

## **“BEFORE” (FACTORS THAT LED TO REFORMATION?)**

Today we call ourselves **“PROTESTANTS”**. In simple term, we protested against the abuses and totalitarian control of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **INTRODUCTION**

- The Reformation was the greatest religious movement for Christ since the early church. It was a revival of Biblical and New Testament theology.
- The Reformation officially began in 1517 when Martin Luther challenged the Roman Church on the matter of Indulgences. While Luther had no idea of the impact this would make on the German society and the world, this event changed the course of history.

*"The Reformation of the sixteenth century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history. It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting from religion, it gave, directly or indirectly, a mighty impulse to every forward movement, and made Protestantism the chief propelling force in the history of modern civilization"*

**The nature of Jesus Christ is the supreme and central essence of our faith. Everything of Christianity stands or falls upon our understanding and belief in the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.**

**The first church council in history** was held in the apostolic church to decide the conditions under which the gentiles, that is, the non-Jews, could enter the Christian Church. (Acts 15.) From that time on, all through history councils were held on every level of church life to make important decisions.

As the Church progressed through history it was faced with many difficult decisions with regard to nature and understanding of Jesus Christ. The Church always settled difficulties and made decisions by reaching a consensus of opinion among all the believers inspired by God who were led by their appointed leaders, first the apostles and then the bishops.

### **THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS**

**Council of Nicea I: 325 AD:** Formulated the First Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Son of God.

**Council of Constantinople I: 381 AD:** Formulated the Second Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

**Council of Ephesus: 431 AD:** Defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary as Theotokos. (God Bearer)

**Council of Chalcedon: 451 AD:** Defined Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man in One Person.

**Council of Constantinople II: 553 AD:** Reconfirmed the Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ.

**Council of Constantinople III: 680 AD:** Affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus by insisting upon the reality of His human will and action.

**Council of Nicea II: 787 AD:** Affirmed the propriety of icons as genuine expressions of the Christian Faith.

Besides the seven ecumenical councils, there are other local church councils as many as 15 councils whose decisions, have been mostly of a moral or structural character.

In the event of these councils, finally, in the year AD 1054, there came a major division known as East and West Schism. This was prior to Protestant Reformation.

### **GREAT SCHISM (EAST-WEST SPLIT OF THE CHURCH (1054)**

Eastern Christian churches (led by the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius) Western church (led by Pope Leo IX).

The mutual excommunications by the pope and the patriarch that year became a watershed in church history.

The excommunications were not lifted until 1965, when Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, following their historic meeting in Jerusalem in 1964, presided over simultaneous ceremonies that revoked the excommunication decrees.

While the Eastern Orthodox Church has claimed some of the church's great voices, and while there are many in the Orthodox tradition that have a genuine salvation relationship with Jesus Christ, the Orthodox church itself does not speak with a clear message that can be harmonized with the biblical gospel of Christ. The call of the Reformers for "Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Christ alone" is missing in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and that is too precious a treasure to do without.

- **Factors responsible for the split:**

1. Eastern churches used Greek language/ western churches used Latin language
2. The Procession of the Holy Spirit Controversy (Filioque clause)
3. The Iconoclastic Controversy (the use of images).
4. Power struggles between pope of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople.
5. The issue of subservience to the emperor. (The pope wanted to control the emperor)
6. Various liturgical differences (married vs. unmarried; bearded vs. unbearded clergy; leavened or unleavened bread used in Eucharist).
7. The equal authority of church tradition and Scripture.
8. Discouragement of individuals interpreting the Bible apart from tradition.
9. The perpetual virginity of Mary
10. Prayer for the dead
11. The possibility of receiving salvation after death
12. The possibility of losing salvation

### **UNDERSTANDING ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IS VITAL (TO BETTER GRASP THE NEED AND MEANING OF REFORMATION)**

- The Roman Catholic Church proclaims itself to be the church that Jesus Christ started in AD 30. The church that was established and built by the apostles.
- On the contrary, reading of the New Testament will reveal that the Roman Catholic Church does not have its origin in the teachings of Jesus or His apostles.

