

## Study for the Month December 2017

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*The 'Man of Sin' of Bible Prophecy and his activities and career*

### ***Is Original Protestant Reformation Still Alive 500 Years After?***

Dear friends, here is an interesting article that clearly reveals that the wound inflicted on “one of the heads of the beast” in 1798 with the capture of Pope Pius VI by Napoleon’s French Republican army and his eventual death in Valence, France the next year,—“the deadly wound,” for all intents and purposes, is “healed.” The prophecy says “and all the world wondered [*followed*, margin] after the beast.” Rev. 13: 3. The title of the article is: “ 500 Years After Martin Luther, Does the Protestant Reformation Still Matter? The line between Catholics and Protestants gets blurred more and more each year. By Brian Withrow 10/1/2017 . [www.thedailybeast.com/500-years-after-martin-lutherdoes-theprotestant-reformation-still-matter](http://www.thedailybeast.com/500-years-after-martin-lutherdoes-theprotestant-reformation-still-matter) . Here are parts of this important observation/report:

“Five-hundred years ago, a monk [a priest with a doctorate degree in divinity] named Martin Luther wrote his 95 Theses and—while he likely didn’t nail it to the Wittenberg Castle Church door [he did], as legend has it--- his words launched the Protestant Reformation, setting Europe on fire—both figuratively and literally.

“This October 31 is the anniversary of that decisive point in history. For many Christians, this commemoration *marks a dramatic shift, as never in history have old wounds between traditions felt closer to healing* [emphasis mine].

‘Majorities or pluralities of adults (including Catholics, Protestants and people with no religious affiliation) in all 15 countries surveyed across Western Europe say Catholics and Protestants to day are ‘religiously more similar than they are different,’ ‘ says Pew’s study of Europe.

“Likewise, in the U.S., approximately, 6-in-10 adults---57 percent of Protestants and 65 percent of Catholics—believe the two are ‘more similar than different, religiously.’

“Why did the church originally divide?

“Luther’s belief that Scripture alone is the sole authority for doctrine enabled him to question the church. Scripture, he argued, said that Christ’s death fully satisfied the penalty of sin. [The Catholic Church actually selling Indulgences, or payments for forgiveness of sins in currency, in kind, or providing service in religious crusades—the subject of the 95 theses.] The protestant mantra became [indeed as taught by the Bible]: justification is by grace alone, through faith

alone, because of Christ alone. At that time, Luther had no intention of leaving the church he hoped to reform, but his theological fury [?] led to his inevitable excommunication as a heretic and the splintering of Christendom.

“But now the chasm between Protestants and Catholics appear to be closing. Pope Francis once surprised reporters by calling Luther a ‘reformer,’ who rightly protested the ‘corruption of the Church,’ though ‘some of his methods were not correct.’

“Luther’s methods would have fit right in with the tenor of *social media today*. They included commissioning woodcuts depicting the Pope as the “Whore of Babylon’ from the book of Revelation, and another in which Satan is defecating out the Pope and his cardinals (Birth and Origin of the Pope’). That message that *Rome* worked for the devil has longevity. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, evangelicals like Jonathan Edwards saw Rome as the prophetic anti-Christian beast of Revelation. Even today, there are Christians---a *minority*---who maintain these views.

“Needless to say, Protestants and Catholics have a rocky past. But today?

“Today,’ added Francis, ‘Lutherans and Catholics, Protestants, all of us agree on the doctrine of justification. On this point, which is very important, he [Luther] did not err.’ “ (end of quote from Brain Withrow’s article. Read the rest for yourselves in the website provided above.)

Now, some very important facts, relatively unknown to (or deliberately downplayed for reasons obviously revealed in this and past study-reports) even by knowledgeable mainstream denomination Bible expositors and preachers that led to the absolute necessity of the Reformation, in general. More specifically, the event and day that the foundation of the Roman Catholic authority was laid.

No wonder Rome has challenged Protestants on their own basic belief of *sola scriptura*-- the Bible and the Bible only as the basis of doctrine and beliefs---and yet keep Sunday, the first day of the week nowhere commanded by God Creator, after six literal days of creation, not by evolution theory or the “Big Bang”---to be the memorial of creation, definitively stipulated in the original, unchanged Ten Commandments as the fourth commandment.

