



In our previous installment of this series we addressed the Reformation under the leadership of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus in England, Martin Luther in Germany, and Huldrych Zwingli in Scandinavia, particularly Switzerland. These were the primary movers and shakers within the early years of the Reformation. Although they held tremendous sway among the European populace, major conflicts remained between their adherents and Roman Catholics, and even between the various Protestant sects. One of the most significant conflicts arose in England where the Church of England, at the time of Wycliffe and the Lollard Movement, remained loyal to the papacy. King Henry VIII remained a devout Catholic, resulting in the suppression of Wycliffe's influence. Wycliffe himself died a Roman Catholic even while attempting to bring reformation to the Catholic Church.

One of Satan's tactics is to foment spiritual error in different camps within Christianity, then pit those camps against one another. Thus, many Christians found themselves fighting vigorously, even militarily, to preserve one error against another error. Such is the case with how the Church of England came to split from the papacy under Henry the VIII.

Despite his devout adherence to Romanism, even to the point of authoring a book critical of Martin Luther, Henry found himself at odds with his church when he sought an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Catherine had borne only one surviving child, Mary, causing Henry to fear that lack of a male heir would jeopardize his descendants' claim to the throne. He wanted to put away Catherine in order to marry again in the hope of producing a male heir. Pope Julius II denied Henry's request, and that denial was reinforced by Julius' successor Pope Clement VII.

In defiance of the pope, Henry divorced Catherine. On January 25, 1533, he married Anne Boleyn, the Marchioness of Pembroke and daughter of Thomas Boleyn, 1st Earl of Wiltshire. As a result, Pope Clement VII pronounced the sentence of excommunication against Henry VIII and Thomas Cranmer,

the Archbishop of Canterbury who at first opposed Henry's marriage to Anne, but later approved it.

On September 7, 1533, Anne gave birth to her first child, Elizabeth, which disappointed Henry. After Anne suffered three miscarriages and was still unable to produce a male heir for Henry, he began to court Jane Seymour, the great-great-granddaughter of King Edward III of England.

In 1534, Henry VIII was granted by the English Parliament the first Act of Supremacy, declaring the King of England "the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England."

In that same year, the Parliament of England also passed the Treasons Act which condemned to death under the charge of treason anyone who protested the Act of Supremacy.

With the Act of Supremacy came the formal split from Roman Catholicism. Under Thomas Cromwell, the chief minister to Henry VIII from 1532 to 1540, and a strong advocate of the English Reformation, the Dissolution of the Monasteries went into effect, disbanding Roman Catholic monasteries, priories, convents and friaries in England, Wales and Ireland. In all, 825 Roman Catholic religious communities were dissolved. Large amounts of land and property owned by the Roman Catholic Church was confiscated by the Crown and ultimately passed to the nobility and the gentry, creating a strong force in favor of the English Reformation.

Under Henry VIII the English Reformation came into full bloom. But unlike the Reformations in other European nations, the English Reformation retained much of the formal religious trappings of Roman Catholicism.

Additionally, in March, 1534, Parliament passed the First Succession Act which disavowed Princess Mary, daughter of Henry by Catherine as illegitimate, and therefore unqualified to succeed to the throne. This was done in the hope that the yet unborn child of Henry with Anne Boleyn would be a son. To Henry's disappointment Anne bore a daughter who would be Elizabeth. The First Succession Act required all subjects to swear an oath to recognize it and the king's supremacy over

religious matters. Anyone who refused to take the oath was also subject to execution under the charge of treason.

Sir Thomas More, an English lawyer, philosopher and Renaissance humanist, who was also a counselor to Henry VIII, and served as Lord Chancellor for a season, believed that “no temporal man may be the head of the spirituality.” More was a strong opponent of the Protestant Reformation, so when the Act of Supremacy was passed, he openly refused to accept Henry VIII as the supreme head of the Church of England, and opposed separation from the Roman Catholic Church. He was subsequently convicted of treason and was beheaded on July 6, 1535.

Wishing to marry Jane Seymour, Henry had Anne investigated for treason in 1536. On May 2 of that year Anne was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. There she was tried and convicted of adultery, incest and witchcraft, all of which are viewed by modern historians as trumped-up charges. On May 19, 1536, Anne was beheaded, leaving Henry ostensibly free to marry Jane, which he did on the thirtieth of that month.