*In the New Testament, there is no mention of the papacy, worship/adoration of Mary, petitioning saints in heaven for their prayers, apostolic succession, the ordinances of the church functioning as sacraments, infant baptism, confession of sin to a priest, purgatory, indulgences, or the equal authority of church tradition and Scripture.*

So, if the origin of the Roman Catholic Church is not in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, what is the true origin of the Roman Catholic Church?

- For the first 280 years of Christian history, Christianity was banned by the Roman Empire, and Christians were terribly persecuted.
- However, this changed after the “conversion” of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine provided religious toleration with the Edict of Milan in AD 313, effectively lifting the ban on Christianity.
- Later, in AD 325, Constantine called the Council of Nicea in an attempt to unify Christianity. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide.
- While this may have seemed to be a positive development for the Christian church, the results were anything but positive.
- Just as Constantine refused to fully embrace the Christian faith, but continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices,
- ***so the Christian church that Constantine promoted was a mixture of true Christianity and Roman paganism.***
- Constantine found that, with the Roman Empire being so vast, expansive, and diverse, not everyone would agree to forsake his or her religious beliefs to embrace Christianity.

So, Constantine allowed, and even promoted, the “Christianization” of pagan beliefs. Completely pagan and utterly unbiblical beliefs were given new “Christian” identities. Some clear examples of this are as follows:

(1) **The Cult of Isis, an Egyptian mother-goddess religion**, was absorbed into Christianity by replacing Isis with Mary. Many of the titles that were used for Isis, such as “Queen of Heaven,” “Mother of God,” and *theotokos* (“God-bearer”) were attached to Mary. Mary was given an exalted role in the Christian faith, far beyond what the Bible ascribes to her, in order to attract Isis worshippers to a faith they would not otherwise embrace. Many temples to Isis were, in fact, converted into temples dedicated to Mary. The first clear hints of Roman Catholic **Mariology** occur in the writings of Origen, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, which happened to be the focal point of Isis worship.

(2) **Mithraism was a religion in the Roman Empire** in the 1st through 5th centuries AD. It was very popular among the Romans, especially among Roman soldiers, and was possibly the religion of several Roman emperors. While Mithraism was never given “official” status in the Roman Empire, it was the de facto official religion until **Constantine and succeeding Roman emperors replaced Mithraism with Christianity.**

*“One of the key features of Mithraism was a sacrificial meal, which involved eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a bull. Mithras, the god of Mithraism, was “present” in the flesh and blood of the bull, and when consumed, granted salvation to those who partook of the sacrificial meal (this is known as theophagy, the eating of one’s god).*

Mithraism also had seven “sacraments,” making the similarities between Mithraism and Roman Catholicism too many to ignore.

Church leaders after Constantine found an easy substitute for the sacrificial meal of Mithraism in the concept of the Lord’s Supper/Christian communion.

Even before Constantine, some early Christians had begun to attach mysticism to the Lord’s Supper, rejecting the biblical concept of a simple and worshipful remembrance of Christ’s death and shed blood.

The Romanization of the Lord’s Supper made the transition to a sacrificial consumption of Jesus Christ, now known as the Roman Catholic Mass/Eucharist, complete.

**(3) Most Roman emperors (and citizens) were henotheists.**

A henotheist is one who believes in the existence of many gods, but focuses primarily on one particular god or considers one particular god supreme over the other gods. *For example, the Roman god Jupiter was supreme over the Roman pantheon of gods. Roman sailors were often worshippers of Neptune, the god of the oceans.* When the Roman Catholic Church absorbed Roman paganism, it simply **replaced the pantheon of gods with the saints**. Just as the Roman pantheon of gods had a god of love, a god of peace, a god of war, a god of strength, a god of wisdom, etc., so the Catholic Church has a saint who is “in charge” over each of these, and many other categories. Just as many Roman cities had a god specific to the city, so the Roman Catholic Church provided “patron saints” for the cities.

