Luther had clearly captured the hearts and minds of the German populace. (Durant, 359)
- On 11 December 1520, the day after the burning of the Papal bull, Luther took his final revolutionary step and proclaimed that no man could be saved unless he renounced the role of the Papacy. The monk had excommunicated the Pope. (Durant, 359) Upon

receiving word of these events, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther and released him to his lay overlord, the Elector Fredrick the Wise, for proper punishment. Instead of burning Luther at the stake, which would have been the customary punishment for heresy, Fredrick claimed that Luther had not yet received a fair hearing and brought him, in January 1521, to be examined by a Diet of princes of the Holy Roman Empire convening in the city of Worms. (Ralph, 687)

- The German problem now fell into the hands of the young newly elected emperor, Charles V, who was under oath to defend the church and remove heresy from the Holy Roman Empire. (Shelley, 242) As the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Charles not only shared his grandmother's desire for a moral reform of the Church but also her adherence to the doctrines of which the Pope was the guardian. (Latourette, 716)
- Viewing Catholicism as the glue that held his far-flung empire together, Charles had no sympathy for Luther. On 18 April 1521, the second day of questioning after a rough first day, Luther uttered his now famous response in German:
  - Since your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without distinctions . . . Unless I am convicted by testimony of Sacred Scriptures or by evident reason (I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other), my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. (Durant, 361)
- Now possessing no other choice but to officially brand Luther a heretic, Charles V was faced with the prospect of martyring the most popular figure in all of Germany. Fearing public opinion and knowing that the support of the German princes might lead to revolution, Charles V, with the sanction of the Pope, secured for Luther a safe passage back to Wittenberg. (Durant, 362)
- Despite these promises, Luther's supporters feared that he would face the same fate as John Hus who was murdered while making a similar journey despite the promises of an earlier Emperor. (Latourette, 717) "In a piece of superb melodrama, he was kidnapped by a group of bandits and held in captivity in Wartburg Castle from May 1521 to February 1522." Elector Fredrick the Wise had pressured the reluctant monk to consent to the "kidnapping" so that Luther could be protected without Fredrick laying himself open to the charge of harboring a heretic. (McGrath, 55)
- While in Wartburg, Luther began making his landmark translation of the New Testament into German, thus implementing his own demand that God's Word be made available to all people.
- During his ten-month confinement at Wartburg, Martin Luther, with pen in hand, translated the New Testament into the German language of the common people from Erasmus' 1519 Edition of the Greek New Testament. (Brake, 83, 235)
- After being reviewed by his associate Melanchthon, Luther published his German Bible in September 1522. As if carried by the wings of the wind, it spread from one end of Germany to the other, and to many other countries. (Miller, 748)

- “Even the papal historian, Maimbourg, confesses that “Luther’s translation was remarkably elegant, and in general so much approved, that it was read by almost everybody throughout Germany.” (Miller, 748)
- “It was a national book. It was the book of the people—the book of God. This work served, more than all Luther’s writings, to the spread and consolidation of the reformed doctrines. The Reformation was now placed on its own proper foundation—the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” (Miller, 748)
- “The following statistics show the wonderful success of the work: “A second edition appeared in the month of December and by 1523 seventeen editions had been printed at Wittenberg, thirteen in Augsburg, and twelve at Basle, one at Erfurt, one at Grimma, one at Leipsic, and thirteen at Strasburg.” (Miller, 748)
- “Meanwhile Luther proceeded in the accomplishment of his great work—the translation of the Old Testament. With the assistance of Melanchthon and other friends, the work was published in parts as they were finished, and wholly completed in the year 1530,” (Miller, 748)
- Luther’s literal word for word translation of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament is the first complete Bible translation from the original languages into a modern vernacular language of Europe. Luther’s German Bible served as the source for the following vernacular translations:
  - 1523—Dutch New Testament
  - 1524—Danish New Testament
  - 1526—Swedish New Testament
  - 1540—Icelandic New Testament
  - 1541—Hungarian New Testament
  - 1562—Croatian New Testament
  - 1584—Hebrew New Testament used for missionary work amongst the Jews of Slovenia

### **German Princes and Populace Support the Revolution**

- Meanwhile, on 26 May 1521, the Diet of Worms issued its’ official edict. The council ruled that beginning on 15 April 1521, Luther was to have twenty-one days after which time no one was to harbor or aid him in anyway. Moreover, his followers were condemned and his books were ordered to be burned anywhere they were found. (Durant, 363)
- At this point, Luther’s hopes of reforming the Catholic Church had been dashed. But there was an alternative, a dangerous, radical, and groundbreaking possibility that was open to Luther. Thanks to his being backed by German princes; he could create a new

- church and start all over again. Luther's ideas were now being backed by secular principalities and powers thus providing a formula that would soon lead to violence.
- While in exile at Wartburg Castle, disguised as a minor nobleman and living under the assumed name Junker George, the revolt against Rome spread without Luther's direct leadership. (Price and Collins, 134) "In town after town, priests and town councils removed statues from the churches and abandoned the Mass. New reformers, many of them far more radical than Luther, appeared on the scene." By far, the most critical development during Martin's stay at Wartburg was that German princes, dukes, and electors were defying the condemnation of Luther by giving support to the new movement. (Shelley, 242-243)
  - No matter how influential Luther had become within the German populace. His cause surely would have failed had it not been for the decisive intervention and support of constituted political authorities. (Ralph 688) The authors of *World Civilizations: Their History and Culture* offer the following insight into this matter:
    - "There had been heretics aplenty in Europe before, but most of them had died at the stake, as Luther would have done without the intervention of Frederick the Wise. And even had Luther lived, spontaneous popular expressions of support alone would not have succeeded in instituting Lutheranism because such could easily have been put down by the power of the state. In fact, although in the early years of revolt he was more or less equally popular throughout Germany, only in those territories where rulers formally established Lutheranism (mostly in the German north) did the new religion prevail, whereas in the other territories, Luther's sympathizers were forced to flee, face death, or conform to Catholicism. In short, the word of the prince in religious matters was simply law." (Ralph, 688)
  - The German princes that chose to support Lutheranism did so for a variety of reasons. Some truly believed and embraced the movement's doctrinal teachings; others did so for their own economic and political gain.
  - German princes had assembled at the Diet of Augsburg in 1500 to demand a refund of some of their ecclesiastical dues they had sent to Rome on the grounds that their coffers were being drained. As one might expect, these requests fell on deaf ears within the Vatican. With the emergence of Lutheranism, many German princes were quick to perceive that if they embraced this new religious movement, ecclesiastical dues would not be sent to support foreigners and that much of the savings would directly or indirectly wind up in their own bank accounts. (Ralph, 688)
  - In addition to the economic matter of taxation, the larger political issue of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century was the search for absolute governmental sovereignty. "Throughout Europe the major political trend in the years around 1500 was toward making the state dominant in all walks of life, religious as well as secular." (Ralph, 688-689) As a result, many rulers fought for the right to appoint their own church officials within their own realms thus limiting the independent jurisdiction of Church courts. Consequently, many Germany princes seized the revolutionary religious ideas of Luther as their chance to assert their political independence from the Catholic Church.

- While individual religious beliefs no doubt played a part in this power grab, the most common aim was the gaining of sovereignty by naming pastors, cutting off fees to Rome, and curtailing the jurisdiction of Church. (Ralph, 689) In the end, what the German princes were not able to secure through negotiation they, were prepared to wrest by force.

### **The Revolution Turns Violent**

- Using Barzun's notion of a revolution, Protestantism's primary ideas at this point had been articulated by Luther, embraced popularly, and supported by a plethora of German princes. According to Barzun's revolutionary definition, the situation was about to erupt into violence as power and property were now up for grabs. Commenting on the religious and politically charged situation within Germany, Barzun writes:
  - "An idea newly grasped stirs the blood to aggressiveness. From safe corners such as universities and monasteries, force was called for, and many laymen were not afraid to use it. They quoted Luther: "One must fight for the truth." When possessions were at stake, whether simply threatened or taken over the Protestants, armed conflict was inevitable. Pulpits, churches, and other religious houses, town offices, and privileges that went with all these changed hands—and more than once. Local sentiment, coupled with power, decided ownership." (Barzun, 15)
- Widespread violence swept over Germany with the Peasants' Revolt of 1524 through 1526. The German peasants were the beast of burden for society, and in no better condition than slaves. They were ground down by taxation, legal and illegal, a condition that would only worsen after the discovery of America and the rapid increase of wealth and luxury that followed. Long before the Protestant Revolution, revolutionary outbreaks took place in various parts of Germany, only to end as disastrous failures as they were put down by brute force. (Schaff, 441)
- In 1524, German peasants, excited by reformers' talk of freedom, and mistaking spiritual liberty for carnal freedom, demanded an end to serfdom. (Schaff, 442) Bands of angry peasants went throughout the countryside raiding monasteries, pillaging, and burning them to the ground. In addition, the peasants also demanded the right to choose their own clergy, be paid by their rulers for extra services performed, and claimed rights of land ownership. (Price and Collins, 134)
- Initially, Luther supported the peasants; however, he turned against them when Thomas Muntzer massacred the inhabitants of Weinsberg and burned castles and churches. (Price and Collins, 134) In a venomous tract, Luther urged the German princes to use whatever means necessary to put down the revolt. In response, both Protestant and Roman Catholic princes united their forces against a common enemy and successfully put down the rebellion, slaughtering over one hundred thousand peasants in the process. (Schaff, 447)
- Luther responded to the carnage by calling the nobility devils for their brutality, but the damage had been done. The ultimate result was that Luther lost the trust of those he had initially sought to help with his reforms. Despite losing much of his popular support, many northern German princes continued to support Lutheranism. (Price and Collins, 134)

- The temporary truce between the Protestants and Catholics did not continue after the end of the Peasants' Rebellion. It would not be long before religious antagonism would erupt into full scale warfare. Germany would witness twenty-three years of war with periodic breathing spells as two unstable leagues of princes, Protestant and Catholic, sought to establish the dominance of their own faith and governmental power. (Barzun, 15) Even though the Edict issued at Worms in 1521 was binding; Charles V was too preoccupied with wars in France and Italy to enforce its ruling. (Latourette, 726)
- In the years following Worms and preceding the outbreak of open hostilities, the German princes had begun arranging themselves on one side or the other, with Northern Germany primarily supporting Lutheranism while the Southern states remained loyal to Rome. In 1524, Papal legates succeeded in organizing a league of Roman Catholic princes in Southern Germany. (Latourette, 726)
- In 1526, the First Diet of Speirer convened to consider the demands of the Catholics that the Edict of Worms should be enforced, and the counterproposals of the Protestants, that religion be left free until a general council, under German auspices, should adjudicate the disputes. To the surprise of many, the Protestants prevailed at Speirer. The council ruled that, pending the findings of future Diets', each German state in religion, "should so live, rule and bear itself as it thought it could answer to God and the Emperor." (Durant 442)
- Furthermore, it was decided that no one should be punished for past offences against the Edict of Worms, and that the Word of God should be preached by all parties, none interfering with the others. (Durant, 442) The revolutionaries interpreted this "Recess of Speirer" as sanctioning the establishment of Lutheran churches, the religious autonomy of each territorial prince, and the prohibition of the Mass in Lutheran areas. (Schaff, 683-687) While the Catholics rejected these assumptions, Charles V was too preoccupied with other matters to do much about the situation.
- In February of 1529, having settled the majority of his foreign distractions, Charles V ordered that the Diet of Speirer be reconvened. Possessing a Catholic majority, The Second Diet of Speirer repealed the "Recess" of 1526 and passed a decree permitting Lutheran services but requiring the toleration of Catholic services in Lutheran states, while completely forbidding Lutheran preaching in Catholic states, thus enforcing the Edict of Worms. (Schaff 690-691) On 25 April 1529, the Lutheran minority published a protest declaring that conscience forbade them from accepting the decree and appealed to the Emperor for a general council while pleading to hold unswervingly to the original "Recess of Speier," no matter the cost. (Durant, 442) Herein lies the origin of the term protestant; it was first used by the Roman Catholics to describe the German princes who protested the ruling of the Second Diet of Speirer. (Latourette, 727)
- By 1530, the religious and political situation within Germany was an absolute mess. Philip Schaff offers the following assessment of the situation:
  - "The Diet of Speier had forbidden the further progress of the Reformation: The Edict of Worms was in full legal force; the Emperor had made peace with the Pope, and received from him the imperial crown at Bologna; the Protestants were divided amongst themselves, and the Conference at Marburg had failed to unite them against the common foe. At the same time the whole empire was menaced

by a foreign power. The Turks under Suleiman . . . had reached the summit of their military power, and approached the gates of Vienna in September 1529.” (Schaff, 696)

- Under these circumstances the Diet of Augsburg convened, on 8 April 1530. Its objective was to settle the religious question, and to prepare for war against the Turks. (Schaff, 696) Knowing the hour and the score, Charles asked the Protestants to put forth their beliefs in writing and demonstrate where they differed from the Roman Catholic Church. The resulting document became known as the Augsburg Confession, which was henceforth regarded as the official presentation of the Lutheran position. (Latourette, 727)
- The document was drafted by Melancthon, a student of Luther’s who, being under imperial ban, was not present at the meeting. Despite being absent from the Diet, Melancthon consulted his teacher and composed a two-part treatise outlining the articles of the faith which Lutherans and Catholics shared in common as well as those that were unique. The Swiss portion of the Empire, being the followers of Zwingli, refused to sign the Augsburg Confession and submitted their own document. Charles V’s attempts to reconcile the views of the revolutionaries with Catholic rebuttals failed. As a result, the Roman Catholic majority claimed that the Protestants had been refuted resulting in Charles’ decree that they had until April 1531 to submit to Papal authority. (Latourette, 727)
- Unwilling to capitulate, the Lutheran princes met at Schmalkalden and formed a defensive league which bore the name of the town in which it was formed. (Latourette, 727) Over the next twenty-three years, Germany existed in a state of almost constant warfare as leagues of Catholics and Protestants sought to establish their own political and religious dominance. (Barzun, 15) In 1532, a temporary truce was struck between Charles V and the Schmalkaldic League in order to defend the region against Turkish invasion. However, during the intermittent time Protestantism continued to spread throughout the Empire. (Latourette, 727-728) When conferences between Protestants and Catholics, held in 1540 and 1541 at Charles V’s request, failed to bring peace, the Emperor sought to eradicate Protestantism from within the borders of the empire and restore Imperial obedience within Germany. (Durant, 453)
- In order to accomplish his goal, Charles declared under the ban Philip of Hesse and Elector John Fredrick of Saxony, the nephew and successor of Elector Fredrick the Wise who had aided Martin Luther. (Durant, 454) In the ensuing war, both Protestant princes were defeated and imprisoned. Protestantism appeared to have been destroyed. (Latourette, 728)
- In actuality, the revolutionaries were far from being snuffed out, as large portions of the populace still embraced Luther’s teachings. When war broke out again, this time the Protestant princes were aided by the King of France who was awarded the border cities of Metz, Toul, and Verdun for his support of the revolutionary cause. With French strength behind them, the Protestants defeated Charles V’s forces and nearly captured him in 1552. (Latourette, 729) “Arms and circumstances so favored the Protestants that they demanded everything: they were to be free in the practice of their faith in all German territory; Catholic worship was to be forbidden in Lutheran territory; present and future confiscation of Church property were to be held valid and irrevocable.” (Durant, 456)

- The resulting Peace of Augsburg was established on 25 September 1555, and rested on the notion of *cuius region, eius religio* (“as the ruler, so the religion”), which meant that in those principalities where Lutheran princes ruled, Lutheranism would be the sole state religion and the same for those with Catholic princes. Thus, in order to permit peace among and within the states, each prince was to choose between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. In addition, all ones’ subjects were expected to embrace the religion of their realm or emigrate. (Ralph, 715)
- As such, the Peace of Augsburg was a historical milestone inasmuch as Catholic rulers for the first time acknowledged the legality of Protestantism; however, it boded ill for the future in assuming that no sovereign state larger than a free city could tolerate religious diversity. Moreover, in excluding Calvinism, it insured that Calvinists would become aggressive opponents of the status quo, a reality that would always make the Peace of Augsburg tenuous at best. (Ralph, 715-716)
- The real winner was not freedom of worship, but the freedom of the princes. Each became like Henry VII of England, the supreme head of the Church in his territory, with the exclusive right to appoint the clergy and the men who should define the obligatory faith. It was the princes not the theologians who had led Protestantism to its triumph; they naturally assumed the fruits of victory, their territorial supremacy over the emperor, and the ecclesiastical supremacy over the church. There can be little doubt that Protestantism fits Barzun’s definition of a revolution. Luther and the theologians had articulated the ideas while the political authorities transferred power and property in the name of the theologian’s ideas. (Durant, 456)

### **The Paradox of Luther**

- Luther cannot be considered a model of Christian decorum. Rather, he was a blunt and sometimes crude writer who was almost as likely to embarrass his supporters as to edify them. (Noll, 164)
- After some of the first Protestant reforms were instituted, a great falling away took place in the schools and universities of Germany as parents concluded that weaknesses in the Catholic Church automatically spilled into the educational systems historically linked to the church. . . Parents who did not see to their children’s education were “shameful, despicable, damnable parents who are no parents at all but despicable hogs and venomous beasts, devouring their own young,” according to Luther. (Noll, 164)
- “Neither, at a more serious level, is it possible to remember Luther as a well-balanced, healthy-minded personality. Luther never enjoyed the serenity, the holy demeanor, or the victorious Christian life that many other worthies in the history of the church exemplified. He was, by contrast, constantly beset by internal struggles, doubts, and depressions. In his rapid shifts of mood, he could be nearly manic.” (Noll, 165)
- “Most seriously, Luther was also manifestly a sinner, especially by the standards he himself proclaimed from the Scriptures. With his open personality, moreover, Luther’s marks of spiritual disobedience were all too obviously on display. Of special damage in the history of the West were Luther’s harsh denunciations of the Jews in 1543, just three years before his death.” (Noll, 165)

- “In extreme language Luther called upon the rulers of Germany to drive the Jews out of their lands, take most of their wealth, and forbid their rabbis to teach.” (Noll, 165)
- “In short, what made Luther’s teaching an important turning point were not his impeccable spiritual credentials. To be sure, he could be genuinely compassionate, deeply loving, and unexpectedly humble, and he had many extraordinary gifts. But it was much more the vision of God that gripped Luther, and which he then communicated through sermons, tracts, and treatises, that made a mark on the history of Christianity. That vision of God, which shattered many of the religious conventions of Luther’s day, first broke through to the depths of his own being and then forced the West as a whole to pay attention.” (Noll, 166)
- In contrasting Luther with Melanchthon, his most trusted and influential associate, Schaff states that Luther was a man of war while Melanchthon was a man of peace. Luther’s writings smell of powder; “his words are battles,” and he “overwhelms his opponents with a roaring cannonade of argument, eloquence, passion, and abuse.” (Schaff, 194)
- There is little connection that can be made between Luther and Calvin in a personal and practical sense. Historians speculate that Luther probably read two of Calvin’s works (*Reply to Sadoleto* and *Treatise on the Lord’s Supper*) during his lifetime. Although Melanchthon’s *Loci Theologici* preceded Calvin’s *Institutes*, Calvin is called the “leader and standard-bearer of theology,” for the Reformation. Luther’s theology, from a scholastic standpoint, was unsystematized, if we are to go by the standard judgment of the average historian. Martin Luther said that he was drawn to Melanchthon as a fellow reformer because he knew that he himself was incapable of systematizing anything.
- Broadbent is very critical of the structure of the Lutheran Church. “Instead however, of continuing in the way of the Word, Luther then built up a church, in which some abuses were reformed, but which in many respects was a reproduction of the old system. Multitudes who looked to him for guidance accepted that form in which he molded the Lutheran Church. Many, seeing that he did not continue in the way of return to the Scriptures which they had hoped for, remained where they were, in the Roman Catholic Church, and the hopes awakened among the brethren gradually faded away as they saw themselves placed between two ecclesiastical systems, each of which was ready to enforce conformity in matters of conscience—by the sword.” (Broadbent, 165)
- “Luther had seen the divine pattern for the churches, and it was not without an inward struggle that he had abandoned the New Testament teaching of independent assemblies of real believers, in favor of the National or State Church system which outward circumstances pressed upon him.” (Broadbent, 165)
- “Moreover, the powers arrogated to a priesthood alone competent to perform these rites (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) bring the nation under a domination in matters of faith and conscience, which, when working in unison with the State, or civil government, make free churches impossible, and religion a matter of nationality.” (Broadbent, 165)
- “With unprecedented power and courage, Luther had brought to light the Scripture truths as to the individual salvation of the sinner by faith, but failed when he might have shown the way to a return to Scripture in all things, including its teaching as to the Church. . .