Henry again hoped to have a male heir, this time with Jane. So in June, 1536, Parliament passed the Second Succession Act, declaring Elizabeth illegitimate, like Mary, leaving both ineligible to succeed to the throne.

On October 12, 1537, Jane gave birth to the future King Edward VI, after which she became gravely ill. There are conflicting reports of the cause, but she died on October 24.

Ten years later, on January 28, 1547, Henry VIII died, content that he had a male heir to the throne. However, Edward died on July 6, 1553 at the young age of fifteen, after naming his cousin, Lady Jane Grey as his successor in an attempt to keep the throne from reverting to Roman Catholic control. His choice was disputed on the basis of the Third Succession Act which, under Henry VIII’s reign, restored both Mary and Elizabeth to succession behind the then Prince Edward.

Although Lady Jane Grey was first acknowledged as the Queen on July 9, 1553, with Mary gaining popularity, the Privy Council of England, made up of senior members of both Houses of Parliament, gave their allegiance to Mary, and Parliament declared her the rightful queen in September. Jane was subsequently declared a usurper of the throne.

Thus, under the Third Succession Act, Mary ascended the throne as the first sovereign Queen of England. Lady Jane Grey and her husband, Lord Guildford Dudley, were charged with treason along with two of Dudley’s brothers and Thomas Cranmer who had supported Jane’s succession to the throne. Ultimately, all were found guilty and executed, Jane and Dudley by beheading.

Jane’s execution was delayed by Mary in order to give Jane a chance to be converted to Roman Catholicism. Jane refused to convert, and went to her death a Protestant.

Mary had remained a Catholic, and her accession to the throne of England undid the reforms of Henry and Edward. She lost no time in restoring the Crown’s loyalty to the papacy. Although she initially issued a proclamation stating that she would not compel any of her subjects to embrace Catholicism, she soon had leading English reformers imprisoned, among them John Bradford, John Rogers, Hugh Latimer and Thomas Cranmer. Her first Parliament declared her mother’s marriage to

Henry VIII valid, and overturned Edward VI’s Protestant laws. In her brief five-year reign she waged a brutal pogrom against Protestants, condemning over 280 to burning at the stake, thus earning her the ignominious nickname, “Bloody Mary.”

Hoping to produce an heir that would prevent Elizabeth, her successor under the Act of Succession of 1544, to follow her to the throne, and to keep the Crown under papal rule, Mary wed Spain’s Prince Philip. Their betrothal precipitated a Protestant rebellion led by Thomas Wyatt the younger in January, 1554.

The marriage of convenience, which exhibited no genuine love between the two, produced no heir, although Mary seemed to suffer from two false pregnancies. She died from influenza at age 42 at St. James’s Palace, and was succeeded by Elizabeth.

Separated from each other by royal duties of Spain and England, Philip was not with Mary at her death. He wrote to his sister Joan: “I felt a reasonable regret for her death.”

With Elizabeth’s accession to the throne England began again to separate from papal authority.

Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy of 1559 which re-established the Church of England’s independence. Another decree of Parliament, the Act of Uniformity of 1559 outlined the form of Protestantism for the Church of England and re-established the Book of Common Prayer. The two acts comprised what would be called the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, which dealt with the divisions created between Mary I’s reign and Henry VIII’s and Edward VI’s reigns.

Parliament also created the Reformation Bill that established the form of worship and the doctrines of the Church of England. The bill defined the “Holy Communion” according to Reformed Protestant theology as opposed to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. While retaining the name “Mass” for the Eucharist within Anglican tradition, the terms most commonly used are “Holy Communion,” “Holy Eucharist,” or “the Lord’s Supper.”

With the coronation of Elizabeth I, England again removed herself from papal domination. In 1563, the Church of England established the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* which defined the church’s doctrines in distinction to those of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism, the latter of which had influenced the majority of Christian churches in continental Europe.

From that time until the present, the Church of England has maintained its independence, although there have been overtures made by some toward returning to “Mother Church.”