**(4) The supremacy of the Roman bishop (the papacy) was created with the support of the Roman emperors.** With the city of Rome being the centre of government for the Roman Empire, and with the Roman emperors living in Rome, the city of Rome rose to prominence in all facets of life.

Constantine (AD 272–337) and his successors gave their support to the bishop of Rome as the supreme ruler of the church. Of course, it is best for the unity of the Roman Empire that the **government and state religion be centralized**. While most other bishops (and Christians) resisted the idea of the Roman bishop being supreme, the Roman bishop eventually rose to supremacy, due to the power and influence of the Roman emperors.

*When the Western half of the Roman Empire collapsed in 476, the popes took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperors—**Pontifex Maximus**. **Pope Gregory I, ruling from 590–604, is usually considered the first bishop to truly wield papal authority.***

Many more examples could be given but these four should suffice in demonstrating the origin of the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church denies the pagan origin of its beliefs and practices.

The Roman Catholic Church disguises its pagan beliefs under layers of complicated theology and “church tradition.” Recognizing that many of its beliefs and practices are utterly foreign to Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church is forced to deny the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

**The origin of the Roman Catholic Church is the tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it.** Instead of proclaiming the gospel and converting the pagans, the Roman Catholic Church “Christianized” the pagan religions, and “paganized” Christianity.

By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions, the Roman Catholic Church made itself attractive to the people of the Roman Empire. One result was the Roman Catholic Church becoming the supreme religion in the Roman world for centuries. However, another result was the most dominant form of Christianity apostatizing from the true gospel of Jesus Christ and the true proclamation of God’s Word.

**Second Timothy 4:3–4 declares, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”**

**RENAISSANCE (14<sup>TH</sup> TO 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: IT WAS A PURE SECULAR CHANGE; IT BROUGHT TRUE HUMANISM) AND REFORMATION (16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: IT WAS SPIRITUAL CHANGE; IT BROUGHT TRUE CHRISTIANITY)**

By the fourteenth century, Europeans began to show renewed interest in classical Greece and humanism, resulting in a flowering of literature, science, and art. It was, in effect, a period of “rebirth,” or “renaissance,” or “age of enlightenment” when men with confidence in themselves started to explore new ways of exploiting their environment. Artists turned from dreary mysticism to employ their skills using new techniques in sculpture, art, and literature.

It was an age of naturalism—when the tools of science and art were applied to glorify the human body and to erect vast new cathedrals. Men seemed to unshackle themselves from old ways.

Gunpowder revolutionized warfare; the mariners’ compass opened new vistas of travel and exploration; commerce was launched into the vast reaches of the Orient; and the Western Hemisphere was discovered.

In the fifteenth century printing by movable type was greatly refined, and the whole field of printing gained new potential. This of course directly affected the rise of the universities and the dissemination of information.

The Renaissance was also a time of spiritual change. In their search for the classical past, men were introduced to the writings of the early church fathers and to copies of the scriptures in Hebrew and Greek. The scholars of the Renaissance began making these works available to the common people.

Discovering the simplicity of the early church as opposed to the ritual and complexity of medieval Christianity led many to discover “**anew**” their original faith. These people founded or joined new religious orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, as well as heretical movements, such as the Albigensians and Waldensians. In a sense, the effects of the Renaissance provided a setting for the Protestant reformation, which tore asunder the unity of Christendom once and for all.

## **THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION: JOHN WYCLIFFE (C. 1330–1384)**

John Wycliffe has been called “The Morning Star of the Reformation.” The morning star is not actually a star, but the planet Venus, which appears before the sun rises and while darkness still dominates the horizon. The morning star is unmistakably visible. Darkness dominated the horizon in the fourteenth century, the century of Wycliffe, who was born in 1330 and died in 1384, almost exactly one hundred years before Luther was born. By his teenage years, Wycliffe was at Oxford. Thomas Bradwardine (known as “Doctor Profundus”) taught theology and William of Ockham (famous for “Ockham’s Razor”) taught philosophy. Before long, Wycliffe took his own place among the faculty. Appointed the Master of Balliol College, Wycliffe lectured and wrote in the field of philosophy. But the tug of biblical studies pulled on him. He applied himself rigorously to the study of theology and Scripture. As he did, he realized how much the church had veered off in so many wrong directions.

