

The background of the poster is a faded, purple-tinted image of a large, ornate domed building, likely a cathedral or government building. Several statues are visible along the roofline of the building. The overall texture is grainy and aged.

# Unity > Truth?

Giving Light to Our World

October 31, 2017 wasn't just about Halloween. Ghosts, Dracula, and witches aside, this special date marked the 500-year anniversary of an event that altered the course of history. "Bang, bang, bang," pounded the hammer of Augustinian monk Martin Luther as he nailed his famous "95 Theses on the Power of Indulgences" on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. In a nutshell, Luther's document condemned the widespread practice of paying money to the Roman Catholic Church in exchange for certificates called *indulgences*. Indulgences granted a reduction in punishment for sins committed by payees (or their dead relatives).

*Indulgences are lies,* thundered the German monk. *God's favor is a gift. It's not for sale!*

In 1517 A.D., Luther's bold "bang!" shook Europe. As his revolutionary message spread, it became God's tool to ignite the Protestant Reformation. The word *protestant* means that a person is protesting or objecting to something. As a result of Luther's protesting movement, millions lost confidence in popes and priests and abandoned the Roman Church. Protestant churches—such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Mennonite and Methodist—rose unstoppably in its wake.

Fast-forward 500 years to October 31, 2017. Is the reformation over? Is the protest dead? Millions think so. Look around. Watch the news. Today, countless so-called Protestants are reuniting with the Roman Church in a large-scale ecumenical movement. “Let’s lay our differences aside,” leaders on both sides of the divide now suggest, “and unite to bless the world.” But should Catholics and Protestants unite? While God desires His people to be united, the Bible says it should not be at the cost of compromising the teachings of Holy Scripture. In fact, there are some differences that Christians should even be willing to *die for*. This is what led most of Jesus’ disciples to die as martyrs and millions more to share the same fate through hundreds of years.

## THE HEART OF THE CONTROVERSY

The heart of the Protestant vs. Catholic controversy centers around how sinners like us can be eternally saved and go to heaven. In 1450 A.D., the printing press was invented, and the first book printed was the Bible. Previously unread, Christians throughout Europe gazed upon—for the first time ever—the sacred pages of God’s Book. In 1501, Martin Luther discovered a Latin Bible in a library in Germany. *Unbelievable*, Luther pondered while reading it, *this is different from what my church teaches*.

At first, Luther tried to reform the church, but his efforts were viciously resisted. Roman Catholic leaders labeled him a heretic and pressured him to recant, threatening both him and his followers with imprisonment and loss of all possessions. Luther countered that Christians should place God's Word first, even above the Pope. *The war was on.* As the conflict intensified, Protestants eventually developed these fundamental principles. Their rallying cry was:

***"Sola Scriptura,"*** by Scripture alone

***"Sola Christo,"*** through Christ alone

***"Sola Fide,"*** by faith alone

***"Sola Gratia,"*** by grace alone

Yes, the Roman Catholic Church also taught (as it does today) the importance of faith, the value of Bible reading, and salvation through Christ and His grace; yet that small four-letter Latin word "*sola*" (meaning "*alone*") became the dividing line between reforming Protestants and Catholicism.

In the 1500s, Protestants taught that a person can reach heaven by God's grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, in Jesus Christ's perfect merits *alone*, based on what is written in the Bible *alone*; whereas Rome added to the requirements of salvation numerous traditions, such as praying to Mary and dead saints, repeating the rosary, confessing sins to

priests, performing works of penance, paying money to release one's dead relatives from the flames of purgatory, and above all, belief in the supreme authority of the Pope as the successor of St. Peter—the universal head of Christianity. Rome also added the notion that temporal punishment for sin could be reduced by purchasing indulgences.

Catholic leaders admitted that these traditions aren't mentioned in the Bible specifically, but asserted that they come from the Holy Spirit working through God's Church. Protestants didn't buy it. They decided to stick with Scripture. In the 1500s, these issues divided Christendom.

## PROPHETIC STUDY

Significantly, as the struggle deepened, Luther turned to the prophecies. By candlelight he read Paul's solemn prediction of a "falling away" (apostasy) in Christian history, and of a "man of sin" to arise in its wake (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**). He read of the antichrist "beast" waging fierce "war with the saints" (**Revelation 13:1, 7**), and of a mysterious Babylonian harlot (a false church) having illicit geo-political relationships with "the kings of the earth" (**Revelation 17:1-5; 18:4**). Little by little, the pieces came together. Horrified, Luther finally realized that he had discovered both *Christ*

and *antichrist*. Compelled by the Spirit of God, Luther finally threw aside political correctness, went public, and declared, "We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist."<sup>1</sup>

*Catholicism is a cleverly crafted counterfeit Christianity*, Luther soberly realized. This was a conclusion that many careful Bible students before and after him had also discovered. People such as John Wycliffe, John Huss (Moravian), John Calvin (Presbyterian), John Wesley (Methodist), Charles Spurgeon (Baptist), Matthew Henry (Bible commentator), and countless others. Google this.<sup>2</sup> These are facts.

*But haven't times changed?* Indeed, they have. Essentially, Rome has not changed, but Protestantism. Unwittingly, Protestants now seeking union with Rome are fulfilling an ancient apocalyptic prophecy that states that in the closing moments of time, "all the world marveled and followed the beast" (**Revelation 13:3**).

Dear reader, the Bible is still true today. The beast is still active. Eternal salvation from our sinful violations of God's Ten Commandments still comes only through simple faith in Jesus Christ *alone* (see **1 John 3:4; Acts 4:12**).

Prophecy also predicts that right before our Savior returns (**Revelation 14:14-16**), God Almighty

will initiate His closing phase of the Protestant Reformation through the global proclamation of three angels' messages recorded in **Revelation 14:6-12**. Pick up a Bible. Read **Revelation 14:6-12** for yourself. God's three angels announce that the "hour of His judgment has come" and urge true worship of the Creator (**verse 7**). They warn about "the beast" (the Roman Church), who we now realize has also changed God's original seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) into Sunday (see **Genesis 2:1-3; Daniel 7:25; Revelation 14:7, 12; Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:8; 28:1-2; John 14:15**).

Above all, God's end-time message urges us all to believe in "the everlasting gospel" (**Revelation 14:6**) of Jesus Christ who *loves everyone*, and paid the full price for our sins (see **John**).

October 31 commemorates more than ghosts and the dead. Make no mistake about it: God's Reformation, started on a Halloween night, is alive, and will exist to the close of time. *Let's be part of it.*

<sup>1</sup> LeRoy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. II (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> For example, try searching for "antichrist" or "what did protestant reformers believe about the antichrist?"



**GIVING LIGHT  
TO OUR WORLD**

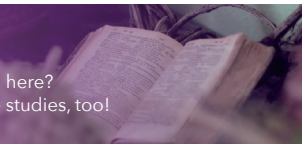


## **Go Deeper**

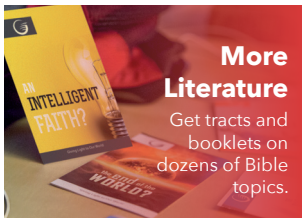
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