Anti-Christ’s influence within the English Reformation is evident in the bloody battles for control, not only between Roman Catholic and Church of England factions during the reign of Henry VIII, and later Elizabeth I, but between the Protestant factions that fought for supremacy within the Church of England and the Crown. In truth, much of the Protestant Reformation was stained with the blood of martyrs on all sides of the religious disputes. So while we recognize God’s hand in opening His Word to better understanding of His grace, Satan successfully manipulated many of the human instruments God used to bring about spiritual enlightenment. This does not negate the truths they discovered and propagated; it merely demonstrates how something godly can be turned into something evil when men succumb to their base nature and

exercise zeal to the extreme. Anti-Christ is well aware of the soulish penchant of man to allow pride to reign in his heart, and begin to think that he is the author and finisher of the faith.

PURITANISM

Soon after the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England, a contingent of English Protestants was emboldened to express a particular theology which would become known as Puritanism. These were largely Protestants who had been exiled during Mary's bloody reign. Considered radicals within the Church of England, the Puritans were not allowed any influence within the Church's body politic. Restricted by English laws on religion, the Puritans took to immigrating first to the Netherlands, then to Ireland and Wales, and eventually to New England in North America.

The Puritans rejected the episcopal model for their religious community, and adopted the practice of worshipping on the Sabbath. Their eschatology was millennial, a departure from most of the Protestant traditions that continued to follow their former Roman Catholic amillennial eschatology.

Although initially shunned by the Church of England, the Puritans eventually became a major political force after the First English Civil War (1642-1646).

The name "Puritan" was applied by their detractors as a pejorative because the Puritans did not consider the Church of England's reforms to be sufficiently removed from Roman Catholicism. They demanded more "purity" in teachings and practice than what they observed in Protestantism in general. They also promoted education for the general population in order that they could read the Scriptures for themselves.

The Puritans adopted a form of Reformed theology similar to Calvinism, yet held to a premillennial eschatological position, expecting that Christ would come to establish His millennial reign on the earth, contrary to the amillennialism of Calvinism and Reformed theology in general.

THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

At the same time England was embroiled in its own intrigues over religious and political power, the Roman Catholic Church began to embark on its response to the Protestant Reformation. The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, or Catholic Revival, began with the Council of Trent which convened from 1545 to 1563, initiated by Pope Paul III (reigned 1534-1549). Although the original Reformers wished only to bring needed change to the Roman Catholic Church, with no desire to separate from it, they found nothing but resistance from the papacy. Thus they were forced to establish their own sectarian institutions. By the mid-sixteenth century the Catholic Church recognized the legitimacy of many concerns brought to the forefront by the Protestant Reformation, spurring Pope Paul III to commission his cardinals to consider certain institutional reforms. Most of these centered on financial abuses, including the selling of indulgences, and on ferreting out corruption among the priesthood and bishops.

Rejecting outright the doctrinal reforms adopted by Protestantism, the Council of Trent maintained the Roman Catholic sacramental system and religious orders, adhering closely to its Medieval heritage. The Council also reaffirmed the veneration

of Mary and the Catholic saints, as well as relics associated with them, among other things that angered the Reformers.

The most notable changes had to do with bringing the Catholic clergy to more accountability with the intention of healing the divide between the clergy and the laity. Many priests, particularly in rural areas, were poorly educated and lacked theological training. There began a move toward educating the clergy in Latin, Roman Catholic theology and apologetics by incorporating the humanist approach toward art and liturgy. The purpose was to address the need for discipline within the Church while enhancing the administrative qualities of its clergy. This has had the effect of creating even a greater divide between the religious establishment and the laity—one of anti-Christ's primary methods of destroying true faith and the priesthood of all believers.

At the same time, the Council did try to establish some form of reasonable integrity to the institution. Bishops could no longer be appointed for political reasons, and were required to be responsible for their priestly duties. Many were bishops in name only, being absent from their dioceses due to responsibility for their vast land holdings. They were to exercise more power over all aspects of the religious lives of their flocks.

The Catholic Reformation also saw the rise of a new spirituality which would morph into what is commonly called Roman Catholic mysticism. Some of the well-known and influential among the Catholic mystics were Ignatius of Loyola who founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Francis de Sales and Philip Neri. Out of Roman Catholic mysticism came spiritual exercises that focus on bringing God into one's presence through meditation and contemplative prayer. Much Roman Catholic mysticism focused then, and does today focus, on devotion to the Virgin Mary. In this way, anti-Christ has used the religious spirit within man to create interlopers to the relationship Jesus established between His disciples and His Father. Mary became the central figure in that deception.