Once the new Church was put under the power of the State it could not be altered, but Luther never pretended that the churches which he had established were ordered after the pattern of the Scriptures. While Melancthon spoke of Protestant princes as “chief members of the Church,” Luther called them “makeshift Bishops” and frequently expressed his regret for the lost liberty of the Christian man and independence of the Christian congregations that had once been his aim.” (Broadbent, 165-167)

### **Conclusion**

- Using Barzun’s definition of a revolution, one can clearly see how the ideas articulated by Luther were revolutionary in nature; and how they threatened the religious and political status quo of Western Europe. Herein lies what McGrath refers to as “Christianity’s Dangerous Idea,” the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers which allowed believers to bypass the ideas of a centralized authority and interpret the Bible for themselves. As time went on, “not even the personal authority of Luther could redirect this religious revolution, which anxious governments sought to tame and domesticate.” The result of this idea was a radical reshaping of Christian society and the violent transfer of power and property in the name of an idea. There can be little doubt that a momentous revolution was now under way in Europe. (McGrath, 3-4)

### Lesson 3

## The Five Sola's of the Reformation: A Scriptural Exposition of the Core Doctrines of the Reformation

Jeffery A. Newnum

### Introduction

- The state, or condition, of the Roman Catholic Church leading up to Martin Luther's monumentally important Ninety-Five Theses was marked by a wanton disregard for God, God's Word, and the people in need of His grace. This was not a localized issue either. It was systemic in all regions which the Roman Church touched because the problem went straight to the source; the Pope and the Church's view of Scripture.
- The process for exposing the corruption that was rampant throughout Rome and its Church came internally. There was no external appeal to Rome. There was no amnesty box for suggestions. There was no customer service hotline. If there was to be reform, it would have to be done from inside the system. And a system it was. It was the sacerdotal (mechanical priestly system) at its height. It's apex. It was the definition of hierarchy, structure and bureaucracy at that time. The state of the Roman church leading up to the reformation/ revolution would be at its highest just at the reformation. It held political, economic, and cultural sway over vast geographical areas.

### The Backdrop to Reformation

- This was not the first time the Roman church was having its authority questioned either. Since the Roman Church also ran the state governmental functions, it used the sword against what it viewed as its enemies; which is one of the primary reasons for the separation of church and state that we have today in America. It used the authority it gave itself to crush any resistance that popped up. Would be reformers, those who had different ideas about what Scripture said, were quickly neutralized, and often tortured and burned at the stake for their "heresies."
- The great exposing of the Church would come in the form of an internal debate; a debate over indulgences and their use and abuse. Luther wasn't so much opposed to indulgences; his main concern was over what power they actually had.
- "The use of indulgences had developed gradually and derived their power from priests who were able to absolve a penitent sinner. By pronouncing forgiveness the priest restores the link with God threatened by sinful acts; only then could a Christian be assured of salvation. As part of the healing process the priest would prescribe for the confessing sinner a carefully weighed punishment, or penance. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century onward the church occasionally allowed that a measured part of this penance could be rescinded in return for noteworthy pious acts. Some of the first indulgences, for instance, were offered to those prepared to join a Crusade. Others involved acts of charity, the giving of alms, donations to support the building of churches, or attendance at the consecration of a new church." (Pettegree, 54).

- Hear some of Luther’s own thoughts that were written down in his Theses;
  - Thesis 32: “Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.”
  - Thesis 41: “Papal indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.” (Kagan, Ozment, Turner, 102)
- The issue then with Luther during 1517 was less about the fact of indulgences and more about their abuse. Regardless, “when Luther took aim against indulgences in his 95 Theses, he was attacking a hugely important institution, a cornerstone of popular devotion and a mainstay of the church economy.” (Pettegree, 53). And because he was directly attacking indulgences, he was indirectly attacking what is arguably one of the greatest inventions and their market since the internet; the printing press. It was going to cause issues. Indulgences benefited the printing industry and therefore local economies, helped reduce purgatory time, allowed believers to skip punishment, raised armies for Crusades, and led people to think they were helping out deceased family and friends.
- Indulgences were not the only issue that the Church had either. Aside from the unscriptural system of priestcraft, doctrinal issues abounded such as purgatory, Church/Pope authority, relics, growing cynicism, Mariolatry and praying to dead people, confession to a priest to absolve sins, the mass and sacraments as necessary for salvation, transubstantiation, required celibacy, monkery, nunnery, monasteries, and convents. So pretty much the whole thing.
  - **\*\*Contrary to popular opinion, which will be discussed in my next lesson, the Roman Church did not reform or learn from these issues, but rather strengthened its resolve to teach and preach these doctrines.\*\***

### The 5 “solas”

- Born, or should I rather say, rediscovered, since Luther’s initial protest (95 Theses) was 5 main points that this lesson will discuss. They are often referred to as “The 5 solas.”
  - By Grace Alone (*Sola Gratia*) – God’s grace alone is sufficient for salvation
  - Through Faith Alone (*Sola Fide*) – Faith without works is sufficient
  - In Christ Alone (*Solus Christus*) – Christ is sufficient with no intermediaries
  - According to Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*) – Scripture alone is sufficient for doctrine, reproof, correction
  - For God’s Glory Alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*) – Only glory belongs to God and none other

- These points, or truths, were a major turning point for Christianity at that time. Every one of these points has its antithesis, or direct opposite, in the Catholic Church. These were developed prior to, during, and after the reformation era in response to the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church. And, every one of these points has as its basis Pauline authority. As we go through these, remember who wrote them and where we find them.

### **Sola Gratia**

- By Grace Alone.
  - Eph. 2:8—For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
  - Eph. 2:9—Not of works, lest any man should boast.
- What is “grace?” The 1828 Webster’s dictionary defines grace as favor, goodwill, kindness, and unmerited favor. Scripture more or less defines it as the opposite of work i.e. Not something you earn or that is merited through work. (Webster, 93).
  - Rom. 4:4—Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
  - Rom. 11:6—And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.
- What does religion want to hide from those honestly pursuing the truth in this dispensation of grace?
  - A non-works based program. Grace is a non-works based program for salvation. That’s exactly what this dispensation of grace is, at least regarding salvation. Grace is not something we work for, or can work for. You pay, or give someone their due for work. It is the opposite for grace. For grace, someone is getting something they did not work for, nor could merit in any way on their own. They did not earn it. Grace is not earned.
- One of the main points of contention for Luther, eventually, not all at once or even at first, was the growing sense of despair he had at knowing that despite how many floors he washed, no matter how many confessions he gave to a priest, no matter how many Hail Mary’s and Our Fathers, no matter how many pious, religious, sometimes even good works he did, they were not enough for salvation.
- By Grace Alone (Eph. 2:8, 9) is a concept that lies at the heart of this dispensation of grace. Grace is contrasted against any and all works.
  - Tit. 3:5—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
- Luther discovered a lot of truths during his time as a monk and priest. ““They (monks, priests, clergy) lead people from Christ to their own works, telling them to go into a

cloister, or make a pilgrimage to Rome or Compostella (alleged burial site of St. James), and live a severe, hard life, and choose the Virgin Mary or some other saint as intercessor, that you may be saved.” And this theory, which he was afterwards so passionately to combat, was deduced correctly and logically from the general practice of the Church. Not that he was repelled by the duties and privations of the monastic career (his dad didn’t like it, but finally accepted it), rather his letters and other references to his daily life show that he found in it the joy of work well done. What he did NOT find was salvation.” (Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 6, No. 4, pg. 410).

- Why was that? Because the Catholic Church through its teachings, doctrines, and traditions had edged out grace altogether and instituted a system devoid of God’s Word. It had become man’s word, man’s teachings, and man’s traditions. There is only one way to describe such a system; anti-Christ. And that is exactly what it was, and what it remains.
- Now compare by grace alone to the doctrine found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:
  - “Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.” (Catechism of Catholic Church, para. 2010).
  - “Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.” (CCC, para. 2027).
  - In many of these paragraphs, or statements, there are citations quoting the reference for such a statement, either to a church “father,” council, or verse of Scripture. In the Catechism, there is no reference for either paragraph 2010, or 2027. Because the referent itself is the tradition which the Catholic Church propagates, which is not found in any verse of Scripture.

### Sola Fide

- By Faith Alone.
  - 2Tim. 3:15—And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- What is “faith?” Faith is trust. It is belief. It results in confidence. Faith in something always corresponds to its referent. Simply believing something doesn’t make it true. The substance of that faith, what it rests on, that determines the validity of the faith. Our faith rests on Christ’s finished work on the cross. In His death, burial, and resurrection for our sins and our justification. Faith is simply taking God at His Word.
- Through all of Luther’s privations and efforts, he still kept coming up short. This drove Luther to become angry at God. In the preface to the complete edition of Luther’s Latin

Works of 1545, he had this to say about his thoughts back in 1519 (this was after posting the Theses) about Romans 1:17: **“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”**

- “I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.”
  - “But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.”
  - “I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.”  
(Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works; D'Aubigne, 57,58)
- How many out there today can relate to the anguish that Luther felt from the weight of the religious works based system? And how many can relate to how it felt once the weight had been lifted? Luther was a Catholic monk and priest who abided by all the rules and regulations, crossed all the T's, dotted all the I's, but with the help of Scripture, IN CONTEXT, was able to come out from religious bondage. To the soul who flees bondage and finds salvation in Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone there is no experience like it.
  - Scripture says that we walk by faith not by sight. (**2 Cor. 5:7**). What religion does, what the Catholic Church had taught and does teach, is therefore the exact opposite. They create a sight-based system; a sight-based faith. They want you to see the paper indulgences, see the images, idols, and relics, see the structures that were constructed, see

the robes, candles and regalia so that your faith rests on what you can see, and not on what Scripture itself says; and sight is the opposite of faith.

- Luther's eyes of faith were gradually being opened by his adherence to Scripture. During his university days as a professor, he had written a commentary on Hebrews. Certainly, during that time he would have come across this most profound verse:
  - Heb. 11:6—But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
- Luther was going through all of this monkery, all of this religious system, because he did want to please God, and to have salvation. Faith alone was never mentioned, because to attain salvation it was always accompanied by never ending works. The more Luther believed the words on the page, the more Luther began to believe that the system in which he found himself was critically flawed. This concept of increased faith by trusting God's Word is directly found in Scripture.
  - Rom. 10:17—So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
- Luther was beginning to see the absolute necessity of faith. And not just faith for faith's sake, but strictly in Christ alone for salvation and justification. Luther began to see, and then vehemently declare that justification is by faith alone.
  - Rom. 3:28—Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
  - Rom. 5:1—Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
  - Gal. 3:24—Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
  - Rom. 4:5—But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
- For Luther, faith had become a cornerstone without which no building could be constructed. He soon realized that there is no salvation without faith, and no salvation without grace. Something else that was becoming increasingly clear was that these doctrinal issues were coming from one source; the Apostle Paul. "The dull hopelessness with which men had seen the ever-increasing corruption and rapacity (greed) of the Church, was exchanged for a vivid hope that now, at last, the time of revival had come, the time of a return to primitive Christianity; Christ Himself was seen afresh, revealed in the Scriptures as the Redeemer and immediate Savior of sinners and the Way to God for suffering humanity." (Broadbent, 183).
- "The just shall live by faith, not works. Salvation is what Christ did for us. It is not given through the Mass, nor given through the sacraments, nor given through the priests. It is not given by the wafer or by the Eucharist, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. Celebrating the Mass is the chief act of the Roman Catholic priesthood. Yet there is not

one word of such a Mass to be found anywhere in the New Testament. In Catholicism, salvation is claimed through taking the sacrament of Mass. This claim denies the all-sufficiency of Christ, His atonement and death on the cross as a once-for-all completed act.” (Carlson and Decker, 231,232).

- Now hear the words the Catholic Church reaffirmed at the Council of Trent which has never been revoked or changed:
  - “If any one shall say, that by faith alone the impious is justified; so as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order unto the obtaining the grace of justification, and that it is not in any respect necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.” (Council of Trent, Canons on Justification, Canon 9.”

### Sola Christus

- In Christ Alone:
  - Col. 1:12—Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:  
Col. 1:13—Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:  
Col. 1:14—In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:  
Col. 1:15—Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:  
Col. 1:16—For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:  
Col. 1:17—And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.  
Col. 1:18—And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.
- The more Luther read, believed, and expounded upon Scripture in context (which is to say rightly divided), the more he came to understand that in no way whatsoever was anything spiritually reliant upon a pope or any other man. If God’s Word was sufficient in all manner of doctrine, so too was Christ sufficient as Head of the Church.
- In 1534, anti-Catholic placards (signs or notices written on paper) were being distributed in France (this became known as the placards affair). The result had the unintended effect of the King strengthening his stand for Catholicism which led to greater persecution and more burning at the stake for reformation sympathizers. The placards struck at the heart of Catholicism and reinforced Christ’s sufficiency and complete work.
  - “The argument the placards used against the daily sacrifice of the Mass was Hebrews 7:27 “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” (**Heb 7:27 KJV**) If, in Germany, **Romans 1:17** was the spark that had ignited the Reformation, in France, this was it. If Christ’s sacrifice for sin on the cross was a complete work, and thus neither need be nor can be repeated, then all our attempts to atone for sin must be both unnecessary and

insulting to Christ, in that they suggest His work is not sufficient. If Christ's sacrifice was indeed 'once for all', then there can be no need of other priests or high priests to offer up more. With that, the Mass, the priests who offered it, and all other acts of atonement for sin were shown to be useless. The only recourse was simple trust in Christ and His complete work." (Reeves, 98).

- Christ is God in the flesh. He is God. The express image of the Father. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. God of all comfort. God of peace. The Alpha and Omega. He is the way, the Truth, and the life. He is the Word. He is the door to eternal life. He is the Avenger. He is the resurrection and the life. He is the Son of God and Son of man. He is our sacrifice. He is our redeemer. He is the spiritual rock. He is the risen Lord. He is our hope. He is Immanuel, God with us. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the Lamb of God. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He is the light of the world. What the Catholic Church had done and continues to do was eclipse that light from man to substitute its own.
- 'In Christ alone' refutes many false doctrines and teachings. It refutes any need for a priest, since "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5). It refutes pluralism; the idea that any road you want leads to God. We know from Scripture that no one comes to the Father except through Christ (Jn. 14:6). It refutes praying to other intermediaries such as saints and especially Mary. "Many had prayed to saints and venerated their relics and images before they embraced the evangelical doctrines of the reformation. The Roman Catholic Church continues to sanction prayers to saints and recommends that the "faithful" honor their relics and images. Saints are considered "specialists" in certain areas: such as "Anne grants riches, Sebastian wards off pestilence, Valentine heals epilepsy, and George protects knights. Philip Melancthon had this to say:
  - "The fact of the matter is that in popular estimation the Blessed Virgin has completely replaced Christ...Men have invoked her, trusted in her mercy, and sought through her to appease Christ, as though he were not a proprietor but only a terrible judge and avenger. Our whole knowledge of Christ disappears if we seek out other mediators besides Christ and put our trust in them." (Brummel, 75).
- Does this sound narrow? You bet it does!
  - Act. 4:12—Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.
- In Christ alone is our battle cry. In Christ alone was our redemption bought and paid for by His precious blood. In Christ alone is forgiveness found. In Christ alone are we accepted. In Christ alone are we reconciled to God. In Christ. Alone.

### **Soli Deo Gloria**

- To the Glory of God Alone.
  - 1Cor. 10:31—Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

- The gospel of the grace of God, which was kept secret since the world began but was revealed to the Apostle Paul, this gospel, our gospel, is the glory of God. God's glory is revealed in this gospel, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It is to God's glory that He kept it a secret, because it shows the determinate council of God beforehand, knowing that Christ would be rejected and yet wanting to open a way that all might be saved, and to have a purpose for those saved in this dispensation for heavenly places. This forward thinking is all to God's glory and praise.
- We, you, me, and all members of the Body of Christ are TO the praise of His Glory:
  - Eph. 1:12—That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
  - Eph. 1:13—In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,
  - Eph. 1:14—Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
- The idea that to God alone belongs the glory had become foreign to the common man. Relics were worshipped. Images were worshipped. Popes, bishops, and cardinals were above reproach and for all intents and purposes unapproachable. The Catholic system kept back God's Word from the people. They kept back the fact of justification by faith. They kept back salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It kept back the people from the God who loved them and gave Himself for them. But God's attitude towards these practices have not changed.
  - Isa. 42:8—I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.
  - Isa. 48:11—For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.
- God has not changed how He views or how He feels about His glory. If you want to lead people astray, the first thing you must do is redirect the glory to man in some way.
- And that is what the Catholic system did. They redirected God's glory to man in many ways. The system says it seeks God's glory but in practice and doctrine they deny it. Simply look at the adoration, praise, and focus that are given to the Pope and Mary.
  - “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the Mother of Mercy, the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives and our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care.” (CCC, 2677).
  - “After speaking of the Church, her origin, mission, and destiny, we can find no better way to conclude than by looking to Mary.” (CCC, 972).

- Mary then, becomes the gateway to Christ, which has no basis in Scripture whatsoever. It is another attempt at removing Christ from the equation and seeking another to replace Him. By adding Mary as a mediator they remove Christ. If you add one, you can add as many as you want, and that is exactly what the Catholic system did with priests, monks, nuns, bishops, cardinals and Popes. In redirecting God’s glory and supplanting it with its own, the Catholic system has become like any other pagan, idol worshipping system.
- Man’s chief end is to glorify God. We having nothing outside of God for which to glory.
  - 1Cor. 1:29—That no flesh should glory in his presence.  
1Cor. 1:30—But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:  
1Cor. 1:31—That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.
  - 2Cor. 10:17—But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.
  - Gal. 6:14—But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.
  - 2Cor. 4:6—For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
  - 2Cor. 4:7—But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.
- Having recovered justification by faith alone, salvation by grace alone and in Christ alone, it was only natural, that having these lights shined on Luther’s heart should bring about the outcome to the glory of God alone. Everywhere Luther looked he saw refutation after refutation of everything the Catholic system was teaching. The idea of everything being to the glory of God alone brought about not only new thinking in Theology, but in every day practical life as well.
- “The Reformation taught that Christian learning and growth was a 24/7 deal. It was wrong in the Middle Ages (and in this dispensation of grace at all) to divide Christians between the “laity” and the “religious.” There was a legitimate concern in underscoring the religious or worshipful dimension of ordinary, daily Christian conduct and especially, how our vocation is to be directed to God’s glory.” (Brummel, 90). This thinking would pave the way for increased honor among the trades, manufacturing, production, and commercial life because it was now understood that God could be glorified in all aspects of the believer’s life.

### **Sola Scriptura**

- According to the Scriptures Alone.
  - 2Tim. 3:15—And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
  - 2Tim. 3:16—All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

- 2Tim. 3:17—That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.
- Rom. 15:4—For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
- There is not an aspect of our spiritual lives that is not touched by Scripture. We know of the gospel by Scripture. We know of salvation by grace through faith by Scripture. We know that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law by Scripture. We know of the dispensation of grace given to and through the Apostle Paul by Scripture. We know the revelation of the mystery by Scripture. We know of the future rapture of the Body of Christ and the following tribulation by Scripture.
- “Therefore, the real issue between Luther and his opponents was that of biblical authority versus ecclesiastical authority.” (Brummel, 13). The Catholic system denies the sufficiency of Scripture and considered tradition of equal value.
  - “...the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” (CCC, 82).
- At the Diet of Worms in 1521 Luther was called to recant his positions that he had previously been espousing and putting out in booklet form. Luther’s reply:
  - “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.” (McGrath, 55).
- Luther appealed to Scripture. So do we. It is the sole and final authority over our lives. It alone is sufficient for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The Bible is complete leaving nothing to be added. The only way to understand Scripture today, in the dispensation of grace is through rightly dividing prophecy from mystery. The only authority we have to speak concerning spiritual matters comes from Scripture; and it is enough.

### **Conclusion: Pauline Authority**

- One point that gets consistently overlooked, especially regarding the “solus”, the five points of doctrine that came out of the Reformation, is that they all relied on Pauline authority. What Luther and other reformers had uncovered was in no small way because of their adherence to the Apostle Paul’s teachings; his thirteen epistles.
- J. H. Merle D’Aubigne recounts in his great work “The History of the Reformation” a man by the name of George Stafford, a professor at Cambridge in 1513. “Paul is risen from the dead,” many said as they heard him. And not just the person of Paul it was his doctrine which Stafford laid before his hearers. “Stafford taught that redemption was accomplished, that the satisfaction offered by Jesus Christ was perfect; and he added, that

Popery having revived the kingdom of the law, God by the Reformation was now reviving the kingdom of grace. The students applauded such teaching and asked themselves who is the most indebted to the other? Stafford to Paul who left him the holy epistles, or Paul to Stafford, who has resuscitated that apostle and his holy doctrines, which the Middle Ages had obscured?" (D'Aubigne, 636).

- In Paul's epistles alone do we find the doctrines for the Body of Christ today. The gospel. The Revelation of the Mystery. The Dispensation of Grace. The all sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. The believer's hope. The redemption of the purchased possession. Our future home in Heaven. The Judgment Seat of Christ. Rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Paul's special and unique Apostleship. So many truths. All God-breathed, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and revealed for us by Paul. We do not magnify Paul, but rather his office.
  - Rom. 11:13—For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:
- Only as believers come to understand the importance of Pauline authority will spiritual confusion cease, which is why the Reformation is still continuing today. Turning away from Paul is to turn away from Christ and the authority of Scripture; which is what caused the need for a reformation in the first place and caused almost two thousand years of spiritual bondage, slavery and darkness. Do not ignore Paul, whom Christ sent to preach Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But the secret is out, so let's help to make all men see what is the fellowship of this mystery.

