

Religious Liberty and the Eternal Gospel



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The Protestant Church And the Reformation

“The Reformation is Over”

Article by Peter Wolfgang,
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What I want to say to my Evangelical friends,
whom I love, is this.

The Reformation is over. Come home.

“The Reformation is Over”

The Reformation ended 25 years ago, when the Catholic Church and the World Lutheran Federation signed the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” in 1999. The World Methodist Council, the Anglican Consultative Council, and even the World Communion of Reformed Churches all affirmed the Joint Declaration by 2017.

“The Reformation is Over”

[Quoting Peter Kreeft from *Catholics and Protestants: What Can We Learn from Each Other?* (2017)]

“We, Catholics and Protestants, both believe that the Gospel is ‘the Good News that we are justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law.’”

Questions like sanctification and the relation between the Church and the Bible remain. . . .

“The Reformation is Over”

The question is, do these differences make enough of a difference that Evangelicals should continue to separate themselves from full communion with the Catholic Church?

“The Reformation is Over”

For my part, I hope Evangelicals celebrate this upcoming Reformation Day [Oct. 31, 2024] by declaring, with Peter Kreeft and George Marsden, that the Reformation is over. And that they are coming home to the Catholic Church.

Great Controversy, 445

When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.

Lutheran World Federation

20th anniversary of Joint Declaration on Justification
lutheranworld.org, 2019

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is a historic agreement, signed by Lutherans and Catholics on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg Germany, resolving divisions on the “basic truths” of salvation as a free gift from God.

Lutheran World Federation

Commonly known as the JDDJ, it was later affirmed by the World Methodist Council (2006), the Anglican Consultative Council (2016) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2017), making it a multilateral agreement between five equal partners. In 2019, all five partners jointly re-affirmed their commitment to the JDDJ at a consultation at the Notre Dame University (USA).

Great Controversy, xi

In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end as in all preceding ages. That which has been, will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. Satan's deceptions will be more subtle, his assaults more determined. If it were possible, he would lead astray the elect. Mark 13:22, R.V.

Great Controversy, 42

“Persecution in the First Centuries”

The sufferings which they endured brought Christians nearer to one another and to their Redeemer. Their living example and dying testimony were a constant witness for the truth; and where least expected, the subjects of Satan were leaving his service and enlisting under the banner of Christ.

Great Controversy, 42

Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey.

[“The doctrine of Balaam” Num. 22-25; 31:16; Rev. 2:14]

Great Controversy, 42

The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force.

Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor.

Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other **essential truths**.

Great Controversy, 42

They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, **but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart.** With some concessions on their part they proposed that Christians should make concessions, **that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ. . . .**

Great Controversy, 42, 43

Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, **urging that this might be the means of their full conversion.**

Great Controversy, 43 (xi)

That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the word of truth.

“In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end as in all preceding ages.”

Great Controversy, 203, 204

“Protest of the Princes”

[Quoting J. H. Merle D’Aubigne’s *History of the Reformation*]

“The principles contained in this celebrated Protest . . . constitute the very essence of Protestantism. Now this Protest opposes two abuses of man in matters of faith: **the first is the intrusion of the civil magistrate, and the second the arbitrary authority of the church.**

Great Controversy, 204

Instead of these abuses, Protestantism sets the power of conscience above the magistrate, and the authority of the word of God above the visible church. In the first place, it rejects the civil power in divine things, and says with the prophets and apostles, 'We must obey God rather than man.' In presence of the crown of Charles the Fifth, it uplifts the crown of Jesus Christ.

Great Controversy, 204

But it goes farther: it lays down the principle that all human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God." — D'Aubigne, b. 13, ch. 6 The protesters had **moreover** affirmed their right to utter freely their convictions of truth. They would not only believe and obey, **but teach** what the word of God presents, and they denied the right of priest or magistrate to interfere.

Luke 9:49, 50

Now John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.”

⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.”

Great Controversy, 204

The Protest of Spires was a solemn witness against religious intolerance, and an assertion of the right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. . . .

Great Controversy, 204

Had the Reformation, after attaining a degree of success, consented to temporize to secure favor with the world, it would have been untrue to God and to itself, and would **thus** have ensured its own destruction.

The Reformation Is *Not* Over

“In the great final conflict, Satan will

- employ the same policy,
- manifest the same spirit,
- and work for the same end

as in all preceding ages.”

Great Controversy, 204

The experience of these noble Reformers contains a lesson for all succeeding ages.

Satan's manner of working against God and

His word has not changed; he is still as much opposed to the Scriptures being made the guide of life as in the sixteenth century.

Great Controversy, 204, 205

In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant Principle – the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.

Great Controversy, 205

Satan is still working through every means which he can control to destroy religious liberty. The antichristian power which the protesters of Spires rejected is now with renewed vigor seeking to re-establish its lost supremacy. The same unswerving adherence to the word of God manifested at that crisis of the Reformation is the only hope of reform today.

2 Timothy 4:1, 2

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2 Timothy 4:3-5

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.