### **SETTING THE STAGE**

In the 1370s, he produced three significant works as countermeasures to the church’s corruption.

The first one, *On Divine Dominion* (1373–1374), took aim at papal authority. Wycliffe was at a loss to find biblical warrant for the papacy. In fact, he argued that the papacy conflicts with and obscures the church’s true authority, Scripture.

The second major work was *On Civil Dominion* (1375–1376). Here Wycliffe targeted the Roman Catholic Church’s assertion of authority over the English crown and English nobility. He saw no reason for England to be obliged to support a corrupt church.

In his third major work, *On the Truth of Sacred Scripture* (1378), he further developed the doctrine of the authority of Scripture.

**These three works were crucial to setting the stage for the Reformation.** Two faculty members visiting at Oxford returned with Wycliffe’s writings to their home city of Prague, which in turn influenced Jan Hus. He would consequently go on to be a second “Morning Star” of the Reformation. Martin Luther’s early writings reveal the fingerprints of John Wycliffe. Yet, as important as these works are, they pale in comparison to his most important contribution, the Wycliffe Bible.

### **REFORMATION BEGAN WITH TRANSLATION**

In *On the Truth of Sacred Scripture*, Wycliffe called for the Bible to be translated into English. According to Roman Catholic law, translating the Bible into a vulgar, common language was a heresy punishable by death. It is almost impossible to imagine why a church would want to keep God’s word from people, unless that church wanted to hold power over the people. Wycliffe was more convinced of the power of the word of God than the power wielded by the papal office. Consequently, he and a group of colleagues committed themselves to making the word of God available.

Not only did the Bible need to be translated; it also had to be copied and distributed. **This was before the printing press (invented in 1440)**, so copies had to be made painstakingly by hand. Despite the challenges, hundreds of the Bibles were produced and distributed to Wycliffe's troop of pastors, who preached across England as the word of God made its way to the people. Wycliffe's followers came to be called Lollards. They were enclaves of reform not only in England, but across Europe.

These efforts in translating, copying, and proclaiming the Bible in English were driven by a singular motive, expressed by Wycliffe this way: **"It helps Christian men to study the Gospel in that tongue which they know best."**

In his final years, Wycliffe endured falling out of favor with the church and nobility in England. Of course, he had long ago fallen out of favor with the pope. Yet, Wycliffe declared, **"I am ready to defend my convictions even unto death."** He remained convinced of the authority and centrality of Scripture and devoted to his life's calling to help Christians study the Bible. Having suffered two strokes, John Wycliffe died on December 30, 1384.

**In 1415, the Council of Constance, which condemned Jan Hus to death, declared Wycliffe a heretic. His bones were exhumed and burned and the ashes were put into the River Swift.**

But the reforming efforts of Wycliffe could not be quenched by the flames or stopped by a council's declarations. This Morning Star shone brightly against the horizon, signaling the soon coming of daylight.

Luther was born in a time of false worship dominated by what can only be described as a false church. If Luther said at Torgau that the true church could spare everything except the Word of God, the later medieval Roman Catholic Church was the opposite. It was about everything except the Word. Because the Word of God was pushed out of the center of church life, everything in the church went askew. Doctrine, practice, the church service—all that constituted the church was off-kilter. Luther sensed this imbalance right from the outset. His early years are marked by fear of a holy and just God. The German word *Anfechtungen* describes these years. The word means "struggles," the deep struggles of man against all odds. In Luther's case, the struggle was between a sinner and a holy God. There was no way the sinner could ever win.