## Lesson 4 Sola Scriptura: Christianity's Dangerous Idea

David W. Reid

### Satan's Warfare Against the Word of God

- The Bible clearly and joyfully reveals Satan's defeat and doom. Thus, his hostility toward the word of God is easy to understand.
  - Gen. 3:15—And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
  - Rom. 16:20—And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen.
  - Col. 2:15—[And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
  - Rev. 12:12—Therefore rejoice, [ye] heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
  - Rev. 20:2—And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
  - Rev. 20:10—And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
- Satan's hostility toward the word of God has manifested itself in a multitude of different attacks on the word of God throughout the ages. He has questioned God's word (Gen. 3:1), misquoted it (Gen. 3:1), denied it (Gen. 3:4), hid it for lengthy periods of time (2Kin. 22:8,13), physically destroyed it (Jer. 36:23), misapplied it outside of context (Matt. 4:6), corrupted it (2Cor. 2:17), and created counterfeits of it (2Th. 2:2)
  - Gen. 3:1—Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
  - Gen. 3:4—And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:
  - 2Kin. 22:8—And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.
  - 2Kin. 22:13—Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto

the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

- Jer. 36:23—And it came to pass, [that] when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast [it] into the fire that [was] on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that [was] on the hearth.
- Matt. 4:6—And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- 2Cor. 2:17—For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.
- 2The. 2:2—That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

### **Barriers Between the Common Man and God's Word**

- During the Middle Ages, Rome had forbidden possession of the Old and New Testaments and the translation thereof. Since the church asserted the authority to forbid the Bible, it was thus clear that the authority of the church superseded that of the Bible.
  - Council of Toulouse (1229), Canon 14: ‘We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old and the New Testament; unless anyone from the motives of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.’ (Peters, 195)
  - Council of Tarragona (1234): “No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned lest, be he a cleric or a layman, he be suspected until he is cleared of all suspicion.” (Doyle)
- Not only was the Bible forbidden from the people, but the Roman Mass itself was distant. The Roman Mass was in Latin and continued to be in Latin until the 1960s. The typical attendee at a mass wouldn’t understand it and thus could not possibly have been edified.
  - 1Co 14:11—Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.
  - 1Co 14:12—Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.
  - Edification is impossible if one does not understand what is said.
- “During the Middle Ages, the laity was largely disconnected from the Bible. Many monastic orders—such as the Benedictines—placed a high value on detailed, extensive study of the Bible. Yet such a knowledge was simply impossible for most ordinary Christians, most of whom could neither read nor afford to buy a manuscript of the Bible.

The advent of printing would alleviate the latter problem, although Johann Gutenberg's first printed Bibles cost far more than large houses of his day." (McGrath, p. 214)

- The common man during the Middle Ages faced multiple barriers that kept him from the word of God:
  - 1. Possession of the Bible was forbidden by the Church;
  - 2. Most men could not read;
  - 3. If men could read, they would have to learn to read in Latin, not simply their vernacular language, since the scriptures only existed in Latin;
  - 4. Bible manuscripts were extremely expensive; and
  - 5. Even if they could overcome all of the foregoing challenges, the Bible that would have been available was Jerome's Latin Vulgate, not the Received Text.

### **Sola Scriptura**

- Contrary to the doctrine of the Roman Church, Wycliffe, Huss, Luther and Tyndale all viewed scripture as the ultimate authority. William Chillingworth put it thus: "The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of the Protestants." This is the idea of sola scriptura. (McGrath, 199)
- *Wycliffe*. "Many of Wycliffe's doctrines were far in advance of the age in which he lived. He anticipated the principles of a more enlightened generation. 'The scripture alone is truth,' he said; and his doctrine was formed on that foundation alone." (Miller, 466)
- *Huss*. "Huss was subjected to every kind of persuasion and ill-treatment to induce him to retract what he had taught, namely that salvation is by grace, through faith, and apart from the works of the law, and that no title or position, however exalted, can make a man acceptable to God without godliness of life. With humility and a rare courage and ability, he steadfastly maintained that he was ready to retract anything he had taught provided it could be shown from Holy Scripture that he was wrong, but that he would withdraw nothing that he saw to be taught in the Word of God." (Broadbent, 116)
- *Luther*. At the Diet of Worms (1521), Luther based his refusal to recant on scripture itself:
  - "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand<sup>2</sup>, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." (McGrath, 55)

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<sup>2</sup> There is uncertainty as to whether Martin Luther actually said the famous "Here I stand" sentence or whether it was subsequently added by a printer. (McGrath, p. 484)

- *Tyndale*. “Not long after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, ‘We were better to be without God's laws than the pope's.’ Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, ‘I defy the pope, and all his laws;’ and added, ‘If God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than he did.’” (Foxye’s, Chapter XII)
- “Debates about biblical interpretation take place in every Christian community, not merely Protestant ones. What distinguishes Protestantism at this point is its principled refusal to allow any authority above scripture, such as a pope or council. This principle is often affirmed using the Latin slogan *Scriptura ipsius interpres* (“Scripture is its own interpreter.”). Whereas Catholicism resolves such tensions through magisterial pronouncements on the part of the teaching authority of the church, Protestantism recognizes no such authority above scripture. Such tensions must be resolved by means that will command support within Protestantism on account of their intrinsic merits, including their intellectual plausibility and their consonance with the biblical writings as a whole.” (McGrath, 221)

### Vernacular Language

- The Protestant leaders made a strategic, intentional decision to communicate to the common man in the vernacular languages.
- *Luther*. Prior to Luther’s day, it had been difficult or impossible for a private individual to reach a wide audience since there was no mass media. But with the invention of the printing press and its increased deployment over time, Luther was among the first private citizens with the ability to communicate directly and broadly to the common man.
- It is sometimes thought that Luther’s posting of his famous Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg was what made his views widely known. However, the church door was simply the bulletin board of its day. Posting something on a bulletin board does not make it widely known. It was the printing press that brought Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses to the attention of the public. (Pettegree, 36, 54)
- In Luther’s dispute with John Tetzel over the selling of indulgences, Luther made a number of significant strategic decisions.
  - Luther decided to respond in German, the language of the common man, rather than Latin, the language of the academics. Luther’s choice to make the matter a public issue, rather than an academic discussion, was the point at which there was no turning back for Luther. (Pettegree, xii, 78-79)
  - Rather than write lengthy academic tomes, Luther’s writings were typically short, concise and direct. Luther’s *Sermon on Indulgence and Grace* was an eight page pamphlet that could be read in ten minutes. (Pettegree, 5, 81, 334)
  - This brevity enabled Luther’s works to be read by a wide audience and also reduced the economic risk for printers deciding whether to print a new edition of

one of Luther's writings since their investment would be comparatively small. (Pettegree, 335)

- Luther published his first work in 1516, and by 1520, he was the most prolific living author. "Luther's works outstrip those of any other author by a factor of ten; he outpublished the most successful of his Catholic opponents by a factor of thirty." (Pettegree, 115, 213)
- "In the first years 1517 to 1520, the most important readers were to be found among the clergy and local intelligentsia, men who would then go on to be leaders in their own right. This was the period when a relatively high proportion of the literature of the Reformation was still in Latin, the language of clerical conversation. But in the five years after Luther's condemnation at Worms in 1521, 88 percent of the published editions of his works were in German." (Pettegree, 208-09)
- The Reformation was not driven by Martin Luther's revolutionary doctrinal teaching, including justification by faith. As seen earlier, Luther's doctrinal views were similar to Jan Huss and the Lollards. In fact, there are many parallels between the lives of Jan Huss and Martin Luther.
  - Although Luther initially was critical of Huss, Luther eventually came to realize that he was a Hussite in doctrine. (Broadbent, 123-124)
  - "When at the height of the 'Luther Affair' in 1521, Martin journeyed across Germany to face the judgment of the German Empire at the Diet of Worms, he did so under guarantee of safe-conduct. Luther would be allowed to arrive and depart unharmed. But there were those among the emperor's entourage who urged him to repudiate this promise and have Luther arrested and executed. Such had been the fate of another heretic, Jan Hus, a century before, and it was the fate that many of Luther's friends expected for him. Luther himself did not expect to leave Worms alive." (Pettegree, 5)
  - Both Jan Huss and Martin Luther were summoned before the authorities to answer for their views, and both were given promises of safe conduct. When Martin Luther left for the Diet of Worms, he did not believe that he would return alive. (Pettegree, 4-5)
    - Perhaps the greatest difference between the lives of Jan Huss and Martin Luther was that Luther's promise of safe conduct was honored but Huss's was not.
- What seems to have preserved Luther was widespread sentiment in Luther's favor that restrained the powers that be from eliminating Luther as they otherwise would have.
  - "Thus we return to the paradox with which we began this book: printing was essential to the creation of Martin Luther, but Luther was also a determining, shaping force in the German printing industry. Many things conspired to ensure Luther's unlikely survival through the first years of the Reformation, but one of them was undoubtedly print. Books, circulating with uncontrollable rapidity through the German towns, created at least the appearance of a new consensus:

that the settled will of the German people was that Luther should be heard. This intimidated and sometimes silenced opponents, and fortified Luther's far from numerous supporters in the German Estates. But Luther could not have been a force in the German church without his instinctive, towering talent as a writer. This was his most astonishing gift to the Reformation and to the German print industry." (Pettegree, 338)

- Men like to sin in secret. The powers that be would have been happy to execute Luther privately, but his cause came to the attention of the public through the printing press (Pettegree, 89). The authorities were thus faced with having to weigh their strong desire to eliminate Luther against the public outcry that would result. Ultimately, they chose not to eliminate him.

- *Tyndale.*

- "Finally in this they be all agreed, to drive you from the knowledge of the scripture, and that ye shall not have the text thereof in the mother tongue, and to keep the world still in darkness, to the intent they might sit in the consciences of the people, through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their filthy lusts, their proud ambition, and unsatiable covetousness, and to exalt their own honor above King and Emperor, yea, and above God himself.

A thousand books had they lever [i.e. rather] to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the scripture should come to light. For as long as they may keep that down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke or despise their abominations with arguments of philosophy and with wordly [worldly?] similitudes and apparent reasons of natural wisdom. And with wresting the scripture unto their own purpose clean contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text, and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories, and amaze them expounding it in many senses before the unlearned lay people (when it hath but one simple literal sense whose light the owls cannot abide), that though thou feel in thine heart and art sure how that all is false that they say, yet couldest thou not solve their subtle riddles.

Which thing only moved me to translate the New Testament. Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text. For else whatsoever truth is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again, partly with the smoke of their bottomless pit whereof thou readest Apocalypse 9 — that is, with apparent reasons of sophistry and traditions of their own making, founded without ground of scripture — and partly in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is impossible to gather of the text, if thou see the process, order and meaning thereof. (Tyndale, Preface)

- Tyndale was trying to communicate scriptural truth to the common man untrained in Latin, but his adversaries resisted him with spurious arguments. It was a disagreement in English over the meaning of a Latin text, and the observer unfamiliar with Latin had no idea who or what to believe. The issue was a stalemate, and the organized church had history, tradition, church councils, and numbers on its side. Tyndale correctly realized

that the only way to establish the common man in the truth was to give them a Bible in their own language so that people could see the truth with their own eyes. This is what Tyndale did, and that is why he was burned at the stake with his translation.

### **The Vernacular Textus Receptus**

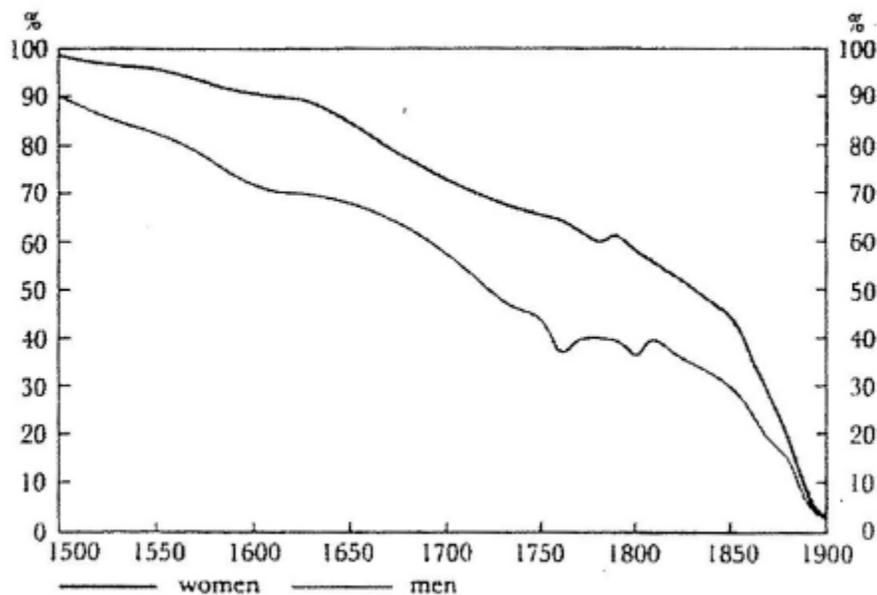
- The translation of the Textus Receptus into the vernacular languages of Europe was the driving force of the Reformation.
- God intended that the scriptures be so readily available that men could search them daily.
  - Act. 17:11—These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.
  - 2Tim. 2:15—Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- With regard to Wycliffe, “[I]t was the translation and circulation of the Bible that gave lasting efficacy to the holy truths which he taught, and was the imperishable crown of all his other labours — the treasure which he bequeathed to future and to better ages.” (Miller, 466)
- “Before Luther had posted up his theses, the holy scriptures were circulated in England. Thus was the Reformation chiefly accomplished by the word of God. [ ] ‘The Reformation in England,’ says D’Aubigne, “perhaps to a greater extent than that of the continent, was effected by the word of God.’ Those great individualities we met with in Germany, Switzerland, and France—men like Luther, Zwingle, and Calvin—do not appear in England; but holy scripture is widely circulated. What brought light into the British Isles subsequently to the year 1517, and on a more extended scale after the year 1526, was the word—the invisible power—of the living God.” (Miller, 804)
  - 1526 is when Tyndale published the first complete edition of his New Testament based upon the Received Text.

### **Literacy and the Textus Receptus**

- The publishing of the Textus Receptus in the vernacular languages produced a massive increase in literacy and intellectual vitality.
- Interest in Martin Luther’s teaching was so great that there were people who had never previously owned books who decided to purchase some of his writings. (Pettegree, 144)
- “Not only were people more interested in their faith, but levels of lay literacy had soared, enabling laypeople to be more critical and informed about what they believed and what they expected of their clergy. [ ] With the advent of printing, books became more widely available and now lay well within the reach of an economically empowered middle class. [ ] Laypeople were beginning to think for themselves and no longer regarded themselves as cravenly subservient to the clergy in matters of Christian education.” (McGrath, 24-25)

- The “Kralitz Bible” produced by the Bohemian Brethren “is the basis of the translation still in use; it became the foundation of Czech literature.” (Broadbent, 125)
- Based upon the available data, it seems that the vast majority of humanity throughout time has been illiterate, but literacy rates rose coinciding with the Reformation. (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina; Floud and Johnson, 344)
  - From 3500BC, literacy was very restricted and closely associated with the exercise of power
  - 1475: 5% literacy rate in England; 10% in Germany
  - 1550: 18% literacy rate in England; 18% in Germany
  - 1600: 35% literacy rate in England; 23% in Germany
  - 1650: 55% literacy rate in England; 31% in Germany; 22% in US
  - 1750: 55% literacy rate in England; 38% in Germany; 48% in US
  - 1820: Only 12% of world is literate
  - 1870: 25% of world attends school; 20% of world is literate
  - 2012: 83% of world is literate; over 80% attend school; Sub-Sahara Africa literacy rates still below 30%.

Estimated illiteracy of men and women in England, 1500-1900



- Faith comes by hearing.
  - Rom. 10:17—So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
    - Much of humanity throughout the ages has been illiterate. God had the wisdom to design the universe so that faith does not come from the sight of words on the page but from hearing. Thus, the importance of preaching.

### **Sola Scriptura and Individualism**

- The doctrine of *sola scriptura* exalted scripture as the highest authority. Scripture prevailed over everything, including man’s opinion, tradition, and the church’s interpretation of the scripture. The effect of *sola scriptura* was to make the individual the ultimate interpreter.
- *Sola scriptura* thus replaced the singular authority of the Roman Church with the unrestrained individualism of all believers interpreting the word of God for themselves. This liberty permits an endless number of possible interpretations. *Sola scriptura* was not simply a rejection of the authority of the Roman Church but a rejection of all authority over the faith of the believer other than the word of God and the believer’s own conscience.
  - “The dangerous new idea, firmly embodied at the heart of the Protestant revolution, was that all Christians have the right to interpret the Bible for themselves. [ ] If every individual was able to interpret the Bible as he pleased, the outcome could only be anarchy and radical religious individualism.” (McGrath, 2-3)
  - “The innate tendency to fragmentation that is characteristic of Protestantism.” (McGrath, 148)
- “Untidy though it may seem, all Protestants agree that some texts are to be interpreted literally and others metaphorically. The problem is that there is no universal agreement on which texts should be allocated to each category.” (McGrath, 224)
- “In one sense, ‘Protestantism’ designates a way of doing theology rather than any given set of possible or specific outcomes.” (McGrath, 244)
- “It is well known that Luther’s early optimism about the ability of *Herr Omnes*—his term for the German people—to interpret the Bible was severely challenged by the events of the Peasants’ War.” (McGrath, 65)
  - “[A] revolt among the peasantry (1524-1525) faced the movement with its first existential crisis: the more so because many of its leaders, to Wittenberg’s great embarrassment, claimed to be inspired to their gospel of social justice by Luther’s teaching.” (Pettegree, 169)

- Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. *Sola scriptura* is the scriptural approach. But it not only confers freedom of interpretation; it also imposes the obligation of honest study, which is too often neglected.

## Lesson 5

### Impact & Response: Analyzing the Cultural Importance of the Revolution

Jeffery A. Newnum

#### Introduction

- These issues are of eternal importance. They seem academic to us now, as we read and study them in regards to history, but the impact and reality of these issues are eternally important. And to be honest, they are scarier than any scary movie you've ever watched. Because at least the movie has an end. Eternity does not. What nightmare of nightmares would it be to check all the Catholic boxes, pass on to eternity, and open your eyes in the fire that is never quenched? That is where the road to Catholicism leads.
- The Council of Trent was named after the city the council was held and which was located in Northern Italy. It was the naming convention of the time. Diet of Worms. Diet of Augsburg. Diet of Speyer. Council of Nicaea. Council of Florence. Etc. The Council of Trent was held in three different sessions between 1545 and 1563 and spanned three Popes (Paul III, Julius III, and Pius IV). It was an on-again off-again affair because of the tumultuous period of the times.
- “Long-standing historical debate on sixteenth-century Catholic history features an effort to determine which Catholic actions were direct responses to the challenge of Protestantism and which were a product of internal Catholic impulses. When responses to Protestantism are in view, historians usually speak of the ‘Counter-Reformation.’ When internal current within the church receive attention, historians are prone to talk of the ‘Catholic Reformation.’ This debate is important, but it can also obscure a more significant historical reality—that the sum total of counter-reform, reform, papal initiatives, and the Council of Trent left the Catholic Church at the end of the sixteenth century a systematically different body than it had been a century before” (Noll, 194). What Noll means here is not different in doctrinal issues, but different in approach and form.

#### Trent as Internal Response

- Essentially, the internal response to the Protestant Reformation was the initiator, or catalyst for the possibility of reformation by revolution. What that means, is that what the Catholic Church did internally set the stage for the era to really be a revolution, and not merely a reformation. Pastor Bryan Ross in Lesson 30 of the Grace History Project, quotes historian Jacques Barzun regarding the difference between reformation and revolution.
  - “The modern Era begins, characteristically, with a revolution. It is commonly called the Protestant Reformation, but the train of events starting early in the sixteenth century and ending—if indeed it has ended—more than a century later has all the features of a revolution. I take these to be: the violent transfer of power and property in the name of an idea.” (Ross, 1)
- It was the internal response culminating from the Council of Trent that led to policies, procedures and practices that the Catholic Church would fully adopt and use at every

discretion to bring about either intimidation or subjugation. Internally, the Catholic Church had been dealing with calls for reform for centuries. Of course, it had to be internal, because to be external was to be a heretic and burned at the stake. But two main internal struggles were vying for reform leading up to the Council of Trent; Mysticism and Scholasticism. Mysticism wanted to focus on the internal, emotional, touchy-feely aspect of a personal devotion to God best summed up in the book “The Imitation of Christ” by Thomas a’ Kempis. It’s a Catholic devotional mixed with some rudimentary truths about everyday living. An example of its mysticism is: “The Eucharist can help the faithful draw near to Christ.” (Bell and Sumner, 227).

- The second internal struggle was Scholasticism which was essentially a byproduct of Humanism which focused on the mind, intellect and learning. Humanism during the Reformation era is sharply contrasted against the Humanism of our day. Then it was comprised of classical literature infused with a Renaissance view of human merit and achievement; the breeding ground of secularization. Today, Humanism emphasizes human fulfillment in the scientific and natural world with a complete rejection of belief in God. Obviously, one led to the other.
- Erasmus of Rotterdam is considered one of the greatest Humanists ever, and played a big role bringing reform to the Catholic Church through his writings because of his scathing view of the Church’s abuses. While he and Luther agreed on many things, they split over the authority of the Pope and the Catholic Church itself. Gasparo Contarini, a leader of a group formed in 1517 who called themselves the Oratory of Divine Love, followed Erasmus’s lead and was later part of a reform commission that would provide the basis the Catholic Church needed to confront the Protestant “plague.” In 1537 the commission gave its recommendations for what to reform; abuse of indulgences, secularization of church offices, bribery, prostitution, and greater attention to spiritual matters. (Bell and Sumner, 229).