It was to Mary that victory at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 was credited. This battle in the Gulf of Corinth saw the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire defeated by the Holy League, a coalition of Roman Catholic Mediterranean maritime states tasked by Pope Pius V with breaking the Ottoman Turks' control of the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Although we have seen how anti-Christ was instrumental in the birth and growth of Islam, the Ottoman Empire was allowed to go only so far in establishing anti-Christ's power over the nations through Islam. That power is kept in abeyance by God, to be released in the very last days which will see Islam as one of two major religio-political forces that will form the anti-Christ's kingdom. (See our latest book, *The Day of Yahweh*, Sword Publishers, 2013). The Lord used one anti-Christ power (The Holy Roman Empire) to keep Islam from gaining too much control until that time.

We have seen numerous instances where anti-Christ has fomented one evil after another, but has lost absolute control over each of them as they have come into conflict with one another. Satan's house divided will not stand.

The Counter-Reformation was not confined to reformation within the Catholic Church; it was primarily focused on attempts to regain control over the lands that the Reformers had gained. The many political and military campaigns saw more bloodshed, further engorging the appetite of anti-Christ to see Christians killing Christians. Although the Catholic Church saw a modicum of success in these campaigns, the Reformation had taken sufficient hold in enough major European countries to keep them out of the papacy's control. Italy, France, Spain and Portugal, as well as some Baltic countries, were all that remained of the papacy's European domain. Much of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor had long before given allegiance to the various Eastern Orthodox religions. Yet in spite of the terrible wound to the Holy Roman Empire, the Catholic Church today remains by far the largest Christian denomination in the world with some 1.2 billion adherents, surpassed in number only by Islam which boasts over 1.6 billion souls.

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The Reformation continued into the seventeenth century with a series of religious wars, primarily fought throughout Central Europe and involving most European nations. These wars are encompassed within a single historical reference as The Thirty Years' War, and lasted from 1618 to 1648. Beginning as a religious war between Protestants and Catholics within the Holy Roman Empire, the conflict spread to become one of the most destructive and protracted conflicts among European nation states.

The Thirty Years' War began with a cessation of conflict between German Lutherans and Catholics through the Peace of Augsburg (1555) ratified by Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. According to the Peace of Augsburg, the rulers of the 224 German states could choose between Lutheranism or Catholicism as the official religion for their particular realms, and could impose their choice upon their subjects. Lutherans were allowed to keep the lands they had seized from the Catholic Church, but the prince-bishops who had converted to Lutheranism were required to surrender their territories to the Holy Roman Empire.

The Peace of Augsburg brought an end to certain hostilities, but it did not resolve major religious differences. Nor did it address the spreading influence of Calvinism in Germany, confining its terms to Lutheranism and Catholicism. But more important, it did not assuage the smoldering undercurrents of the religious conflict among other nations. France, Spain, Sweden, and other portions of the Holy Roman Empire continued to vie for preeminence with Europe.

Thus, although it began as a religious war, the Thirty Years' War morphed into a battle for political power which was really a continuation of the Bourbon-Hapsburg conflict for European dominance. Again, Christians were pressed into bloodshed of one another under earthly rulers whose aims were anything but faithful to the Gospel. Anti-Christ fomented one conflict after another, enflaming all of Europe and soaking its ground with the blood of men professing faith in Jesus Christ. The devastation came not only through weapons of war, but disease and famine which resulted from the wars.

Mercy was cast aside and brutality was the order of the day. Pillaging, rape and wholesale destruction of entire villages and towns reflected the ungodliness of war waged in the name of God.

The Thirty Years' War came to a conclusion through a series of treaties, culminating in the Peace of Munster on May 15, 1648. On October 24 of that year the Treaties of Munster and Osnabrück were signed, marking the official end of the War.

The result of The Thirty Years' War was the further weakening of the Holy Roman Empire, which effectively ended the Reformation period. The European power structure was drastically altered, and the Protestant states were left in peace.