Luther applied himself to academics, eventually earning his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Erfurt. As he was about to enter the profession of law, he was caught in a violent thunderstorm in June 1505. This brought his anxieties to a head. He thought God Himself was out to get him. In the downpour and the chaos, Luther made a vow that he would enter the monastery if God would spare his life.

But Luther dared not appeal to God directly. Instead, he went through a mediator, St. Anne, the patron saint of miners, his father's profession. Before the thunderstorm, Luther had been visiting his parents' home. In that home was a shrine to St. Anne. "Help me, St. Anne, and I will become a monk," Luther cried out.

Luther survived. In July, he entered the monastery. Yet, his struggles did not subside. They intensified. Looking for peace and rest, he found strife and turmoil. Luther tried white-knuckling his way to heaven. Later, he would say that if ever a monk could get to heaven by monkery, he would be that monk. In 1510, he was sent on a pilgrimage to Rome. He found the debauchery revolting. All of his attempts to get closer to God served only to drive him further away. At one point, Luther declared that he sometimes hated God.

The reason for Luther's downward spiral had everything to do with the obscuring of the Word of God and the consequent obscuring of the gospel. The whole Roman Catholic system depended on the quantification of sin and the quantification of grace. The problem is sins, or demerits. The solution is grace-enabled merits. The church consequently preached a false gospel of works to counter these demerits. The church also falsely taught that when this life is finished and demerits are still left over, the next stage is purgatory. In purgatory, the final demerits are purged and souls are readied for heaven.

Luther saw right through this by way of a (re)discovery of two all-important truths. The first concerns sin. The problem is not sins, as in the quantity. The true problem is that I am a sinner at the root (*radix* in Latin). I am a sinner and God is holy. This explains why Luther sometimes declared that he hated God. God, the righteous judge, demands righteousness. Yet, I can never achieve righteousness because I am a sinner at the root.

The second all-important truth may be summed up in the expression alien righteousness. The righteousness God demands was earned apart from me and entirely apart from any works I might do even when enabled by grace. This righteousness was earned by Christ alone. It is outside of me, or alien to me.

*Theologians use the word imputation. That means that my sin—not the part but the whole—is imputed to Christ. He takes my sin upon Him at the cross and, as my substitute, endures the cup of God's wrath. Then Christ's righteousness is imputed to me. His perfect obedience is counted as mine, and I am declared righteous.* This is the gospel.

The question is, where did Luther learn this? He learned it from reading the Bible, from reading in Habakkuk that the righteous shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4). He learned it from reading Romans and Galatians. From 1515 through 1520, Luther was lecturing on these particular books. He was immersed in the text.

**Luther's reading of the Bible is at the heart of his contest with the false church of his day. It led him to post the Ninety-Five Theses at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517.**

Desiderius Erasmus, the humanist scholar, published the Greek text of the New Testament in 1516. Luther was reading it when he was formulating his theses.

### **First experience with the selling of indulgences**

In 1510, Luther was sent to Rome on business by his Augustine order. The trip would prove pivotal. The Curia was struggling financially due to the expensive construction of St. Peter's Basilica. **To raise money, the church leaders introduced the selling of indulgences. The congregation was told they could attain the forgiveness of sins by committing good deeds - or**

**paying the Church. Prices were set according to income, and even those who'd already died could allegedly be rescued from the fires of hell if their relatives coughed up a few coins.**

It wouldn't be until much later that Luther would take a critical view on the practice he had witnessed.

### **Luther's search for acceptance by God**

In 1512, Luther - already highly respected by his colleagues and superiors - earned his doctorate in theology and became a professor at the University of Wittenberg.

Nevertheless, **Martin Luther was still searching for a merciful God and continued to ask the question: What must I do to be approved by God?** None of the Church's rituals or rules was able to answer this question.

Luther continued fervently to read the Bible and was particularly moved by the Apostle Paul's letter to the early Roman church, where he read about justification by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The theologian gradually understood what would become the core of the Reformation: God is not just a just judge, but also a father who loves the people he created and who sent his son to pay the price for the sin that was separating them from him. **John 3:16**

As Luther discovered in the Bible, anyone who believes in God and his son Jesus Christ is given the free gift of justification before the Almighty. The monk had finally found the answer to his question.