### **Trent as External Response**

- The Council of Trent went on for three sessions from 1545 – 1563. The first two sessions were done by 1552 and had already reaffirmed the validity of tradition as equal to Scripture, that Jerome’s Vulgate was the authentic Bible text, that the Pope alone had authority to interpret Scripture, reaffirmed all seven sacraments as essential to salvation which could only be administered by the clergy, the continued sale of indulgences, and faith plus works for salvation.
- Before the Catholic Church could consider internal reformation it had to take drastic measures now to combat the spread of Protestantism. So in 1542 Pope Paul III established the Congregation of the Inquisition, known as the Roman Inquisition which was led by six cardinals who titled themselves “Inquisitors General.” Although this predates the Council of Trent, it shows the thinking of the Catholic hierarchy at the time to use violence first and discussion second.
- Because of the Roman Inquisition and the open season on heretics, by 1559 John Foxe had already compiled his famous book, “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.” During this time and with the sanction of the Catholic Church, Mary Tudor in England was on the hunt and is estimated to have murdered over 300 Protestants earning her the title “Bloody Mary.” Many of these people John Foxe knew personally. “Foxe’s account of the final days of

England's leading Protestant martyrs was avidly read, hardening attitudes within the community and strengthening its resolve to resist and eventually to overcome this evil. In France, violent deaths of possibly as many as thirty thousand Protestants in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572 further radicalized many more Protestants." (McGrath, 130,131). Something I noticed in all my reading, was that many books try to sanitize the Roman Inquisition, to either downplay it or not discuss it altogether.

- At no time during this period, and really not until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (almost 100 years after these events) which Pastor Ross wrote about in his Master's Thesis of "The Thirty Years War" was the Catholic Church going to concede anything. The Council of Trent represented a reaffirming, a retightening, a doubling down of the Catholic Church's previous policies and stances. As the sole religious and political structure it was not going quietly into the night, and in every way contrary to Scripture, it was going to keep the reins by any means necessary.
- The Council of Trent was a "getting back to basics." While the reformers were turning to Scripture and Christ, the Catholic Church was turning to everything but Scripture and Christ. "Trent stipulated that bishops were to make regular visits to the churches in their diocese; they were to hold an annual meeting for instruction and encouragement with all the ecclesiastical officials under their authority; and they were to see to the establishment of a seminary for the training of priests in each of their respective jurisdictions." (Noll, 200). This is how Noll describes the before and after of Trent for the Catholic Church. Not different in doctrine, but in function and form.
- "The last session of the council reaffirmed the counter-reforming canons and decrees of the first two sessions, but also began to chart a course for the Catholic Church oriented more towards its needs for the future than its quarrels with Protestants...Trent was no longer primarily directed against the doctrines of the Protestants or launched in response to their criticism of Catholic belief and practice. Rather, reform under papal leadership went beyond a 'Counter-Reformation' to positive and constructive efforts at building a more tightly organized, better instructed, and effectively controlled church than the old institution before 1563 had been." (Noll, 200).
- In the military, after training or a mission, you conduct an A.A.R., or after-action review. It is a lessons learned type of review. The Council of Trent was an AAR for the Catholic Church to review what it thought it did well, and what it needed to work on.

### **Impact of Trent & Counter Reformation/Revolution**

- Trent ended by 1563 and with it the way forward was spelled out for the Catholic Church. The only reforming accomplished was to curb moral abuses within, not to return to Scripture. Apocryphal books were declared as Scripture while Protestants were increasingly leaving them out as they saw them of no importance in doctrinal matters. "Trent insisted that the notion of justification by faith alone was unacceptable in that it failed to do justice to the New Testament emphasis on the place of love in the Christian life. Trent argued that justification is a complex process, enfolding both acceptance and subsequent transformation by God. In other words, it rolled justification and sanctification into a single concept. This argument was a recipe for confusion..."(McGrath, 249). Reconciliation with Protestants was not the goal, and indeed, never has been.

- Trent was reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. In responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church, the question was asked, “Did the Second Vatican Council change the Catholic doctrines of the Church?” Pope John XXIII responded, “The Second Vatican Council neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine, rather it developed, deepened and more fully explained it. There is no better comment to make than to say that this promulgation really changes nothing of the traditional doctrine. What Christ willed, we also will. What was, still is.” (Amato, Second Vatican Council Responses).
- The other driving force to come out of the Counter- Revolution was arguably one of the greatest impacts of the Catholic response itself; the founding of the Society of Jesus by Ignatius Loyola. Although not officially connected with the Council of Trent, the Society was formed as part of the overall reaction to the spread of the reformation. The Society began with just six members in 1534 but was formally sanctioned in 1540 by Pope Paul III. The society would become a bulwark for the future growth and outreach of the Catholic Church. What Luther did for Protestantism and the Reformation Ignatius would do for the Catholic Church; and the impact of the Society cannot be overstated.
- Loyola, a Spaniard, was born the son of a noble and fought for the King of Spain until 1521 when he was greatly injured. After his injury, he put aside soldiering, and the world, and sought refuge for his soul as a Dominican monk; he became fanatically religious. This was partly influenced by his reading during recovery of Thomas a’ Kempis’ book, “The Imitation of Christ” which stressed very strict devotion to the Catholic Christ. Like Luther, there was no rest in his soul. He sought severe penances. Daily begged for food. Spent 7 or more hours on his knees in prayer. Flagellated himself three times a day. Grew out his hair and nails. He saw God as angry at him. He agonized, every bit like Luther did, over his sins. He was depressed, seeing no way to appease God. He experienced no comfort in confession or ordinances. But instead of turning to the all sufficient work of Christ, he turned to himself. Luther and Loyola both had a deep conviction of their sins and wished to have assurance of salvation. In this, there was no difference between the two monks, except where Luther had a Staupitz with a Bible in his hand, Loyola did not. Where Luther concluded his conscience captive to the Word of God and the light it brings, Loyola concluded his internal turmoil was of the devil; and so put aside thinking of his sins, and turned towards the spirit of darkness. Loyola began having many visions, dreams, and saw numerous apparitions. (D’Aubigne, 293,294).
  - Loyola told of an apparition of Jesus, in which he saw Jesus as a big round form shining as gold. This is on par, on the level with Joseph Smith and Mohammed. Instead of seeking the truth in Scripture, he imagined communication with the kingdom of spirits. “His life soon consisted only of ecstasies and contemplations.” His visions became more frequent. In one, while he was singing hymns to the “holy virgin,” his soul was seized with ecstasy. He remained motionless; the mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed to his eyes under magnificent symbols. He shed tears, sobbed aloud, and did not stop talking about the experience. These apparitions ceased his doubts about salvation. Where Luther turned to the Word and faith, Loyola took his oath to dreams and visions, and fantastical apparitions became the principle of his life and faith. (D’Aubigne, 294).

- It was on this foundation, that Loyola had laid for himself, and his devotion to the Catholic Christ and the virgin Mary, that the Society of Jesus sprang. This strict devotion and “self-denial” (which is more closer to self-affirmation), would spark an internal restructuring and re-focus for the Catholic Church that rivaled and at some times surpassed what the Protestants were doing. They took an oath to the pope of absolute obedience, not counting the cost, toiling without rest with no thought of reward (Noll, 213). Six members became seven. Twenty five years later seven became a thousand. Sixty years later they numbered over thirteen thousand. They rejected those of poor “moral” character, (disregard the fact that the whole thing is false teaching which is immoral), and weak constitutions due to the strictness of the order. It would soon become “the most powerful instrument of Catholic revival and resurgence in this era of religious crisis.” (Noll, 193). In essence, they were able to “stop the bleeding” of the reformation, and in some areas regain a Catholic foothold. They were very zealous in their indoctrination and outreach. Their efforts were mainly focused on education and mission work and by 1640 they had established over five hundred colleges in Europe. (Bell and Sumner, 238).
  - “It is indeed difficult to exaggerate the practical and symbolic significance of the founding of the Jesuits.” The Jesuits were extremely significant and vital for three main reasons;
    - 1) one of the finest expressions of the Catholic Reformation that...revitalized the Roman Catholic Church...and would be the most remarkable in winning Protestant regions back to Rome, and for solidifying the faith of those in Europe who wavered in their loyalty to the Catholic Church.”
    - 2) the Jesuits symbolized the strength of what would become traditional Roman Catholicism all the way to the mid-twentieth century
    - 3) the missionary zeal of the Jesuits also made them an extraordinary potent force in the history of Christianity. (Noll, 193).

### **Impact of Reformation on Politics**

- Julius Henry Marx, otherwise known as Groucho Marx, the notable comedian and actor is attributed with the quote, “Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.” To some extent, this underlying theme has always permeated politics, and mainly for three reasons; 1) sin, 2) finite/limited knowledge, and 3) self-interest. Without the wisdom of God, we turn to ourselves, and our own knowledge and self interests. This was true before the Reformation, during the Reformation, and after the Reformation. But, what the Reformation did open the way for, was for the freedom to decide and choose how politics was going to be applied, and I believe this started with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.
- What prompted the Peace of Westphalia is that once the Reformation/ Revolution had ignited, people wanted the right to choose for themselves. This wasn’t anything new, but they were gaining leverage to be able to do so. Honesty, for mankind the right to choose goes back to the Garden of Eden. This manifested itself in the Peasants revolt, which was promptly and brutally extinguished, but the avalanche had started and was only going to

gain momentum as time went on. As the Reformation progressed, and both sides used physical and violent force to secure their own way of thinking, this led to more military action. There would be more councils and more Diets (Speirer 1 and 2, Augsburg-Augsburg Protestant Confession, Peace of Augsburg- as the ruler so the region etc) leading to the Peace of Westphalia, but none would have the lasting impact of Westphalia. In other words, the Peace of Westphalia granted religious liberty, and in granting religious liberty, it granted political liberty.

- Pastor Bryan Ross in his Thesis “The Protestant Revolution and the Thirty Years War” writes that the “Thirty Years War was the capstone event of the Protestant Revolution that began over one hundred years earlier. The Peace of Westphalia which ended the conflict in 1648 closed the door on the religious wars of Europe and brought about the establishment of a completely new political structure. In short, the Peace of Westphalia weakened the Hapsburg states of Spain and Austria, strengthened France by awarding it German territory, and made German princes independent of the Holy Roman emperor. The treaty thus abandoned the idea of a Catholic empire that would rule most of Europe. It recognized Europe as a group of equal independent states. This marked the beginning of the modern state system and was the most important result of the Thirty Years War.” (Ross, 5). Thus, the conflict over religious freedom resulted in political freedom as well.
- The Peace of Westphalia “granted rights of private worship, rights to emigrate throughout Europe, full voting rights for Northern German governmental officials, marked a definite step toward separating politics and religion, began secularizing political institutions, and granted freedom of conscience to the individual in religious beliefs and affiliations” (Ross, 43). In the same way the Council of Trent cannot be overstated for its impact on the Counter-Reformation, so too can the impact of the Peace of Westphalia not be overstated. There existed nothing like it in the previous 1600+ years.
- Luther’s separation of the political and spiritual spheres was called the “two-kingdoms” doctrine which he wrote about in his work, “Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed” (1523). In his view, God ruled in two ways, through the spiritual kingdom and the earthly kingdom. Where the church was to have rule in spiritual affairs, the earthly princes were to have rule in worldly or governmental affairs. “Where the temporal (secular government) authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God’s government and only misleads souls and destroys them,” thereby indicating that temporal/civil/secular authority has its limits. (Luther, 18).
  - Luther continued, “When a man-made law is imposed upon the soul to make it believe this or that as its human author may prescribe, there is certainly no word of God for it. If there is no word of God for it, then we cannot be sure whether God wishes to have it so, for we cannot be certain that something which he does not command is pleasing to him.” (Luther, 18).
- The separation of powers in Luther’s “two-kingdom doctrine” has had a great impact upon Western civilization’s development. The line of thinking can be easily traced out to our own day through Luther (1483-1546), Thomas Helwys (1575-1616) and his propagation of religious liberty, John Locke (1632-1704) in his writing “On the Difference Between Civil, and Ecclesiastical Power”, and James Madison (1751-1836) when he wrote “The Federalist #51” in 1788. (Bracey, 1,2).

- Helwys writes, “the king, although a king is but a mortal man and as a mortal man, though a king, has no authority whatsoever over the consciences of his subjects.” (Bracey, 2).
- James Madison, writing on Luther says, “America’s government illustrates the excellence of a system which, by a due distinction, to which the genius and courage of Luther led the way, between what is due Caesar and what is due to God, best promotes the discharge of both obligations.” (Bracey, 2).
- “As history unfolded, reformation swept through Germany, then continental Europe, and then England. King Henry VIII would establish the Church of England, from which the Puritans arose in hopes of purifying it. After much persecution and a civil war, a small band of Puritans set sail in 1620 on the Mayflower seeking religious liberty. This ship would famously come ashore at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts. The Puritans impact on America’s founding is seen especially in the writings of George Buchanan (1506-1582), John Knox (1514-1572), and Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661). (Bracey, 2)
  - “Buchanan argues that political power should be situated with the people and that kings are not above a land’s law and that citizens may resist and even punish tyrants.” (Bracey, 2)
  - John Knox wrote, “Kings then have not an absolute power in their regiment to do what pleases them, but their power is limited by God’s Word.” (Bracey, 2)
  - This all would lead straight to Thomas Jefferson who famously wrote that “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends (Life, liberty, pursuit of happiness), it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government.” (Bracey, 2).
- The Reformation took us from a union of church and state, to the secular authority of kings, and now to government by the consent of the people. A government by the consent of the people is a great thing, so long as the people are as John Adams put it, “a moral and religious people.” Adams said “our government is for a moral and religious people and wholly inadequate for the use of any other.” The inherent flaw then, in a government by the consent of the people, is the moral and spiritual condition of the people. So while “it probably isn’t accurate to say that democracy” or even a constitutional republic, “was a direct result of the Reformation,” it would be accurate to say that the Reformation absolutely paved the way for its resurgence. (Bell and Sumner, 292).

### **Impact of Reformation on Science**

- **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col 3:17).**
  - This verse became a creed, almost a rallying cry for life after the Reformation as people began to have the darkness lifted from their minds. The cloister (convents, monasteries) quickly became irrelevant and meaningless. The Reformation rediscovered that any moral line of work could glorify God and

from that emerged a “scientific revolution.”

- “The Reformation’s new hermeneutical strategies promoted by the first protestants were thus of central importance in establishing the conditions that made the emergence of modern science possible.” (McGrath, 373). Although these early Protestants established the conditions, most scholars argue that there is not necessarily a clear line from A – B regarding Protestantism and modern science as “already in the seventeenth century promoters of new approaches to the study of nature viewed their efforts as akin to those of the Protestant Reformers, and it was not uncommon for scientific innovators to be identified with key figures of the Reformation.
  - Copernicus and Paracelsus were thus dubbed “the Luther and Calvin” of natural philosophy, while Johannes Kepler was similarly known as the Luther of Astronomy. Francis Bacon suggested in the early seventeenth century that the reformation of the church provided the model and inspiration for a renovation of knowledge more generally.” (Howard, Noll, 101).
- In other words, “any simple story about the relationship between science and Protestantism is likely to be wrong” due to complexities and nuances of the era. “Science as we presently understand it only dates back to the nineteenth century. There has really never been a unitary thing called science that Protestantism could influence upon, and this is particularly true before the nineteenth century. The emergence of modern science signaled a decisive move away from the doctrines and methods of Aristotelian natural philosophy, and in this way, Protestantism had a great influence.” (Howard, Noll, 99). The Protestant Revolution and the scientific revolution were both, in the main, refutations of Aristotle.
- “One of the most important developments of this time was what is called the Copernican Revolution. Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) was a German Polish mathematician and astronomer who lived during the Reformation and what he was suggesting in his “Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies” disturbed the Catholic power structure only slightly less than did the works of the reformers. Copernicus posited that the earth and the rest of the planets revolved around the sun and that the moon revolved around the earth. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) later validated Copernicus’s hypothesis when he further developed the telescope and more accurately observed the rotations of the solar system (Bell, Sumner, 298,299).
- “In 1616, the Catholic Church warned Galileo not to defend the ideas of Copernicus. The pope summoned Galileo to stand trial before the Inquisition. In 1633, under threat of torture, he knelt before the cardinals and read aloud a signed confession in which he agreed that the ideas of Copernicus were false” (Ross, 2).
  - “Dominican Father Caccini in a sermon directly targeting Galileo insisted that “geometry is of the devil” and that “mathematicians should be banished as the authors of all heresies.” In 1992, however, (395 years later) pope John Paul II issued an apology to Galileo.
  - Galileo, firm in his convictions said, “I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.” (Collins, 154, 156, 158).

- Francis S. Collins, the Director of the National Institute of Health, who helped discover certain disease genes in DNA, and helped lead the Human Genome Project, says that before Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus, it was easy to think of the placement of the earth at the center of the majestic starry heavens because it seemed to represent a powerful argument for the existence of God. “If he put us on center stage, He must have built it all for us. (Collins, 85). Heliocentrism revised this method of thinking that everything revolves around mankind. The light of man’s knowledge after the fall grew dimmer and dimmer because he was cut off from The Light. This led to many things being forgotten and for new ideas and thoughts to creep in, such as a man/earth-centered universe.
- “Many anti-Christians claim that Christianity and science have been enemies for centuries. This is simply not true. Informed historians of science know that modern science first flourished under a Christian worldview. Professor Peter Harrison explains, “When the sixteenth century people began to read the Bible in a different way, they found themselves forced to jettison traditional conceptions of the world. Had it not been for the rise of the literal interpretation of the Bible and the subsequent appropriation of biblical narratives by early modern science, modern science may not have arisen at all. In sum, the Bible and its literal interpretation have played a vital role in the development of Western science. (Sarfati and Bates, 219-223)
- “Scientists started to study nature in the same way they studied the Bible and studied how nature really did work rather than accept philosophical ideas about how it should work. When this method was transferred to science and observing nature directly in an inductive and empirical way, modern science was born. There are certain essential features that make science possible at all, and include:
  - The universe is real; as opposed to an illusion.
  - The universe is orderly because God is a God of order.
  - God is Sovereign, and the only way to find out how His creation works is to investigate and experiment. Galileo demonstrated that apart from air resistance that weights fall at the same speed which Isaac Newton was later able to formulate as the result of universal gravitation.
  - Man should investigate the world around him because the mandate to subdue the earth has not been relinquished.
  - Man can think rationally and logically and that logic itself is objective. Although impaired from the fall, it has not been eliminated.
  - Results should be reported honestly so as to not bear false witness.” (Sarfati and Bates, 220-223).
- Even a cursory search for a scientific advancement timeline shows the reality of what the Reformation did to science. From about 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., there are only one or two entries of advancements per century. Between the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the list grows to four entries per century. The 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. had five listed, and then the 17<sup>th</sup> century exploded with twenty entries. What I take this

to mean is, that the closer we are to the truth and the closer we are to reality, whether in the Bible or in science or any field, the more we know about the world around us. What happened during the Protestant Revolution and the scientific revolution was trading lies for truth.

- “The medieval church gave natural philosophy the freedom to consider ideas contrary to Aristotle but not enough freedom to move beyond Aristotle to a new paradigm. The protestant Reformation, with its fresh hermeneutic of Scripture, the establishment of justification by faith, and trust in the sovereignty of God, allowed scientists to construct a new paradigm consisting of a passive nature made up of atoms that behave according to the laws imposed upon nature by God.” (Neste and Garrett, 230,231).

### **Impact of Reformation on Economics**

- “The first lesson of economics is scarcity: There is never enough of anything to satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics.” –Thomas Sowell.
- “Prior to capitalism, the way people amassed great wealth was by looting, plundering and enslaving their fellow man. Capitalism made it possible to become wealthy by serving your fellow man.” –Walter E. Williams
- “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.” –Milton Friedman
- “Economics is the study of how people allocate their limited resources in an attempt to satisfy their unlimited wants. As such, economics is the study of how people make choices. It asks three primary questions, what and how much will be produced, how will it be produced, and for whom will it be produced and is answered in two ways; will these questions be answered according to a centralized planning system (socialism/communism) or will it be answered according a price system (a market system/capitalism).” (Miller, 2-5).
- Every economic theory deals with the fact of scarcity. “All scarcity means is that we do not have enough of everything, including time, to satisfy our every desire. And because we do not have enough of everything, competition exists.” (Miller, 29). “Economics studies the consequences of the decisions that are made about the use of land, labor, capital, and other resources that go into producing the volume of output which determines a country’s standard of living. Scarcity means that what everybody wants adds up to more than there is.” (Sowell, 2,3).
  - Economics is not about money, but decision making. When you make the choice to go out to the movies or go play golf, it is an economic choice. You must give up the one to do the other, and what you give up, in economics, is called opportunity cost. It cost you giving up one thing to do the other.
- Just as Walter Williams pointed out that capitalism (private ownership of production and voluntary exchange of resources) made it possible to become wealthy be serving your fellow man, the Reformation is what made capitalism possible. Capitalism is a decentralized method of resource exchange and private (non-governmental) ownership of production. Almost every facet of life prior to the Reformation was centralized in some

manner. Agriculture was produced under a feudalist/mercantilist economy. Clothing, dishes, hardware were produced in guilds that received trade protections from this type of economy.

- “Mercantilism (between 16<sup>th</sup> and late 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), was essentially state absolutism; a system of Power or State-building. The King, nobles, and princes in order to become more powerful states, gave privileges to merchants to restrict imports and subsidize exports. The state (King, nobles, princes), granted exclusive rights to produce or sell a given product in a certain area, typically to allies of the Crown and ranged anywhere from something like trade with the Far East (East India Companies) or as small as manufacturing playing cards. The result was to privilege one set of business men at the expense of their competitors and consumers (who paid higher prices). (Rothbard, 213, 214).
  - Guilds (groups of merchants/tradesmen) were on the receiving end of such agreements, as they were granted protection from competition. Sometimes, the state would cartelize craft production by compelling all producers to join and obey the orders of privileged urban guilds. (Rothbard, 214). Guilds and mercantilism were mainstream until well into the nineteenth century. Some remain today in Europe, but on a much smaller scale. The advent of classical economics with Adam Smith would change everything. Classical economics, as put forth by Adam Smith in his monumental work “The Wealth of Nations,” argues that markets operate best when government intervenes least.

Adam Smith was the Luther of Economics. Smith famously quoted in his book “Wealth of Nations” that markets are guided by an “invisible hand” as he called it. “He said this not of divine providence, but from a scientific analysis, and from the free market analysis generally, that pursuit of self-interest on the market leads to advancing the interest of all. He saw it as the harmonizing influence of the free market.” (Rothbard, 465).

- How would the Protestant Reformation open the way up for free markets? Max Weber (a German sociologist and historian from 1864-1920) in his monumental work “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism argued that since the Reformation opened up the idea of godly secular work, then it became incumbent upon individuals to find this “calling” (or task set by God—usually something you were good at) and this became a vocation, and also in a Calvinistic way to validate one’s own election (finding your “calling” in your task set by God). How could you know if you were of the elect? You were fulfilling your calling and vocation of God! (Weber, 28-36, 76-83). What net, or sum total effect did this new idea of a secular vocation/ calling have for the glory of God?
  - “The Protestant Reformation, beginning in 1517, was both a shock to the market for religion and a first-order economic shock. While Protestant reformers aimed to elevate the role of religion, we find that the Reformation produced rapid economic secularization. Large numbers of monasteries were expropriated during the Reformation, particularly in Protestant regions. This transfer of resources shifted the demand for labor between religious and secular sectors: graduates from Protestant universities increasingly entered secular occupations. Consistent with forward-looking behavior, students at Protestant universities shifted from the study of theology toward secular degrees. The appropriation of resources by secular rulers is also reflected in construction: during the Reformation, religious

construction declined, particularly in Protestant regions, while secular construction increased, especially for administrative purposes.” (Cantoni, Dittmar, Yuchtman, Abstract).

- “Protestantism did more than bring about the theological adjustment that opened the way to a modern capitalist economy; it created the economic conditions that made such a change inevitable and essential.” (McGrath, 334). “As people began to immigrate to new places, they brought manufacturing and marketing skills with them. The publishing industry increasingly developed along with ancillary industries, and markets began expanding. With the abolition of the old ecclesiastical and guild system—the final obstacle to ‘modern capitalism’—these newcomers could set up business and begin manufacturing and trading without serious restrictions.” (McGrath, 334, 335).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

- In almost all points of doctrine, the Catholic Church of 2017 is the same Catholic Church of 1563. They do not recognize basic tenets of Christianity, continue to place mediators between the individual and Christ, and continue to Sacrifice Christ anew at every Mass. It would appear that the only thing that has changed for Catholicism is the date on the calendar. They are not moving closer to Protestantism, nor have any inclination to do so. As a matter of fact, in an article dated August 31<sup>st</sup> 2017, Pew research polls indicate just the opposite; that Protestants are closer to Catholics than they are Martin Luther (Zylstra, 1). Martin Luther would surely have the answer to that problem (Sola Scriptura).
- The Protestant Reformation paved the way for great strides in Science, Politics, Art, Literature, Law, Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy, Medicine, and Economics. And while we have made great achievements in many fields; we have discovered flight, separated church and state, cataloged innumerable species, created plastic, manufactured real-life prosthetics, and even developed the free market system, the greatest achievement of the Protestant Reformation was getting a copy of God’s Word in your hand.

**Lesson 6**  
**Reformation 2.0: How the 19th Century Resurgence of Pauline Truth Reinvigorated the Revolution**

Bryan C. Ross

**Introduction**

- Lessons 3 and 4 outlined and discussed in detail the five major doctrines of the Protestant Revolution:
  - *Sola Gratia* (“by grace alone”)
  - *Sola Fidea* (“by faith alone”)
  - *Solus Christus* (Christ alone)
  - *Sola Deo Gloria* (“Glory to God alone”)
  - *Sola Scriptura* (“by scripture alone”)
- Once again, it is important to note that the spiritual life generated by the Protestant Revolution was Pauline in nature. Martin Luther’s emphasis on justification by grace through faith apart from works signified an initial phase in the resurgence of Pauline truth.
- As one studies the doctrine of the Reformers, it does not take long to realize that they did not go far enough in terms of “recovering” Pauline truth. Major holes and blind spots persisted in Protestant Theology, especially in terms of their Ecclesiology (doctrine of the church) and Eschatology (study of future events). For the most part, Protestant Theology remained blind to the following aspects of Pauline truth:
  - Pauline origin of the church
  - Paul’s unique gospel and apostleship
  - Difference between prophecy and mystery
  - Difference between Israel and body of Christ
  - Difference between Israel’s earthly hope and the heavenly hope of the church
  - Difference between second coming of Christ and the catching up (Rapture) of the saints to meet the Lord in the air.

- As Protestant Theologians overlooked these equally important aspects of Pauline truth the Revolution stalled and coalesced around the formation of different denominations. This is clearly seen when one considers the settlement patterns of Europeans in the New World.
  - *Puritans*—Massachusetts
  - *Baptists*—Rhode Island and Southern Colonies
  - *Anglican*—it was the established church in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Maryland after 1691, and part of New York City after 1693.
  - *Quakers*—Pennsylvania
  - *Presbyterians*—Maryland established the first Presbyterian church in the New World (Noll, 38-69). (For more information see GHP Lesson 39 Westward Ho: The Old Religion in the New World)
- With all this in mind, many within the American Grace Movement have sought to establish an explanatory model for understanding how the Pauline Truths identified above came to be understood. Borrowing from and expanding upon a model first utilized by Dr. E.W. Bullinger in *Number in Scripture* (1894, see page 88.) Fredrick E. Lewis a member of the American Grace Movement presented the following paradigm for the Loss and Recovery of Pauline Truth.

#### **Pauline Truths Lost (Order of Loss)**

- *First*—The Distinctive Message and Ministry of the Apostle Paul
- *Second*—The Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ
- *Third*—The Difference Between Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ
- *Fourth*—Justification by Grace Through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone

#### **Pauline Truths Recovered (Order of Recovery)**

- *First*—Justification by Grace Through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone. Recovered via the Protestant Revolution in the 16th century via Luther and others.
- *Second*—The Difference Between Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ. Recovered in the 1800's via John Nelson Darby, E.W. Bullinger, Sir Robert Anderson and others.

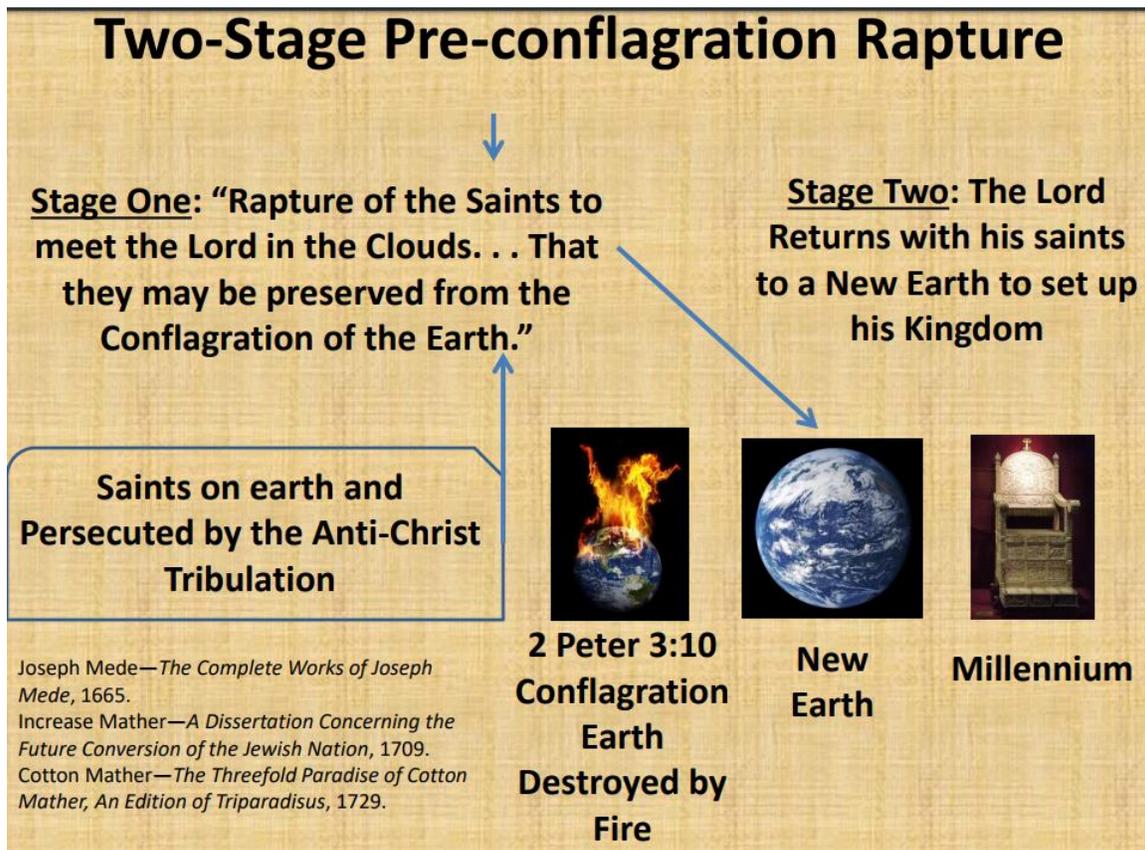
- *Third—The Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ.* Recovered in the 19th Century via John Nelson Darby and included and popularized by C.I. Scofield in his Reference Bible in 1909.
- *Fourth—The Distinctive Message and Ministry of the Apostle Paul.* Recovered from the middle of the 1900's via J.C. O'Hair, Charles F. Baker, Cornelius R. Stam and others. (Lewis, 1)
- While I understand why Fredrick Lewis used the word “recovery” when articulating the order in which key features of Pauline theology were brought back into the theological discussion, I find the term somewhat misleading. Technically these truths were never “lost,” they could always be found on the pages of scripture from the time Paul wrote them in the first century until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when they began to be “recovered.” Moreover, there have always been pockets of believers down through history to whom these truths were not “lost.” Saints such as the Paulicians and Waldensians stood for key features of the message and ministry of Paul regardless of the potential consequences.
- Therefore, for the purposes of this study, we will speak about Pauline truth being willfully “abandoned” in the first century while Paul was still alive. Likewise, Pauline truth (or elements thereof) experienced a systematic “resurgence” in the 1800s in that it once again, to varying degrees, gained an acknowledged place in the theological discussion and dialogue of the past two centuries.
- This new “resurgence” of Pauline Truth in the 1800s was Reformation 2.0. This new growth would begin to set folks free from the entrenched denominationalism that held Protestantism in doctrinal stagnation and spiritual bondage.

### **Sola Scriptura and the Second Coming**

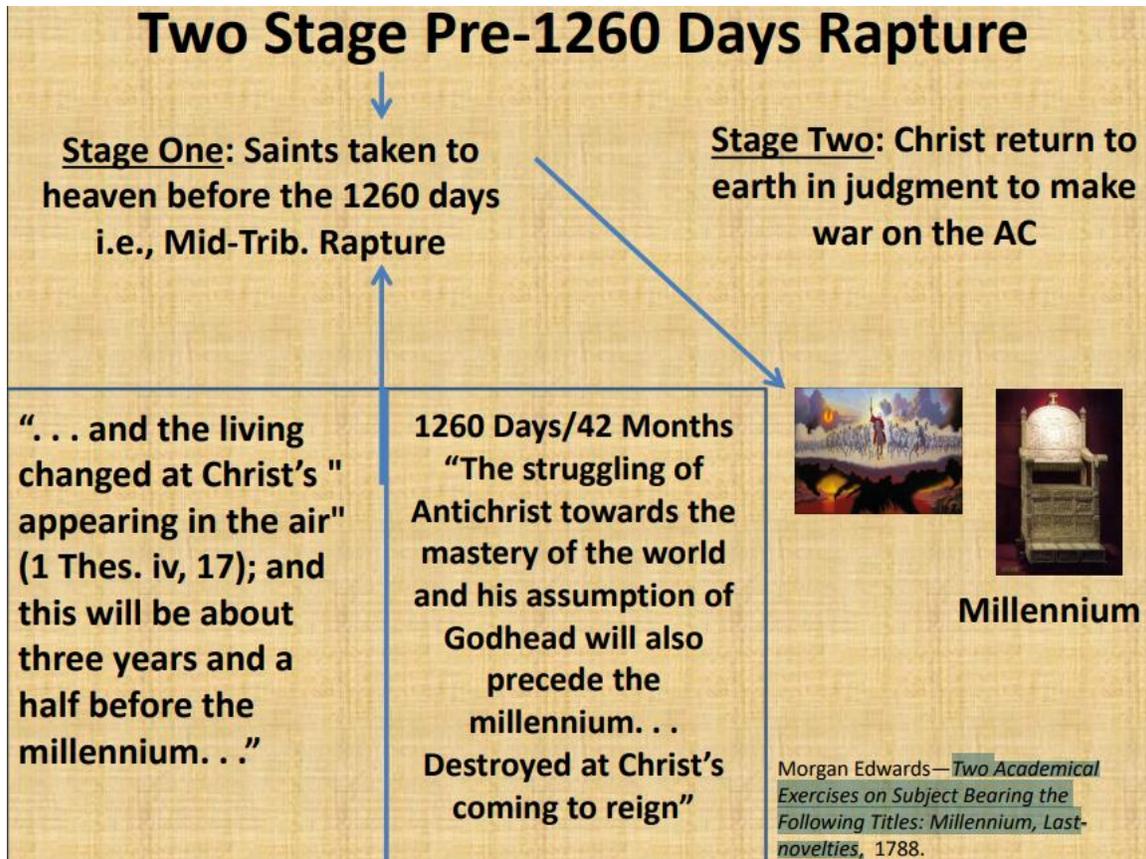
- While Lewis' model (see above) is helpful it is not entirely accurate in terms of its chronology. In reality, the situation was not as neat and tidy as his chart depicts.
- As Bible students and theologians sought to apply the principle of sola scripture, they eventually encountered “things that differ” within scripture that needed to be explained. One subject matter in which this was particularly true was the timing of the Lord's second coming. Theologians found themselves needing to reconcile I Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 19. How did the return of the Lord to meet the saints in the air fit with the bodily return of Christ back to earth?
- One early attempt to distinguish between the events described in these passages was made by Joseph Mede, the father of British Historicism in 1665. Mede states the following on page 776 of his *Complete Work*:
  - “I will add this more, namely, what may be conceived to be the cause of this Rapture of the saints on high to meet the Lord in the Clouds, rather than to wait

his coming to the Earth. What if it be, that they may be preserved during the Conflagration of the earth and the works thereof, 2 Peter 3:10 that as Noah and his family were preserved from the Deluge by being lift up above the water in the Ark, so should the Saints at the Conflagration be lift up in the Clouds unto their Ark, Christ, to be preserved there from the deluge of fire, where the wicked shall be consumed.” (Mede, 776)

- Joseph Mede is the first known person to utilize the term Rapture to refer to the catching up of the saints in I Thessalonians 4. A similar view was expounded on by Increase and Cotton Mather the in early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their view could be represented by the following graphic.



- In 1788 Morgan Edwards wrote *Two Academical Exercises on Subjects Bearing the Following Titles: Millennium, Last-Novelties* in which he moved the timing of the Rapture back to the middle of the tribulation.



- Nearly fifty years later in the late 1820s, John Nelson Darby (JND) concluded on the basis of the distinction between Israel and the Church that the Rapture of the church would take place before the tribulation. Once JND understood the difference between Israel and the Body of Christ, and the Church’s unity with its Head in heaven, the correct placement of I Thessalonians 4 before the 70th week of Daniel was natural and easy. JND did not invent this teaching – it was contained within the pages of Scripture for almost 2,000 years. This doctrine experienced resurgence thanks to the ministry of Darby.
- The principal of sola scriptura had once again brought a point of heretofore abandoned doctrine to theological forefront. With JND’s breakthrough serving as the impetus, a new wave of Pauline resurgence broke forth providing new spiritual light and vitality.

### **Reformation 2.0: When Was the Mystery No Longer a Mystery?**

- The resurgence of the following doctrines, spearheaded by JND, brought about a Dispensational Renaissance that was impactful, far reaching, and most importantly Pauline in nature:
  - Difference between Israel and the body of Christ
  - Difference between Israel’s earthly hope/destiny and the body’s heavenly hope/density

- Difference between the catching up (Rapture) and the second coming
- Correct placement of the catching up before the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel
- Mark well, while there was much about JND's dispensational scheme and theological understanding that we would disagree with, just as there was with Luther's, JND needs to be given due credit for what he got right and the growth that it generated.
- In *The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant* by JND, he stated the following regarding the mystery:
  - “We have the largest and fullest warrant for saying, that it was entirely unrevealed in the Old Testament. Speaking of the mystery, the admission of the Gentiles to be of the one body in the assembly of God, Paul says [JND quotes Roman 16:25; Ephesians 3:4-5, 9; Colossians 1:24] . . . This doctrine, of which Paul, as he states in the Colossians, was a minister, as well as of the gospel, in order to complete the word of God, was thus wholly unknown to the saints of the Old Testament. Much more was utterly obscure; but this was hid in God. Other things they might have were for an age to come, not for themselves, as the promise of the Spirit and the Messiah's glory and redemption; but this they knew not at all.” (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- In the same work JND maintained that the church was a unique Pauline revelation:
  - “What will, perhaps, surprise the reader, the church is never named in the epistles but by Paul. A particular assembly is named by John; but the assembly or church as a whole, the body of Christ, is spoken of **by Paul only**,” (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- The resurgence of Pauline truth spearheaded by JND experienced theological refinement in subsequent generations. Men such as William Trotter, Richard (William) Holden, C.H. Mackintosh, and E.W. Bullinger (EWB) planted and watered upon the soil plowed by JND. In fact, by the year 1900 nearly all of the distinct theological tenets of the American Grace Movement were known and in print.
- Men such as JND and EWB did much to spread Pauline dispensationalism around the world.
  - JND— “Darby visited the United States and Canada seven times between 1862 and 1877, actually residing in and traveling through the two countries for nearly seven out of those sixteen years.” (Sandeen, 71)

- JND—J.H. Brooks—C.I. Scofield—Lewis Sperry Chafer—Charles Baker
  - EWB—sent Pauline dispensationalism around the world through his Bible study periodical *Things to Come*.
- The efforts of these men and many more that we will never know caused many to leave their denominational traditions and embrace dispensational Bible study in general and Paul's unique message and apostleship more specifically.

*Case Study: Richard Holden*

- In 1870, a member of the Plymouth Brethren named Richard Holden published *The Mystery, the Special Mission of the Apostle Paul, the Key to the Present Dispensation*. (Allen, 47; Penney, 302) This work was anonymously republished in the Brethren Magazine *The Christian's Friend* in 1876, with the following abbreviated title; "The Mystery: Ephesians 3." An analysis of this book shows clear progression and refinement in the resurgence of Pauline truth making it possibly the earliest **known** articulation of the mid-Acts dispensational position in print.
- From the opening paragraphs, the reader is presented with a mature understanding of the unique commission of the Apostle Paul. Holden writes,
  - "There were two objects embraced in Paul's ministry. He has expressed them in verses 8 and 9 (Eph. 3) of this chapter, where he states in brief and plain terms the character of his commission as an apostle or evangelizer.

First, the grace was bestowed upon him of his being sent to preach among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The emphasis here is on the fact of the Gentiles being those to whom he was specially commissioned. . . A richer and fuller exhibition of these unsearchable riches there certainly was in Paul's ministry; but otherwise the specialty of the grace given unto him lay in his being selected to preach them "among the Gentiles."

The second branch of the apostle's commission, was that expressed in the words, 'To make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery.'

There is here, I apprehend, an intended contrast between the 'all' and the 'Gentiles' of the preceding verse. Jew and Gentile were alike indebted to Paul's ministry for the knowledge and intelligence of a 'mystery' unveiled through him, and which he was specially commissioned to make all see."

- According to Holden, the vast majority of Christians are ignorant of Paul's commission and the Reformers said nothing about it, thereby leaving it for later generations to exhume.

- “To many it will seem a bold or even a rash assertion, that to the vast majority of Christians, learned and unlearned, this side of the apostle's commission has remained to this hour without effect. The Reformation (great and blessed work of God as it was, for which we cannot be too grateful), while it brought once more into light much of ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’ that had become encrusted with the corrosions of Popish error, left this side of truth wholly in darkness; and it has been reserved, in God's inscrutable wisdom, to a later day, and to ‘a feeble folk,’ to exhume from the word the long-buried treasure. . .

It is no disparagement of the Reformation, to say that it brought back only a part of the long-lost truths of the Word. It was pure sovereign grace that led men so far into truth as they did then go; as it is pure sovereign grace that has in these latter times, through other instrumentality, directed the minds of numbers of God's children to other truths in the Word not then discerned.”