### **LUTHER'S FOUR PILLARS OF FAITH**

Through his study of the Bible, Martin Luther developed four key theological pillars.

**The first is the Holy Scripture.** He saw the Bible as the only benchmark of truth, while the Church at the time also relied on additional texts written by the pope and the synod.

**Secondly, salvation only comes through God's grace and not by good works.** This belief made the selling of indulgences obsolete.

**Thirdly, Luther concluded that Jesus Christ, through his death on the cross, which paid the penalty for all sin, is the only bridge between humanity and God.**

**Finally, we are saved by faith alone,** believed Luther.

"Christian life is entirely based on faith," he said. "By faith, Christ lives in us and is one with us. By faith in Christ, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and what is his, becomes ours."

These beliefs revolutionized the relationship between humans and God. Realizing they were made accepting to God by his grace and their faith alone, people could approach him directly without the help of an intermediary priest.

Consequentially, the Church lost its power with Luther's teachings and its hierarchies began to crumble. While his work is indeed revolutionary, Luther himself believed he was simply reinstating old, forgotten principles rather than expressing new and unwelcome beliefs.

As a theology professor, Luther taught his theological viewpoint to his students and preached on it during mass. At first, he went unnoticed. But Luther was determined to correct the Church's unbiblical theology and initiate a return to the origin of the Christian faith. Most of all, he wanted to put an end to the selling of indulgences, which had become a common practice in Germany.

***(Initially it was not his intention to leave the church nor was he really against Pope but the system and the doctrine)***

## FIVE SOLAS

The five *solas* are five Latin phrases popularized during the Protestant Reformation that emphasized the distinctions between the early

Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. The word *sola* is the Latin word for “only” and was used in relation to five key teachings that defined the biblical pleas of Protestants. They are:

1. *Sola scriptura*: “Scripture alone”
2. *Sola fide*: “faith alone”
3. *Sola gratia*: “grace alone”
4. *Solo Christo*: “Christ alone”
5. *Soli Deo gloria*: “to the glory of God alone”

Each of these *solas* can be seen both as a corrective to the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church at the start of the Reformation and as a positive biblical declaration.

***Sola scriptura*** emphasizes the Bible alone as the source of authority for Christians. By saying, “Scripture alone,” the Reformers rejected both the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Pope and confidence in sacred tradition. Only the Bible was “inspired by God” (2 Peter 1:20-21) and “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Anything taught by the Pope or in tradition that contradicted the Bible was to be rejected. *Sola scriptura* also fueled the translation of the Bible into German, French, English, and other languages, and prompted Bible teaching in the common languages of the day, rather than in Latin.

***Sola fide*** emphasizes salvation as a free gift. The Roman Catholic Church of the time emphasized the use of indulgences (donating money) to buy status with God. Good works, including baptism, were seen as required for salvation. *Sola fide* stated that salvation is a free gift to all who accept it by faith (John 3:16). Salvation is not based on human effort or good deeds (Ephesians 2:9).

***Sola gratia*** emphasizes grace as the reason for our salvation. In other words, salvation comes from what God has done rather than what we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

***Solo Christo*** (sometimes listed as *Solus Christus*, “through Christ alone”) emphasizes the role of Jesus in salvation. The Roman Catholic tradition had placed church leaders such as priests in the role of intercessor between the laity and God. Reformers emphasized Jesus’ role as our “high priest” who intercedes on our behalf before the Father. Hebrews 4:15 teaches, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus is the One who offers access to God, not a human spiritual leader.

**Soli Deo gloria** emphasizes the glory of God as the goal of life. Rather than striving to please church leaders, keep a list of rules, or guard our own interests, our goal is to glorify the Lord. The idea of *soli Deo gloria* is found in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

The five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation offered a strong corrective to the faulty practices and beliefs of the time, and they remain relevant today. We are called to focus on Scripture, accept salvation by grace through faith, magnify Christ, and live for God's glory.