- Holden’s work includes a lengthy discussion of the Greek word *oikonomia*, which he defines as “house law,” i.e., “the law, rules, regulations, or administration, of a household.” After surveying all the passages in which *oikonomia* and its sister word *oikonomos* appear, Holden offers the following definition of dispensational truth, “. . . it looks at the world as a great household or stewardly, in which God is dispensing, or administering, according to rule of His own establishing, and in whose order He has from time to time introduced certain changes, the understanding of which is consequently needful, both to the intelligent interpretation of His word and to intelligent action under Him.” Holden illustrates this point by comparing the household of a godly man with that of a godless man in which two female servants trade places. “In order to her becoming a faithful and profitable servant in the godly household, she must first acquaint herself with its order or ‘economy,’ and then conform herself to that. . . Even a change in the circumstances of the same household will necessitate sometimes a change in its rule, and demand therefore a corresponding change in the conduct of its servants.” Based on these premises, Holden concludes that God is a dispensationalist and that the only prayer mankind has to understand Scripture is to rightly divide the word of truth.
  - “Now surely it is just as simple and plain, that if God has, from time to time, introduced changes into the order of His dealing with the world, and dispensing its affairs, the nature of these changes must be studied, understood, and acted on by His servants, if they would prove profitable servants, and co-operate intelligently in His plans. To import into one dispensation the directions or conduct prescribed for another must entail confusion and disorder, whether in the interpretation of the Scriptures relating to them, or in the regulation of action, individual or corporate, under them. **Hence the necessity of what the apostle (2 Tim. 2: 15) calls "rightly dividing the word of truth," the neglect of which has ever been and ever must be the source of unutterable confusion; in short, of most of the confusion we see around.**”

- Just as Moses was “the divinely-appointed instructor” during the dispensation of the law, Paul is the divinely appointed instructor for the current dispensation of grace, according to Holden. Holden goes on to plainly state that the reason there is so much confusion in Christendom is because of the general ignorance of the mystery.
  - “To ‘make all see what is the dispensation,’ or, in other words, to be the divinely-appointed instructor in the character and order of the present time, as Moses was in that of the dispensation of ‘law,’ is that special feature in the commission of Paul, in which it was distinct from that of the other apostles.

If then it shall appear that, far from seeing what is ‘the dispensation of the mystery,’ the mass of Christians have entirely missed it, and, as the natural consequence have almost completely misunderstood Christianity, importing into it the things proper to another dispensation, and so confounding Judaism and Christianity in an inexpressible jumble; surely it is matter for deep humiliation before God, and for earnest, prayerful effort to retrieve, with God's help, this important and neglected teaching.”

- Holden is also explicitly clear about the connection between the words “revelation” and “mystery” in Ephesians 3.
  - “Let the reader then observe, first of all, that Paul claims to have had the truth in question given to him ‘by revelation’ (v. 3). Now the word ‘revelation’ means unveiling or uncovering, and its used in Scripture to signify the communication, by God, of truth not previously known, or, up to that time shrouded under veil of secrecy. The fact therefore, that the apostle claims for the truth he speaks of in this chapter, the character of ‘a revelation,’ ought itself to prepare us for the discovery, in his teaching of somewhat not to be met with in any previous portions of the word of God.

Next, be it observed, he calls it a ‘mystery,’ or secret, which secret he insists on with repetition and emphasis, as entirely hidden till given to him to tell out. Thus, in verses 3 and 5, by revelation of God made known to him the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed; and so in verse 9, ‘the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God.’ Language could hardly be more explicit than this. A secret which had not in other ages been made known to men, but from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, is now made known to the apostle by revelation.

. . . To other ages (or generations) it was not made known; from (the) ages and (the) generations it has been hid—hid from the beginning of the world, hid in God, kept secret since the world began. I know of no truth in the whole range of the word to which the testimony is more explicit and unmistakable, and I trust the reader will be prepared, in view of it, to set it down as a point of certainty, that whatever ‘the mystery’ may be, it is something quite unknown until the day of Paul.

If the reader has now fully bowed to the Word on this point, he will at once perceive that to look for an unfolding of this mystery in the pages of the Old Testament must be a hopeless and deceptive proceeding. For any man to imagine he finds there that which the Holy Ghost so expressly declares was hidden—an unrevealed secret—when that book was written; must be to follow a will-o'-the-wisp, that will lure him into the quagmire of misinterpretation and confusion. Let the reader keep this point in memory; it will meet us again when we have advanced our enquiry another stage, examining next into the subject of the mystery itself.”

- Holden defined the mystery as the church the body of Christ and argues that the essence of the mystery is encapsulated in the following three points:
  1. “That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs.
  2. That they should be one body
  3. That they should be partakers or co-partners of God’s promise in the Messiah

In other words, the Church or assembly of God as distinguished alike from a Jewish assembly and from the kingdom.

For this thing, the Church of God, or for any one of these three features of that which distinguishes it most markedly, as well from all that has gone before, as from all that will follow after, the reader will search in vain throughout the pages of the Old Testament.

This then is “the mystery”; the Church of God. . .”

- Holden also demonstrates an astute awareness of the word “church.” Anticipating possible objections, Holden writes that the “church” spoken of by Paul is not the same church Stephen spoke of in Acts 7:38. Holden’s comments on this matter sound like one of the main arguments utilized by Vernon A. Schutz in his book *The Three Bible Churches*.
  - “‘But,’ the reader may say, ‘surely the Church is spoken of in the Old Testament;’” does not Stephen affirm it in Acts 7:35, where he speaks of “the Church in the wilderness?”

That Stephen uses the word ‘Church,’ and applies it to Israel as found in the wilderness, is beyond a question; just as certain as that the Holy Ghost employs it in Acts 19:41, and applies it to the idolatrous rabble gathered into the theatre of Ephesus; of whom, after they had spent two hours in shouting ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians,’ it is said, ‘He dismissed the church.’ The employment of the word church or ecclesia in these cases no more implies that the one assemblage was the Church of God than the other.”

- Regarding the first key point of the mystery, “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs,” is nowhere found in the Old Testament, Holden writes:

- “The broad statement in this, as in the other points, is that of Gentile equality with the Jew. . . . And such is the highest position of the Gentile in the prophecies of the Old Testament; he is to share in the benefits of Israel’s inherited blessing, but is never lifted into the position of a co-heir—never made Israel’s peer.

[After a lengthy exposition of Isa. 60:3-16, Holden concludes] . . . but still it is of Zion or Israel that they are spoken, and the Gentile is there exhibited as coming to her light to be blessed, and finding his blessing in ministering to her; as might happen where the servant of a master who has come into a rich estate, might share in the benefit of his master’s improved circumstances, though not himself a co-heir with him in his inheritance. Israel is to inherit the Gentiles (Isa. 54:3); but the Gentile is not to inherit Israel.”

- Without specifically using the phrase “time past,” Holden contrasts Paul’s comments about Israel being “one body” with the Gentiles with numerous passages from the Old Testament prophets where God clearly distinguished between these two groups of people. God’s reconciling both unto himself in one body is the second aspect of the mystery, according to Holden.

- “Did my reader ever detect, in the course of this study of Moses and the prophets, anything that looked like this? Most surely not. If there is one thing more evident than another in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is the steadily–maintained distinction between Israel and the nations, from first to last; under the glory of the future as under the vicissitudes of the past. The welding of Israel and the nations into one body, from which their nationalities shall disappear; all distinctive autonomies be lost; is a thought as foreign to the ancient oracles as heaven is to earth. Take any of the Scriptures that refer to the Messiah’s reign and the blessings that are to attend it; the nations and Israel will ever be found in separation.

[After using Psalm 72, Isaiah 2, 11, and Zechariah 14 as examples, Holden states] . . . Everywhere it is the same: Israel and the nations in their respective places, in most telling contrast with what the apostle insists on as distinctive of the present order of things, wherein (Col. 3:11) ‘there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.’”

- Regarding the third aspect of the mystery, that the Gentiles are “co-partners in God’s promise in the Messiah,” Holden wrote.
  - “If there is any one thing that excites the ire of the Jew, it is the claim of the Gentile to an equal share with himself in the Messiah. He laughs to scorn the Gentile pretension to show from the prophets that such a thing should be; and he does so triumphantly; it is not there; and to pretend to it is to weaken under pretense of strengthening the Christian cause. God has said it is not there; to profess to find it is to pervert His truth, and must lead to the confusion of him who attempts it. Intimations of Israel’s failure and their rejection there are;

predictions of blessing to the Gentiles under Israel, and in connection with the Messiah, abound, as in the Scriptures that have already been before us; but a co-partnership, anything like the equality of privilege in the Messiah that the gospel has introduced, and we ourselves at this moment enjoy, will be sought in vain.

- If the mystery of the church of God is not found in the Old Testament then what is found therein? According to Holden, the Old Testament is taken up with the subject of the establishment of the kingdom.
  - “But if there is indeed no mention of the mystery—the Church of God—in the Old Testament Scriptures, of what then is there mention? I answer, of the Kingdom.

A reign of righteousness and peace under the kingship of the Messiah. Zion, the seat of rule. Israel, a people of peculiar nearness and special privilege, with the nations grouped around this center, in their subordinate places; blessed in Israel’s blessing, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Such is the future depicted by the prophets, alluded to in the New Testament (Acts 3:19-21), as ‘times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ ‘the times of the restitution of all things.’ This and this only is the theme of the prophets of old. A state of things with which the present dispensation in now wise corresponds, at almost any point. A state of things the world has not yet seen.”

- “Have, then, the prophecies failed? By no means. So certainly, as these are foretold, so surely will they one day come to pass,” so writes Holden in a lengthy section where he discusses what happened to the kingdom. Holden understood that during the earthly ministry of Christ, Israel’s long-propheesied kingdom was announced as being at hand, and had Israel accepted her Messiah, the prophetic promises of the Old Testament would have been accomplished. In the following astounding section, Holden addresses how the revelation of the mystery took Satan by complete surprise to the undoing of his entire plan of evil.
  - “To Satan, for whom, be it borne in mind, the counsels of God are as secret, until revealed, as to the children of men, it must have appeared a marvelous triumph of his ingenuity and devilish craft, when he had succeeded, to appearance, in overturning the plans and giving the lie to the prophetic teaching of God, by securing the rejection and crucifixion of God’s king. . . . The revelation of ‘the mystery,’ unfolded in vain before the eyes of God’s children, has been seen of him (Satan) with clearer discernment. Nor let the reader consider this as mere conjecture; it is the teaching of the Word itself. (quotes Eph. 3:9-10) Here we have the fact that the display of God’s manifold wisdom, by means of the church, was a fore-contemplated object of creation, and that, with express reference to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places.’ Now, if in Eph. 1:21 and Col. 2:10, ‘principalities and powers’ seem employed to designate celestial inhabitants, in favor with God; in Eph. 6:12, the same is used for the deadly

enemies of God and man, the wicked spirits known elsewhere as ‘the devil and his angels;’ by whom this manifold wisdom will be learned to their confusion and dismay, as by the others to their edification and joy, through the demonstration of God’s ability to accomplish results, the highest and most blessed, through the instrumentality of the very elements that seem most to thwart his plans and traverse his purposes.

. . . No; Satan has not triumphed. God’s purpose is not foregone. God’s plans have suffered no frustration. A postponement, but a foreseen one, has delayed the immediate establishment; but, in his seeming victory the prince of darkness has outwitted himself, has wrought out God’s secret purpose, to suspend for a season the erection of the throne, in order to the preparation of a bride for His King, to be associated with Him in His reign—the Church of the living God—an otherwise unknown thing; a people brought into a special place of nearness; who, owning and taking part with Him in his humiliation and rejection, shall also have part in His exaltation and glory; who, because they ‘suffer with Him, shall also reign with Him;’ filling that very place in the heavenlies, in which Satan and his angels now are—those powers of the air of which he is prince, the ‘wicked spirits in the heavenlies, against whom, as the opposers of her blessing, the Church, in her individual members, has now to contend in spiritual conflict (Eph. 6:12). No; the prophecies spoke only of earth; there was in these no intimation of a people to fill the place of the Satanic powers, no word of their being dispossessed in favor of a people redeemed from the earth. This was a secret, a mystery hid in God, which Satan’s seeming triumph gave occasion both to the unfolding and to the accomplishment of, to his own utter and eternal confusion, and to the display of God’s multiform wisdom, His grace and His glory; and the kingdom, the kingdom which Satan thought to frustrate, will yet be set up on earth—the millennium of New Testament prophecy—to the literal accomplishment of every detail of God’s word, and the full vindication of the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of His prophets.

The present dispensation is, then, an interregnum or parenthetical period, contemplated indeed in the counsels of God, but not revealed till given to Paul, as set forth.

Once this truth is seen, it becomes the key to the interpretation of Scripture and to the ‘rightly dividing the word of truth,’ in the sundering of things Jewish from things Christian. Until this is seen neither Testament can be understood aright; and Christianity, instead of having its proper and distinctive character, is degraded into a sort of bastard Judaism.”

- Holden writes that instead of seeing Christianity as something taught exclusively by Paul, the church has viewed Christianity as the flowering of the bud of Judaism and has blended things Jewish with things Christian resulting in the entire misunderstanding of the Christian dispensation.
  - But they did not ‘see what is the dispensation of the mystery;’ and because they did not, they have also left us, in their chapter-headings, a monument of the inevitable consequences of ignorance of this cardinal truth. In common with all

the divines of their day, they took up the erroneous notion that Christianity, instead of being, as taught by Paul, a distinct thing, and a previously unrevealed secret, was but the foretold outcome - the regular and anticipated development of what had preceded - the full-blown flower from the bud of Judaism. Of the parenthetic or interregal character of the dispensation, they had not a conception. That the Church of God was a thing so distinct and peculiar, in respect of all that had gone before, as to be quite unknown to prophecy was a thought to which they were wholly strangers - a thought so foreign to their minds, that, taking for granted that Christianity and the Church must be there, they turned to the Old Testament scriptures, with the deliberate purpose therein to discover it. The natural result of a research for what was not, under the control of a foregone conclusion that it was, is easy to anticipate. They must of necessity misapply to it what belonged to something else; and accordingly, the prophetic announcements concerning Israel and 'the kingdom,' are made to do duty on behalf of the Church; with the necessary consequence, in their own and all minds that have followed in their wake; of an entire misunderstanding of the Christian dispensation, no less than of the millennial dispensation, yet to follow - a blending of things Jewish with things Christian, to the lowering of the entire character of 'the heavenly calling,' and a misapplication, throughout, of the truth of God."

- Holden even understood that the revelation of the mystery filled up or completed the word of God.
  - "If all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in 'the mystery;,' so that the dispensation of it, as given to Paul, is the filling up, or completing, of the word of God, as stated in verse 25 of the previous chapter; then it is self-evident, that where 'the mystery' is not understood, the key to the understanding of the Word, is not in the hand; and 'the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' though fully revealed of God, must remain locked."
- Holden even seems to have understood some things about the unity of the spirit and the one baptism of Ephesians 4 as being spiritual in nature. He explicitly mentions how the body is being formed by "one spirit" through whom all believers are baptized into one body. Therefore, the unity of the body is derived from the fact that it has been tempered together by Christ.
  - "If God has revealed to us, that the order and plan of the dispensation in which He has set us is that Christ should, by His death, not only save our souls, but should 'gather together IN ONE the children of God that were scattered abroad,' so that there should be 'ONE FLOCK and one Shepherd' (John 11: 52, John 10: 16); that in reconciling men to Himself, by the cross from among Jews and Gentiles, it was His will that this should be effected, not as scattered units, as in former ages, but that those so reconciled, should be found in unity - 'in one body' (Eph. 2: 16); that this 'body,' of His divine purpose, *has been* formed by

the ‘one Spirit,’ by whom all are baptized into it (1 Cor. 12: 13); that He ‘has tempered the body together,’ and ‘has set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him’ (1 Cor. 12: 18, 24), in order that the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, should make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love’ (Eph. 4: 16); and that, for this reason, His will is ‘that there should be no schism in the body.’ (1 Cor. 12: 25.) If, I say, such is the revealed mind and will of God, as concerning ourselves, and the dispensation under which He has placed us, then clearly all action on our part that does not conform to this truth, and has not this principle as its basis, must be in contravention of His plans and in opposition to His will, and therefore SIN. . .

Now God has both revealed to us the fact, and enjoined on us the conduct befitting us, as arising out of the fact. He will have us to ‘walk worthy of the vocation where with we are called’ (Eph. 4: 1); and inasmuch as we are not only called with a holy and heavenly calling, but are ‘called in one body’ (Col. 3: 15); accordingly, among the instructions in detail, which follow, a most prominent position is given to the duty of ‘endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;’ and this, as arising out of the truth, that there is one body and one Spirit, even as the hope of our calling (the glory) is one, and unity characterizes all that pertains distinctively to it – ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.’

To act then in any manner contrary to this divinely formed unity, is to walk unworthily of the vocation where with we are called; and to set oneself in opposition to the whole order and plan of the dispensation; the very thing the entire Church of God has been doing for centuries. What doctrine, in all the range of truth, has been so trampled underfoot - so daringly and systematically set aside, as unity? “

#### *Concluding Remarks on William Holden*

- The depth of understanding Holden displays is mind boggling. Reading Holden is like reading J.C. O’Hair, C.R. Stam, or Charles F. Baker sixty or seventy years before anyone is supposed to have understood these doctrines according to the standard historical understanding we have functioned under. Richard Holden was a mid-Acts dispensationalist sixty to seventy before that descriptor came into usage. He articulates all the core principles of the mid-Acts position.
  - First, Holden never says that the church started in Acts 2.
  - Second, Holden defines the mystery as the church of God.
  - Third, he describes the church of God as the unique situation in which Jews and Gentiles have been: 1) made fellow-heirs, 2) made one body, 3) made partakers of God’s promise in Christ (Israel’s Messiah) by the gospel.

- Fourth, this mystery i.e., God’s plan for forming the church the body of Christ was kept secret since the world began and was therefore unknown prior to the time of Paul. Therefore, the church could not be formed until the mystery was revealed to the Apostle Paul.
- Fifth, Holden states, “In the coming of the Messiah there was a real and perfectly consistent offer to Israel of the long-prophesied kingdom; an offer which, had it been accepted, would have led to the immediate accomplishment of the promises, in the introduction of His glorious reign.” This offer of the kingdom is extended into the early Acts period beyond Acts 2. In the following statement, Holden views the fundamental distinction of time past between Israel and the Gentiles as still being in force in Acts 3, “A reign of righteousness and peace under the kingship of the Messiah. Zion, the seat of rule. Israel, a people of peculiar nearness and special privilege, with the nations grouped around this center, in their subordinate places; blessed in Israel’s blessing, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Such is the future depicted by the prophets, alluded to in the New Testament (Acts 3: 19-21), as ‘times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,’ ‘the times of the restitution of all things.’ This and this only is the theme of the prophets of old. A state of things with which the present dispensation in no wise corresponds, at almost any point. A state of things the world has not yet seen.” According to Holden, Acts 3 is describing a state “with which the present dispensation in no wise corresponds,” therefore, the current dispensation could not have begun in Acts 2.
- Sixth, Holden does not extend the dispensational boundary to Acts 28:28, nor does he differentiate between the Acts and post-Acts epistles of Paul. Instead, as the following quote testifies, Holden viewed the revelation of the mystery originating with Paul and encompassing the entire Pauline era: “. . . that whatever ‘the mystery’ may be, it is something quite unknown **until the day of Paul**. . . The present dispensation is, then, an interregnum or parenthetical period, contemplated indeed in the counsels of God, but not revealed **till ‘given’ to Paul**.” Michael Penny, author of *Approaching the Bible*, states the following regarding Holden’s view of the mystery and the place of the Pauline Epistles, “Instead of limiting the revelation of this mystery and the start of this dispensation until after Acts 28:28 and the giving of Ephesians, Holden widens it to embrace Paul’s day. That is, all Paul’s letters are seen to be directly for this dispensation.” (Penny, 210)
- I WOULD CALL SUCH A PERSON A MID-ACTS DISPENSATIONLIST. RICHARD HOLDEN WAS A MID-ACTS DISPENSATIONALIST SIXTY TO SEVENTY YEARS BEFORE THERE WAS A FORMAL CLASSIFICATION FOR THE BELIEFS HE ARTICULATED.

### **State of Pauline Truth by 1900**

- After surveying the works of Darby, Trotter, Holden, Mackintosh, and Bullinger written before 1900 we have clearly demonstrated that the following aspects of Pauline truth were known and in print before the turn of the century. In no particular order:
  - Clear distinction between prophecy and mystery.
  - Church was a unique Pauline revelation unknown prior to the time of Paul.
  - Despite an official Acts 2 stance on the part of Darby and Trotter, the opening chapters of Acts are viewed as being Jewish in their character and content. Acts 7 is viewed by these men as the final tale of Judaism. Meanwhile, Holden, Mackintosh, and Bullinger are all clear that Acts 2 was not the beginning of the body of Christ.
  - The Church was in the mind OF God before the world began. It was thus first in the plan and program of God but last in order of revelation.
  - The mystery pertains to the formation of the body of Christ. The truth that Jews and Gentiles would be reconciled to God in one body by the cross was never revealed prior to the ministry and writings of the Apostle Paul.
  - The Church's blessings are spiritual in nature and heavenly in position, whereas, Israel's blessings were physical in nature and earthly in position.
  - The phrases "time past" and "but now" were in usage to explain dispensational distinctives.
  - Principalities and powers in heavenly places are taught the manifold wisdom of God by the church the body of Christ.
  - The dispensation of the fullness of times is a future dispensation in which all things in heaven and on earth will be centered in the person of Jesus Christ.
  - The source of all the confusion in Christendom stems from the failure to rightly divide the word of truth as well as from the general ignorance of the mystery.
  - Paul is the divinely appointed instructor for the dispensation of grace just as Moses was during the dispensation of the law.
  - The church in the wilderness (Acts 7:35) is different from the church the body of Christ.
  - The mystery includes the following three points (Eph. 3:6)

- That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs.
  - That they should be one body
  - That they should be partakers or co-partners of God's promise in the Messiah
- The establishment of the kingdom is the subject of prophecy. Therefore, the Old Testament, Four Gospels, as well as early Acts contain a consistent testimony to Israel. The Four Gospels and Acts record the history of Israel's rejection of her king and kingdom.
  - John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the twelve Apostles present a consistent ministry to Israel during the Gospels and early Acts through the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Consequently, the parables, i.e., the mysteries of the kingdom in Matthew have nothing to do with the church the body of Christ.
  - Satan's actions in bringing about the death of Christ wrought out God's secret purpose concerning the church the body of Christ. The body of Christ will dispossess Satan and his angels from the current positions in the heavenlies and inherit their vacated positions of rank and authority. Through the revelation of the mystery, Satan's entire plan of evil is thwarted.
  - Christendom has degenerated into a form of bastard Judaism because they have failed to rightly divide the word of truth. Israel's program has been mixed with the Body's program which has caused the church to fall short of true understanding.
  - The difference between the believer's standing and state was understood.
  - Pentecost is not the beginning of the body of Christ.
  - The Church is not the bride of Christ but part of the Bridegroom.
  - All the Pauline Epistles, even those written during the Acts period, are for this dispensation.
  - There was a difference between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God committed to Paul. Failure to understand Paul's gospel articulated in the first eight chapters of Romans was the source of the church's confusion.
  - The Blessed Hope of the Church is the rapture when the Lord returns to meet the saints in the air. This event was clearly understood to be different and distinct from the Lord's bodily second coming recorded in Revelation 19.
  - The body of Christ is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit into Christ. This is not accomplished through baptism with water.

- Those standing for Pauline authority can always expect to be in the minority when compared with the professing church.
- There can be little doubt that the real history of the resurgence in Pauline truth is much more edifying, enlightening, and fascinating than the instructional histories that have for too long dominated these historical discussions within the so-called Grace Movement. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were already strong voices contending for the word of God rightly divided and the revelation of the mystery committed to the Apostle Paul.
- In the midst of the new doctrinal growth generated by Reformation 2.0, a plan was afoot to neutralize its impact and stagnated its growth. In our next study, we will consider how and why the Reformation 2.0 fizzled.

## Lesson 7 Pilfering the Power of the Paper Pope of Protestantism: Understanding Why the Reformation Fizzled

Bryan C. Ross

### **Introduction**

- Eph. 3:4—in order to understand “the mystery of Christ” all one needs to be able to do is read the scriptures.
- This simple principle was not lost on the adversary. All he needed to do to keep people ignorant of the mystery and Paul’s unique apostleship was simply to hamper their ability to read about it. Prior to the Protestant Revolution this was accomplished through two primary mechanisms:
  - Extremely low literacy rates
  - Binding God’s word in an elite scholar’s language i.e., Latin
- So even if people could read their native tongue they lacked the specialized academic training to have access to the Bible.
- The Protestant Revolution reversed both of these trends that had held sway for the first 1500 years of the dispensation of grace.
  - Literacy rates exploded
  - God’s word was made available in the vernacular languages of the people.
- These trends, coupled with the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, converged to create a seismic shift in the established power structure of Europe. The availability of the Bible in the vernacular languages of Europe was the driving force of the Protestant Revolution. In addition, the notion that the Catholic hierarchy was not needed to interpret scriptures created a very serious problem for the Catholic Church.
- Roman Catholic thinkers and theologians immediately began to devise strategies for how to combat the Paper Pope of Protestantism.

### **Pilfering the Paper Pope: Originals Onlyism**

- One of the goals of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation (we looked at this in Lesson 5) was to call into question the Protestant view of the Bible. Above all, the Jesuits attacked the Protestant belief in *Sola Scriptura* as the following quotes will attest:
  - “Wherever the so-called Counter-Reformation, started by the Jesuits, gained hold of the people, the vernacular was suppressed and the Bible kept from the laity. So

eager were the Jesuits **to destroy the authority of the Bible—the paper pope of the Protestants**, as they contemptuously called it—that they even did not refrain from criticizing its genuineness and historical value.” (Dobschutz, 136)

- “This translation (Unitarian translation of 1869) is a decided help in the great battle against Bibliolatry and the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration. Every new version, even if it be not so good as this, aids in overthrowing the power of the **"Paper-Pope" which has ruled Protestantism as with a rod of iron**. Such superstition in an enlightened land, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, seems almost incredible; but it is asserted on good grounds that nine-tenths of the members of Protestant churches in this country believe as implicitly in the infallibility and absolute freedom from error of King James's version as the Catholics of Spain do in the infallibility of Pope Pius IX and the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary.” (Morse & Marvin, 442)
- The aims of the Catholic Counter-Reformation were beginning to bear fruit in the 19<sup>th</sup> century just as resurgence of Pauline truth that we studied in Lesson 6 was underway. The practice of constant revision of the Bible would cause people to question whether they had God’s word.
  - “Revisions at moderate intervals of fifty years, will keep alive the idea of man's limited acquaintance with the **original Scriptures** in all the fulness of their meaning, and prevent superstitious attachment to the letter. Whatever checks bibliolatry is good and profitable.” (Davidson, 2)
- According to Davidson, the way one “checks bibliolatry” i.e., the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is to remind mankind of his “limited acquaintance with the original Scriptures.” Put another way, how do you know that you really have God’s word, the original autographs are lost, don’t you know.
- The notion that the “originals” only were inspired and inerrant originated within the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Philip Schaff, in his 1893 publication *A General Introduction to the Study of Theology: Exegetical, Historical, Systematic and Practical*, states the following in a footnote on page 393:
  - “The distinction between “inerrant autographs ” and errant copies seems to have been first made by Richard Simon (1638-1712), the father of biblical isagogic, to prove the necessity of textual criticism and to silence the attacks of Protestant and Roman Catholic champions for the inerrancy of the existing text of the Bible.” (Schaff, 393)
- Richard Simon was a Roman Catholic monk/priest who sought to counter *sola scriptura* by arguing that only the lost originals were inspired and therefore Catholic tradition was necessary to interpret scripture. This argument the missing “first originals” was first advanced by Simon in his 1682 work *A Critical History of the Old Testament*:

- **“The great alterations which have happened, as we have showed in the first Book of this Work, to the Copies of the Bible since the first Originals have been lost, utterly destroy the Protestants Principle, who consult only these same Copies of the Bible as we at present have them. If the truth of Religion remained not in the Church, it would be unsafe to search for it at present in Books which have been subject to so many alterations . . .**

Those Protestants without doubt are either ignorant or prejudiced who affirm that the Scripture is plain of itself as they have laid aside the Tradition of the Church, and will acknowledge no other principle of Religion but the Scripture itself, they were obliged to suppose it plain and sufficient for the establishing the truth of Faith without any Tradition.

But, as we but consider the conclusions which the Protestants and Socinians draw from the same principle, we shall be convinced that their principle is not as plain as they imagine, since these conclusions are so different and the one absolutely denies what the other affirms.

Instead of believing with the Protestants that the shortest and most certain way of deciding the Questions of Faith is to consult the Holy Scriptures, we shall on the contrary find in this Work that if we join not Tradition with the Scripture, we can hardly affirm anything for certain in Religion.” (Simon, Author’s Preface pages unnumbered)

- In 1689 Simon wrote another book titled *A Critical History of the Text of the New Testament* from which many similar quotes could be multiplied.
  - “Is it possible (may some say) that God hath given to his Church, Books to serve her for a Rule, **and that he hath at the same time permitted that the first Originals of these Books should be lost ever since the beginning of the Christian Religion?** There have been from the very first planting of the Church, Hereticks who have disputed against the Writings of the Apostles, and therefore it seems to behoove the Divine Providence to **preserve these Originals** at least for some time, from whence these Hereticks might be solidly confuted. Although the Scriptures are a sure Rule on which our Faith is founded, yet this Rule is not altogether sufficient of itself; it is necessary to know, besides this, what are the Apostolical Traditions . . .” (Simon, 30-31)
  - Whereas the Protestants make the Holy Ghost to descend on the Apostles to translate the Gospel of S. Matthew out of Greek into Hebrew: some Catholic Divines on the other side pretend also that the ancient Latin Version of the New Testament hath been inspired. But **it is much more reasonable only to admit this Inspiration for the Originals of the Holy Scriptures**, which have been translated into different Languages according to the necessities and occasions of the Churches.” (Simon, 79)

- The historical evidence suggests that Roman Catholic thinkers sought to attack the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* based upon the notion that only the “originals” were inspired, the originals are lost, and therefore the traditions of the Catholic Church are necessary to interpret scripture. This served to plant a seed that would later be used to undermine the Protestant view of the Bible.

### **Protestant Bibliology Before 1860**

- Bibliology is a word used by theologians to describe one’s view of the scripture.
- [\*The Westminster Confession of Faith\*](#) (WCF) drafted in 1646 is viewed by many as the standard bearer for the Protestant view of scripture. It was influential in the drafting of the following creeds:
  - 1658—[\*The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order\*](#) (Reformed)
  - 1689—[\*The London Baptist Confession\*](#) (Baptistic)
  - 1742—[\*The Philadelphia Baptist Confession\*](#) (Baptistic)
- Please note that the WCF was drafted 40 years before Richard Simon authored the two pieces quoted from above in the 1680s in which he refers to the “first originals.” For the purposes of this lesson we will note what the Reformers believed regarding the Bible:
  - Inspiration
  - Preservation
  - Translation
  - Inerrancy/Infallibility
  - *Sola Scriptura*

#### *Inspiration*

- The WCF states the following regarding the doctrine of inspiration.
  - Chapter I Article II—Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these . . . All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.
  - Chapter I Article III—The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of

no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

- Chapter I Article VIII—The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God.
- There is absolutely no language in the WCF limiting inspiration to the original autographs alone.

#### *Preservation*

- The framers of the WCF also believed in the doctrine of preservation.
  - Chapter I Article VIII—The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, **by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic**; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.
- The WCF demonstrates the historic Protestant belief in the notion of preservation or the idea that God kept his word pure in all ages. This belief was held across denominational traditions (Reformed and Baptist) as well as geographical boundaries (Old and New World).

#### *Translation*

- All four *Confessions* hold that the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament were “inspired by God” and “kept pure in all ages.” Moreover, the saints responsible for these *Confessions* assert the need for these pure Hebrew and Greek words to be translated in the “vulgar language of every nation unto which they come.”
  - Chapter I Article VIII— The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. **But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated in to the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in**

**all**, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

- This is a strong appeal for the accurate and proper translation of the pure Hebrew and Greek words into the vernacular languages of all peoples. Note how this notion was opposed by the Catholic priest Richard Simon. It is also important to note that the drafters of these *Confessions* were ascribing these statements to the Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Greek *Textus Recptus*, the only Greek text they had available to them. It was the act of translating the *Textus Receptus* into the vernacular languages of Europe that drove the Reformation and touched off the greatest era of Christian mission work the world has ever seen. These are historical FACTS that cannot be disputed.

### *Inerrancy/Infallibility*

- The Westminster divines believed in the infallibility of the scriptures despite not having access to the original autographs.
  - Chapter I Article V—We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, **and the entire perfection thereof**, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, **our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof**, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.
- My investigation into the writings of Luther and Calvin revealed that these men believed the scriptures were inerrant simply because they were the word of God. The belief that the scriptures were infallible was based upon “the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts,” according to the WCF. There was no formal theological doctrine of inerrancy and it was certainly not limited to the original autographs only.

### *Sola Scriptura*

- It is clear from the final two Articles of Chapter I that the WCF maintained the Protestant conviction that scripture alone is the final authority in matter of faith and practice.
  - Chapter I Article IX—**The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself**: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

- Chapter I Article X—The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, **can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.**
- Richard Simon sought to attack Protestantism by seeking to undermine one of its foundational tenants. His approach was to call into question the Protestant understanding of scripture by bringing up the absence of the “first originals” and “errors” that were present in the copies. Thus, the tradition of the church is needed to tell us what the scriptures teach. This tactic of using the originals, first utilized by Simon, would be codified in Protestant Doctrinal statements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; but mark well the notion does not appear in the great Protestant Confessions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- For the Reformers, *textual criticism* began with the following presuppositions:
  - the scriptures were the inspired word of God and of Divine origin
  - what God gave by inspiration was preserved and “kept pure in all ages”
  - God’s word was available to be translated into the vernacular languages of the nations.
  - When it was translated, it remained the word of God and retained its divine authority.

### **Protestant Bibliology is Attached and Revised**

- Between 1860 and 1900 the Protestant view of the Bible was attacked and rewritten in response to the following forces: 1) Evolution, 2) Liberalism/Modernism, 3) German Higher Criticism, and 4) Rationalism.
- The attackers pointed out the existence of *variant readings* in the manuscript copies as part of their attack on Protestant Bibliology. The existence of *variant readings* leads to a confining of inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy to the nonexistent original autographs. It was widely thought by defenders of the Bible at the time that the scriptural standard for preservation required “verbatim identity.” This understanding combined with the undeniable existence of a multitude of *variant readings* in the body of manuscripts became Mt. Impassable for those wishing to hold to historic Protestant Bibliology.
- Instead of holding the line in the face of attack, Protestant Theologians “revised” Protestant Bibliology according to terms set by their opponents. In an attempt to address the existence of *variant readings*, three of the doctrines noted above were altered in the following ways.

- *Inspiration*—was limited to the nonexistent original autographs; Divine Dictation was dropped and ridiculed as a descriptor for how inspiration was accomplished.
  - *Preservation*—the promise of preservation was dropped from doctrinal statements.
  - *Inerrancy*—formal doctrine developed that limited inerrancy to the nonexistent original autographs; took shape in a logical syllogism that met the German Higher Critics on their own terms.
- These “revised” points became the new Protestant Orthodoxy on the Bible and were carried forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Fundamentalists in their doctrinal statements.
  - These changes, among others, caused textual criticism to be reworked starting with the rationalistic/naturalistic notion that the Bible is like any other book and should be treated in like manner as any work of antiquity. The net effect of these phenomenon was that the traditional Greek text of the Reformation, the *Textus Receptus*, was replaced with a “new and improved” Greek text based upon the Rationalistic suppositions of Westcott & Hort.
  - Drs. Westcott and Hort were the chief architects of the critical methodology and authors of the new and improved Greek text. They began their work with the presupposition that the Bible was like any other book and should be treated using the same rules of textual criticism as the writings of Plato, Aristotle, or any other work of antiquity. Moreover, they infer that textual corruption could have entered the text via the hands of the original authors or their amanuenses.
    - “The principles of criticism explained in the foregoing section hold good **for all ancient texts preserved in a plurality of documents. In dealing with the text of the New Testament no new principle whatever is needed or legitimate.** (Westcott and Hort, 73)
    - “Little is gained by speculating as to the precise point at which such corruptions came in. **They may be due to the original writer**, or his amanuenses if written from dictation, or they may be due to one of the earliest transcribers.” (Westcott and Hort, 280-281)
  - On this point Hort stands in opposition to modern Evangelical scholarship in that he allows for “corruption” to have entered the text via the “original writer.” Such a position explains why Hort is reluctant to ascribe infallibility to the text in any form. In a letter addressed to J.B. Lightfoot dated May 1, 1860, Hort stated in part:
    - “I am convinced that any view of the Gospels, which distinctly and consistently recognizes for them a natural and historical origin (whether under a special Divine superintendence or not), and assumes that they did not drop down ready-made from heaven, must and will be ‘startling’ to an immense portion of educated English people. But so far, at least, Westcott and I are perfectly agreed, and I confess I had hoped that you (Lightfoot) would assent. . . **If you make a**

**decided conviction of the absolute infallibility of the N.T. practically a *sine qua non* for co-operation, I fear I could not join you, even if you were willing to forget your fears about the origin of the Gospels. I am most anxious to find the N.T. infallible, and have a strong sense of the Divine purpose guiding all its parts; but I cannot see how the exact limits of such guidance can be ascertained except by unbiased a posterior criticism. . .** (Regarding the question of “Providence” in Bibliology Hort writes) Most strongly I recognize it; but I am not prepared to say that it necessarily involves absolute infallibility.” (Hort, 419-421)

- This is the type of textual criticism that Dr. Edward F. Hills is referring to when he talks about the “naturalistic method” in the *King James Version Defended*. He is speaking about an approach to the scriptures that doubts their supernatural origin, doubts their infallibility even in the original autographs, and treats the Bible as though it were any other book. Such was the approach of Drs. Westcott and Hort.
- In the English speaking world, the net effect of this process was the publication of the Revised Version in 1881. This version was based upon the rationalistic Greek text of Westcott and Hort.

### The Revolution Fizzles

- Recall from the introduction the following changes brought about by the Protestant Revolution:
  - Increased literacy rates
  - Scriptures available in the vernacular languages of the people
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century these forces gave birth to the Reformation 2.0 or the resurgence in Pauline truth that we studied in Lesson 6.
- Then, in the midst of the Pauline resurgence, the adversary introduced a new challenge designed to keep the revelation of the mystery under wraps. The new challenge took shape around the question, “What is the Bible anyway?” It is our job to reconstruct the Bible and that process is still ongoing.
- The publication of the Revised Version in 1881 opened the flood gates for all the modern versions that now fill the market place. Even at the time of its publication it was viewed as a triumph for theological liberalism and Roman Catholicism.
- The May 26, 1881 issue of *The Free Religious Index* ran a piece titled “The New-New Testament”. It stated the following about the newly released Revised Version:
  - “And we think one of the certain effects of this acceptance of the revised version will be the increase of more rational views about the Bible. A book that can be amended cannot be infallible. Yet thousands of readers of the King James

Version have read it in the firm belief that they were reading an infallible book. They will now begin to see that that belief, at least, was a mistake. But, since no claim is made that the new revising committee have been inspired, and their process of working with the instrumentalities of human scholarship is even frankly described, have these readers an infallible book now? Have all mistakes been corrected? And these "manuscripts" that are talked about—on what authority do they rest? **And so, the question of infallibility having once been started among readers who never raised it before, it may not rest until it reach the question of original authorship, and the popular theories of the Bible be reconstructed on a more rational basis. From this point of view, therefore, the revised New Testament has a special interest for Liberals. That the revision, on points where any doctrinal change is involved, favors liberal Christian rather than orthodox interpretation is also apparent.** But this is a matter of much less moment than setting the Bible-reader's wits to work on the question whether the Bible he is reading is an infallible book. **Let that question once fairly get started among the plain-thinking people of Christendom in the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century will answer it by placing the Bible on the library shelves alongside of other historical religious books, classified as one of the human literatures of the world's religions.** (Potter, 570)

- *The Dublin Review* from July-October 1881 contains an essay titled "The Revision of the New Testament" that is pregnant with pertinent quotations. According to Lord Panmure "the prospect of a new version is fraught with the utmost danger to the Protestant liberties of this country, if not the Protestant religion itself." (132-133)
  - "Now, it must be remembered that since the year 1611, a new science has been born into the world, called Textual Criticism--a science which professes to enable men of sufficient self-confidence to determine with absolute certainty, by the aid of a small number of MSS., hardly legible, what the text of the Scripture really is. This science, at least in the opinion of its professors, quite compensates for the **loss of the inspired autographs**, and by its aid the textual critic has no difficulty in telling amidst thousands of various readings, what the sacred writer really wrote. This would be an unmixed blessing to the religious world, if textual critics could but agree one with another. That each critic should have his own theory of recension, and his own view of the age and genealogy of different MSS., is not to be wondered at. But that no two critics can agree upon a plain matter of fact is certainly surprising . . .

What, then, has textual criticism done for the New Testament? **It has destroyed the old textus receptus**, but it has failed to construct another in its place. Since the days of Griesbach every critic of any textual pretensions makes a text for himself. Lachman, Scholz, Tregelles, and Tischendorf have published their texts. Dr. Westcott and Dr. Hort have just published another, the result of twenty years' toil.