***With this background let us see***

## **THE FACTORS THAT LED TO REFORMATION**

- There had been numerous attempts to reform the Roman Church before the 16th century, but they had always been squelched by the Inquisition. There were also groups outside the Roman Church, such as the Albigenses and Waldenses. They opposed the Roman Church and their blood flowed like water in martyrdom. Men such as John Wycliffe (1320-1384), John Huss (1360-1415), and Gerolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) spoke out against the papacy, auricular confession, purgatory, pilgrimages, worship of saints, relics, etc. Huss and Savonarola were burned at the stake as heretics. Rome herself made some halfhearted attempts to reform at the Councils of Pisa (1409), Constance (1414-1418) and Basel (1431), but these were not successful. There was a group within the Roman Church called *The Brethren of the Common Life* that came into existence around 1350 for the specific purpose of bringing reform. Some famous men who belonged to this group were John of Wessel, Erasmus and Thomas à Kempis.
- God appointed the 16th century to be the time of reformation, and had pre-pared the Church in many ways for this reformation. Religious, economic and political factors that had been brewing for centuries set the stage for the Reformation. The papacy was corrupt; monasticism and scholastic theology had declined; mysticism was on the upswing; there was a revival of the Greek and Roman classics; men with a spirit of inquiry and independence were discovering the new world; the printing press had been invented, and the Greek New Testament republished. The Renaissance was also a factor in that it challenged men to use their minds - but the Renaissance was purely secular, not religious. The Renaissance brought humanism, but the Reformation brought true Christianity. These things were all part of God's plan to bring about the greatest religious revival since the first three centuries of the Church.
- Some men have wrongly called the Protestant Reformation a Protestant revolution because much of the Reformation was political and economic. Men forget that because the Roman Church controlled everything, it was necessary for the Reformation to include political and economic elements. If Protestants were to survive, they had to have political and economic power to hold off Rome. Also, it was common for a prince and his whole province to turn Protestant. Later, even kings and whole countries embraced the Protestant faith. Providence forced the Reformers to participate in politics and economics. While some secular rulers used the Reformation for their own greed, many more threw in their lot with the Reformers from a deep religious conviction of serving the one true God through Christ.

*"For the Reformation was neither a revolution nor a restoration, though including elements of both. It was negative and destructive towards error, positive and constructive towards truth; it was conservative as well as progressive; it built up new institutions in the place of those which it pulled down; and for this reason and to this extent it has succeeded."*

*"There are two leading aspects in which the Reformation, viewed as a whole, may be regarded; the one more external and negative, and the other more intrinsic and positive. In the first aspect it was a great revolt against the sea of Rome, and against the authority of the church and of churchmen in religious matters, combined with an assertion of the exclusive authority of the Bible, and of the right of all men to examine and interpret it for themselves. In the second and more important and positive aspect, the Reformation was the proclamation and inculcation, upon the alleged authority of Scripture, of certain views in regard to the substance of Christianity or the way of salvation, and in regard to the organization and ordinances of the Christian church" (William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*).*

### **SUMMARY:**

We should not forget what the protest was about and is still about:

- Purgatory
- Papal Infallibility
- Salvation by works
- Prayers to and worship of dead saints and angels
- The sale of indulgences
- The grave and disgusting immorality of the church leadership
- The veneration of relics to name a few things being protested then and still ought to be protested now with addition of the elevation of Mary to that of equality with and even superiority to Jesus.

However, it is quite obvious that Martin Luther was not in favour of dividing the church. He was against the church's immoral practices and manmade traditions that were actually a stumbling block for people to come to Christ and experience the true joy of salvation.

**Church division is never God's perfect will.** When problem arises in the church, which I believe, that there is in every church, we should not at once think of dividing the church, at the most.

Today, we do not need another reformation but what we truly need is that, our faith and obedience to the word of God must be the supreme priority.