Here, then, lay the chief difficulty of the revision of the New Testament. King James's Revisers had an easy task--simply to translate the text that Pope Stephens, as Bently calls him, had fixed for them. But the Revisers of 1881 had first to find the text and then make the translation. Like Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, they were required first to find the dream and then make the interpretation. If they have failed, the blame must rest not upon them, for they could hardly be expected to be all Daniels but upon the Church which put them to such a task. To anyone who knows what textual criticism is, how dubious in its methods, how revolutionary in its results, it is amazing that any Church calling itself Christian should hand over the Sacred Scriptures, the very title-deeds of its existence, to the change voting of critics, who are scholars first, and Christians afterwards, and some not Christians at all. That it should give to these men power over the Word of God, to find and lose, to revise and excise, to put in and leave out, to form the text as well as to give the interpretation. Yet this has been done by that Church, which made it an article of its creed that other Churches had erred and that nothing was to be believed but was found in Scripture and could be proved thereby!" (133-134)

- "A revision which leaves out some forty entire verses and makes twenty thousand changes cannot be charged with timidity. But "comparative finality" is another matter. It is an illusion to suppose that finality can be attained by petty compromises with rationalism. **Now textual criticism is a tool belonging to the rationalism. The revivers have borrowed it to help them revise their bible.** They have used the tool sparingly, but they have taught others to use it, who we less gentle. With a Variorum Bible [having notes by various editors or commentators including variant readings from manuscripts or earlier editions] and good eyesight, **even an ignorant man can revise his bible for himself; and soon there will be no Bible to revise.** In the first days of Protestantism private judgement fixed what the Scripture meant; **now textual criticism settles what scriptures says; and shortly 'higher criticism' will reject text and meaning alike. What has happened in Germany will happen in England.**

. . . But perhaps the most surprising change of all is John 5:39. It is no longer "Search the Scriptures," but "Ye search;" and **thus Protestantism has lost the very cause of its being.** It has also been robbed of its only proof of Bible inspiration by the correct rending of II Tim. 3:16, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable," [this is the corrupt reading of the RV]. The old transitional [King James reading] appears in the margin, a minority of the translators apparently adhering to it." (135-136)

- "Lastly, we come to the most serious of all--viz., the passages the Revisers have thought proper to leave out altogether. So far it has been a question of translation and of names, but **here the vital integrity of sacred scripture is affected. By the sole authority of textual criticism these men have dared to vote away some forty verses of the inspired word.** The Eunuch's Baptismal Profession of Faith is gone; the Angel of the Pool of Bethesda has vanished; but the Angel of Agony remains--till the next Revision. The Heavenly Witnesses [I John 5:7] have

departed, and no marginal note mourns their loss. **The last twelve verses of St. Mark are detached from the rest of the gospel, as if ready for removal as soon as Dean Burgon dies.** The account of the woman taken in adultery is placed in brackets, awaiting excision. Many other passages have a mark set against them in the margin to show that, like forest trees, they are shortly destined for the critic's ax. Who can tell when the destruction will cease? **What have the offending verses done that textual critics should tear them from their home of centuries in the shire of God's temple? The sole offence of many is that the careless copyist of some old uncial ms. skipped over them.** . . . The Angel of Bethesda may have cured "the sick, the blind, the halt and the withered," but **modern science** has no need of his services, for it has proved, without identifying the site, that the spring was intermittent and the water chalybeate. But our intelligent critics forgot to get rid of the paralytic, whom the Lord cured, and as long as he remains in the text his words will convict them of folly." (140)

- "We have spoken of the admissions, the peculiarities, and the **omissions of the newly Revised Version.** It only remains to express our **deep anxiety as to its effect** upon the religious mind of England and Scotland. It cannot but give a severe shock to those who have been brought up in the strictest sect of Protestantism. **Their fundamental doctrine of verbal inspiration is undermined.** The land of John Knox will mourn its dying Calvinism. The prophets of Bible religion will find no sure word from the Lord in the new Gospel. But assuredly the Broad Church will widen their tents yet more, **and rejoice in the liberty wherewith textual criticism has made them free.** Already one of their great oracles, himself a Reviser, has declared that Inspiration: "**It is not in a part but in the whole, not in a particular passage but in the general tendency and drift of the complete words.**" And he teaches a new way to convert the working-classes from their unbelief. "The real way," he says, "**To reclaim them is for the church frankly to admit that the documents on which they base their claims to attention are not to be accepted in blind obedience, but are to be tested and sifted and tried by all the methods that patience and learning can bring to bear.**" Then Heaven help the poor working man if his sole hope of salvation lies in the new Gospel of Textual Criticism! But what will those think who, outside the Catholic Church, still retain the old Catholic ideas about Church and Scripture? How bitter to them must be the sight of their Anglican Bishops sitting with Methodists, Baptists, and Unitarians to improve the English Bible according to modern ideas of Progressive Biblical Criticism! Who gave these men authority over the written Word of God? It was not Parliament, or Privy Council, but the Church of England acting through Convocation. To whom do they look for the necessary sanction and approval of their work, but to public opinion? One thing at least is certain, **The Catholic Church will gain by the new revision, both directly and indirectly. Directly, because old errors are removed from the translation;**

**indirectly, because the “BIBLE-ONLY” principle is proved to be false. It is not now at length too evident that scripture is powerless without the church as the witness to its inspiration, the safeguard of its integrity, and the exponent of its meaning.” And it will now be clear to all men which is the true church, the real Mother to whom the Bible of right belongs. Nor will it need Solomon’s wisdom to see that the so-called church which heartlessly gives up the helpless child to be cut in pieces by textual critics cannot be the true mother.” (143-144)**

- In other words, the Revision will be the end of Protestantism. The Richard Simons of the world will have accomplished their purpose.
- In his 1892 publication *The Bible: What It Is and Is Not*, Joseph Wood stated the following:
  - **The Revised Version is of great doctrinal significance.** It tends to **break down the rigidity of orthodoxy, and it justifies that Liberal Christianity** which we, in this place, hold and teach. We, at any rate, have every reason to be grateful for the help which the Revised Version gives us to a better understanding of the work of Christ and his Apostles. We who know the fatal force and fascination of words, and have learnt to realize the immense and inconceivable mistakes which have been made by nearly all English churches through the deficiencies and mistakes of the Authorized Version, welcome with the deepest thankfulness the Bible which the revisers have placed in our hands, as bringing before the English reader for the first time the true sense of inspired writers.” (Wood, 46)
- Also in 1882, *The Gospel Standard* ran a story that was very critical of the RV:
  - “All who believe in inspiration have admitted it to be the authority (KJB); but now-a-days men are aiding the infidel, by undermining the certainty of God’s Word with questions as to its genuineness. We consider the omission of words, clauses, and whole verses, and marginal notes in the Revised Version to accomplish no other purpose.” (Allen)
- The *Universalist Quarterly and General Review* stated the following in part in Volume 21 from 1884:
  - “In fact, any new version is contested by that ultra conservative spirit that will not brook any interference with “God’s word.” But no English version is God’s word. The Greek original comes nearest to that. It is an irreverent reverence that invests any version with such sanctity as to repel any attempt at communion with the divine original for the purpose of bringing a more accurate report to men. It is to make a fetish of a book, and perpetuate mistakes.” (Hanson, 471)
- Fredric Edwards’ 1885 address on The Revised Old Testament is fascinating to consider:

- “the inspiration that is now believed in is the inspiration not of words but of men. As long as the old theory was held, the value of textual criticism was underrated. In a general sense the words were believed to be inspired, but nobody seemed to attach much importance to the study and investigation of the words themselves. Manuscripts were neglected, comparisons were not instituted, evidence was not weighed, and the words were left to take care of themselves. With the progress of the change I have referred to, another marked change has come. No sooner did we get to believe in inspired men, than importance began to attach itself to the words of these inspired men. An impetus was given to textual criticism such as it never before had. . . I believe I only represent the feelings of most present, when I express thankfulness that after fifteen years of honest, consecrated labour, the Authorized Version has been revised. . . It is well known that the text which the authorized represented was a very imperfect representative of the text which a wide and extensive comparison of Greek manuscripts would force us to adopt. In fact, the *Textus Receptus* failed through no fault but rather through the misfortune of its framers. They did not, it is true, use all the aids in the shape of manuscripts that they might have done, and even those they did use were not very carefully edited. It must not however be forgotten that multitudes of manuscripts are now known and classified, the existence of which was then unthought of, and the oldest and most valuable of the existing manuscripts were then unknown.” (Edwards, 8-11)
- “Of this I am growing more and more certain every day, that as regards this as well as everything else, the Liberalism of to-day will be the Conservatism of to-morrow, and as for the Conservatism of to-day, it will be utterly forgotten and ignored in the future, which is near, and we who may have upheld it, will be the first to wonder at ourselves that our eyes were not sooner opened to its narrowness and incompleteness.” (Edwards, 27-28)
- In this quotation from Herman Joseph Hueser’s 1895 publication *Chapters of Bible Study*, we see the completion of the train of thought initiated by Richard Simon nearly 200 years earlier in the 1600s:
  - “Besides these changes, which must be a shock to many an English Protestant who has accustomed himself by long reading of the Bible to believe in verbal inspiration, there are a number of omissions in the New Revised Text which in all amount to about 40 entire verses. It appears, then, that the King James Bible of some years ago has not been as most Protestants of necessity claimed for it—the pure, authentic, unadulterated Word of God. And if not, what guarantee have we that the promiscuous body of recent translators, however learned, **withal not inspired, have given us that pure, authentic, unadulterated Word of God? . . . So far Protestant revisions have done Catholics a service in removing by successive corrections one error after another from the "reformed" Bible, thus demonstrating the correctness of the old Vulgate; but they have also led**

**Protestants to reflect seriously, and to realize that the "Bible only" principle is proved to be false and dangerous. They must see that the Scripture is powerless without the Church as the witness to its inspiration, the safeguard of its integrity, and the exponent of its meaning."** (Heuser, 122, 131)

- The Revised Version which was supposed to make God's word clearer and more assessable sowed the seeds of doubt and confusion.
- It is commonly repeated that modern versions are supposed to make God's word more clear and understandable. If this were so, should we not be witnessing the greatest research in Pauline truth the church has yet seen, given the proliferation of modern versions in our midst?
- Leland Ryken, author of *The Legacy of the King James Bible*, chronicles the following results of the ascendancy of modern versions.
  - "First, we have lost a common English Bible in both the church and the culture at large. It is an incalculable loss. On numerous fronts, life was greatly simplified when virtually everyone agreed on what was meant by the "the Bible." Conversely, many things became problematic when that agreement ceased, and some things were permanently lost.

Second, the authority of the Bible went into eclipse when we lost a common Bible. . . It is a fact that the English Bible is no longer accepted as an authoritative book in the public spheres . . . religion, education, law, politics, and the arts. Even when modern literary authors refer to the Bible, they usually do so in a manner that challenges the intended meanings of the biblical authors.

Third, biblical illiteracy has accompanied the decline of the King James Bible. This is widely acknowledged. When a colleague in my own department learned that I was writing a book on the King James Bible and its legacy, she volunteered the observation that after the King James Bible gave way to a proliferation of modern translations, even Christian students became inept at seeing biblical references in literature. . .

Claims by modern translators and Bible scholars that the Christian public is fortunate to have been delivered from the archaisms and occasional inaccuracies of the KJV turn out to be hollow. If Bible knowledge in our day has declined across the board, where is the alleged gain from modern translations? The very proliferation of translations has discouraged the Christian public from seeking to know what the Bible actually says. . .

What has been lost? A common English Bible, a nearly universal reverence for the Bible as an authoritative book, and biblical literacy. Finally, we have lost the affective and literary power of the King James Bible. . ." (Ryken, 230)

- In the name of scholarship, Protestants have allowed their Paper Pope to be Pilfered. They embraced the rationalistic suppositions of their opponents and have caused their

entire enterprise to suffer damage. Protestant influence has dwindled since they allowed their own backbone of their movement to be called into the question.

## Lesson 8 The Message of Grace in Post-Reformation America

David W. Reid

### America's Founding

- America was founded by Protestants who viewed their lives through the lens of scripture.
- Although historical revisionism has attempted to paint the founding of America as a secular endeavor, the Mayflower Compact expressly declared the purpose of the Pilgrims' hazardous travel across the Atlantic to be "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith."
  - "In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc., having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid . . ." (Mayflower Compact)
- The Pilgrims likened their situation in England / Europe to that of Israel suffering under Pharaoh and their journey to America as Israel's journey to the Promised Land. It would have been easy to liken their hazardous journey across the Atlantic to Homer's Odyssey, which chronicles Odysseus's difficult travel homeward after the fall of Troy, but the Pilgrims thought of their lives in scriptural terms.
  - "Between 1627 and 1640, some four thousand individuals made the hazardous crossing of the Atlantic Ocean and settled on the coastline of Massachusetts Bay. For these settlers, there was a clear alignment between the narrative of their journey and that of the Bible. England was the land in which they struggled under oppression; America would be the land in which they found freedom. Expelled from their Egypt by a cruel Pharaoh (as they saw in both James I and Charles 1), they had settled in a promised land flowing with milk and honey. They would build a new Jerusalem, a city upon a hill, in this strange land. The Pilgrim Fathers were an inspiration to many who followed them to the new world." (McGrath, 153)
- It is worth noting that a large part of the African American community has similarly viewed its American experience through Biblical analogy.
  - "'African American Christianity (in its denominational formation) is almost singularly the product of missionary theology, which is deeply rooted in Biblicist, fundamentalist theology.' White Protestants evangelized first the slaves and later the freed blacks with a theologically conservative message built on a high view of the Bible's authority. Generally speaking, the Bible remains important in the black community because it has for centuries been identified

with the African American narrative in U.S. history (moving from slavery to freedom just as ancient Israel in the Old Testament, and moving to freedom in Christ in the New Testament).” (Goff, et al., 21)

- The church governance structure adopted by the founders emphasized local control rather than state churches with rigid hierarchy. This philosophical approach would subsequently be reflected in the federalist design of the American government.
  - “One of the most remarkable features of the early history of New England Protestantism in the 1620s and 1630s is that most Puritan communities appear to have abandoned a Presbyterian view of church government within months of their arrival and adopted a congregational polity instead. [ ] Reacting strongly against the rigid hierarchical structures of the European state churches, the American settlers opted instead for a democratic congregationalism.” (McGrath, 153)
  - “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” (US Constitution, Amendment I)

### **The Decline of American Protestantism**

- To evaluate the health and influence of Protestantism in America, the first and most obvious indicator would be the percentage of the population that self-identifies as Protestant. Secondary indicators would be the extent to which self-identified Protestants hold to core Protestant beliefs. By all of these measures, Protestantism in America is on the decline.
- The chart below shows the percentage of each American age group that identifies with certain religious traditions.

Religious Tradition by Age Group

	<b>65+</b>	<b>50-64</b>	<b>30-49</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>Demographic trend</b>
Evangelical Protestant	29%	28%	25%	20%	-9%
Mainline Protestant	22%	16%	13%	10%	-12%
Historically Black Protestant	6%	7%	7%	6%	Flat
Catholic	24%	23%	20%	16%	-8%
Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)	12%	17%	25%	36%	+24%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- If those percentages hold as the American population ages:
  - Protestantism will lose 21 points of market share (decrease from 57% to 36%) within millennials’ lifetimes.

- Both Evangelical Protestantism and Mainline Protestantism will lose more market share than Catholicism.
- The “nones” will triple in size.

### **Protestant Rejection of Protestantism**

- The confusion and error within Protestantism is so pervasive that a significant percentage of self-identified Protestants do not hold even the most basic of Protestant views.
- “Just 19% of Protestants knew the basic tenet that salvation is through faith alone, not actions as well.” (Grossman)
  - This remarkable statistic indicates that 80% of Protestants lack the basic understanding of why Protestantism even exists. Thus, their Protestantism is evidently merely a cultural association completely lacking in doctrinal understanding or conviction.

### **Sources of Guidance on Right and Wrong**

	Overall	Evangelical Protestant	Historically Black Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)
Religion	33%	60%	47%	29%	30%	7%
Philosophy/reason	11%	5%	6%	10%	10%	18%
Common sense	45%	30%	41%	51%	48%	57%
Science	9%	3%	4%	6%	10%	17%
Don’t know	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- As further evidence that Protestant doctrine is not a significant influence in the lives of many Protestants, consider that 51% of Mainline Protestants view common sense, not their faith, as the source of guidance on right and wrong.
- Determining right and wrong based upon common sense is a repudiation of God’s word as the authority for determining right and wrong. It is a rejection of sola scriptura.

### Belief in God

	Overall	Evangelical Protestant	Historically Black Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)
Believe in God; absolutely certain	63%	88%	89%	66%	64%	27%
Believe in God; fairly certain	20%	10%	9%	25%	27%	22%
Believe in God; not too/not at all certain	5%	1%	1%	4%	5%	11%
Believe in God; don’t know	1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Do not believe in God	9%	<1%	<1%	2%	2%	33%
Other/ don’t know if they believe in God	2%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	6%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- Incredibly, 34% of Mainline Protestants are not absolutely certain that God exists!

## Protestantism & The Word of God

### Interpreting Scripture

	Overall	Evangelical Protestant	Historically Black Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)
Word of God; should be taken literally	31%	55%	59%	24%	26%	10%
Word of God; not everything taken literally	27%	29%	23%	35%	36%	11%
Word of God; other/don't know	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	1%
Not the Word of God	33%	8%	9%	28%	28%	72%
Other/don't know	7%	4%	6%	9%	8%	7%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- The majority of Protestants do not view the Bible as the word of God to be taken literally, and the trend toward unbelief is increasing.
- Nearly half (45%) of Evangelical Protestants and the vast majority (76%) of Mainline Protestants do not believe that the Bible is the word of God and should be taken literally.
- Note that the views of Mainline Protestants as to how to interpret scripture are indistinguishable from those of Catholics.
- Unsurprisingly, one's view of whether the Bible is the word of God and should be taken literally seems to correlate with how frequently one reads the word of God.

### Frequency of Reading Scripture by Religious Group

	Overall	Evangelical Protestant	Historically Black Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Catholic	Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)
At least once a week	35%	63%	61%	30%	25%	9%
Once or twice a month	10%	12%	13%	13%	11%	6%
Several times a year	8%	7%	8%	12%	10%	6%
Seldom/never	45%	18%	18%	44%	52%	79%
Don’t know	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<1%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- Nearly half of all Mainline Protestants read the scriptures seldom or never.

### Frequency of Reading Scripture by Generational Group

	Greatest (1910-24)	Silent (1925-45)	Baby Boomer (1946-64)	Generation X (1965-76)	Older Millennial	Younger Millennial
At least once a week	45%	44%	38%	36%	29%	25%
Once or twice a month	9%	9%	9%	11%	10%	13%
Several times a year	6%	7%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Seldom/never	38%	38%	44%	44%	52%	53%

Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study 2014

- If current generational practices continue, the percentage of Americans that read the Bible at least once a week will decrease from 45% to 25% during Millennials’ lifetimes.
- America is approaching the point where the majority of the population seldom/never reads the Bible.
- Prior to the Reformation, the word of God was inaccessible. Today, it is ignored.
- With the advent of the printing press and widespread literacy, the Received Text in English has become almost costless and very easy to access. Multiple smartphone apps enable essentially free access to the Received Text in English and other languages. And yet Bible reading is on the decline.
- During the Middle Ages, the Bible was denied to the common man through many barriers (e.g., illegal to own, expensive, not in the vernacular languages). Today, through textual criticism, Satan has convinced man that the pure word of God does not exist, and thus, men disregard the word of God that is easily within their reach.

### The Enduring King James Version

- American Protestantism as a group has departed from the Received Text, but American Bible readers disproportionately favor the Received Text, the King James Version.
- The complete New International Version was first published in 1978. By 1986, the NIV had overtaken the King James Version as the bestselling version. (Goff, p. 12)
- However, among people who actually read the Bible, the King James Version remains the overwhelmingly preferred edition.

### **Bible Translation Used by Readers**

King James Version	55%
New International Version	19%
New Revised Standard Version	7%
New American Bible	6%
Living Bible	5%
Other translations	8%

(Goff, p. 12)

- The NIV is evidently like home exercise equipment: frequently bought and rarely used.
- Nearly half of Bible readers have departed from the Received Text. (Goff, 12)
- 53% of KJV readers believe that the Bible is the literal word of God while only 39% of NIV readers believe that the Bible is the literal word of God. (Goff, 13)
  - It is understandable for those reading the NIV not to believe it is the literal word of God as the NIV contains demonstrable errors.
  - Mar 1:2 NIV—as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—
    - The language in quotes is not found in Isaiah but in Malachi 3:1.
  - Mat 5:22 NIV—But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.
    - Jesus Christ was angry (Mark 3:5) but not subject to judgment. The NIV erroneously omits the phrase “without a cause” which makes the verse inaccurate.
  - Mat 17:21 NIV—See footnotes
  - Mark 16:9 NIV note: “[The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9-20.]”

- Even with the rise of the NIV and the multitude of modern versions, as of 2014, approximately 40% of congregations still used the KJV in worship. (Goff, 13)

### **Pentecostalism**

- American fundamentalism has largely rejected dispensational truth, and as J. C. O’Hair predicted, the inevitable result has been the rapid growth of Pentecostalism.
- “It does seem that God is using the rod of Pentecostal fanaticism to bring to their senses the “grace” preachers, among Fundamentalists, who teach that the dispensation of the mystery began with Peter on a Jewish feast day, instead of with Saul, after his name was changed to Paul. They will still say that there was no difference between the gospel OF the circumcision committed to Peter and the gospel OF the uncircumcision committed to Paul (Galatians 2:7). They add to the confusion by teaching that Paul perpetuated the same message and spiritual program which began with Peter and Pentecost. The answer to Pentecostalism, Seventh Day Adventism, Anglo Israelism, and every ill and “ism” with which the Body of Jesus Christ is afflicted, is Pauline Grace Truth, the understanding of Ephesians 3:1 to 11 and 4:1 to 14.” (O’Hair, 190)
- In one survey, respondents who had read the Bible at least once outside of worship in the past year were surveyed as to their favorite verse or story, and Paul’s letters were mentioned only infrequently. (Goff, 18)
- “Pentecostalism has become the fastest growing family of world Christianity. It is growing at a rate of 13 million a year, or 35,000 a day. With nearly a half billion adherents, it is, after Roman Catholicism, the largest Christian tradition.” (Christianity Today).

### **The Solution**

- The current state of American Protestants is that (1) they are declining in numbers, (2) they have lost sight of justification by faith, (3) they do not look to their faith for guidance on right and wrong, (4) they suffer uncertainty as to whether God exists, (5) they do not believe the Bible should be interpreted literally, (6) they read the Bible only infrequently, (7) they are departing from the Received Text, and (8) they are increasingly embracing Pentecostal confusion.
- Many Protestants recognize these problems, but their answer is to become more like the world. This is the wrong response because it is not possible to be as worldly as the world. It is not even a sensible idea to begin with.
- New translations are not the answer for the simple reason that people don’t want to read them.
- All of these manifold problems can be addressed with a single solution: preaching, reading, and believing the Received Text, the King James Version, rightly divided.
  - 2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

- The Protestant Revolution was not a compromise or accommodation to the existing religious orthodoxy. It was a bold change of direction fundamentally rooted in the embrace of God's word by the common man. If American Protestantism is to reverse its decline it will be by embracing the Received Text that was the driving force of the Reformation.

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