All past and present Sunday-keeping, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal Orthodox, Nondenominational churches who claim to Christian---who claim *sola scriptura*, “the Bible and Bible only” as the rule of doctrine and faith,” have not been able to clearly answer this question nor refute the clearly implied rebuke and challenge of the Roman Catholic Church because, they, too, defy their own fundamental belief of the inerrancy of scripture. Many fanciful reasons have been given but none prove---by any stretch of the truth---that the *Sunday* --sabbath they observe is the one commanded “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” The seventh-day of creation was *hallowed, sanctified, blessed*, and upon which God Creator *rested* from a completed six literal days of creation of earth. “

The information below is from *The Great Controversy by E.G. White Plus Supplementary material by the editor of HARVESTTIME BOOKS*, P. O. Box 300, Altamont, TN 37301, Printed in the U.S. From the editor's "Four Major Events in History," supplementary materials.

NOTE: On my own volition, I recommend this particular edition (I have several different editions in my library) for its comprehensive supplementary and illustrated materials that are extremely helpful to seeing a bigger yet more detailed historical perspective of what I personally consider "the handbook of the last days" by the inspired writer, Elle G. White. Now this:

**"1. [Year] 1562—DEL FOSSO SPEAKS AT THE COUNCIL OF TRENT: *The day the foundation of Roman Catholic authority was laid.***

"Many historians consider these to be one of the three most important events in Catholic history. Protestants had declared that all doctrine must be brought to the test of the inspired Word; and any concept not found there must be rejected. *This deep truth lies at the heart of Protestantism.* (Italics mine). Rome was determined to overthrow that truth. But how to do it was the question; for there was a division in the Church over the primacy of Tradition.

"Down through the centuries, in every dispute over worship, doctrine, or practice, Rome had always declared Tradition---the sayings of popes and councils---to be superior to the Scripture. But how could they defend putting the words of men above the Word of God? It was not until **January 1562**, that the question was finally settled. (Bold letters mine).

"Every basic modern doctrine of Catholicism finds its foundation in the decisions affirmed in the *Council of Trent* (1545-1563), initially convened by Pope Paul III, to figure out ways to oppose the Protestant faith. But, in the council, there was an ongoing battle over this matter of Tradition. It would be embarrassing to officially codify the fact that the opinions of men, not the Bible, was the basis of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church!

"What reasoning could be offered for placing Tradition above the Holy Scriptures, *as the highest authority*? In other words, what excuse could be given for declaring the uninspired words of men to be superior to the Bible? This was a real crisis.

"There was much bickering upon this point. Protestantism was making a powerful attack on papal beliefs---specifically because they were based on Tradition. Since Roman Catholic Tradition was nothing more than a hodgepodge collection confused sayings and borrowed pagan practices of earlier times, many of the archbishops and cardinals attending this important council hesitated to make an official that they all knew that Tradition was the basis of the Roman Catholic Church. The problem was that there was just no reason they could offer for placing Tradition above the Bible.

*"But then came the deciding point—and it came as a surprise. What is not generally known is that the entire argument was settled in one day.*

NOTE: I was not aware of this, too, until I read this material although I had read some on the Council of Trent and other councils!]

“When Gaspar del Fosso, the Archbishop of Reggio, stood up and spoke on January 18, 1562, he decided (once and for all!) the entire future course of Catholicism.

“Rising to his feet and calling for attention, he wholeheartedly praised Tradition, and then made bitter jibes at those who wanted to downgrade its supremacy in the Church.

“Since others had already spoken in defense of tradition, **what was it that made Del Fosso’s speech so decisive? It was this:** (emphasis mine):

“First, he reasoned that the Church of Rome was founded on tradition: and the Church and its beliefs would soon perish without it. Then he gave his **punch line:** He told the assembled delegates the great proof that the doctrine of ‘Tradition-above-Scripture’ must be right was the fact that, centuries earlier---and quite apart from any Scriptural command---the Church had changed the seventh-day Sabbath, *which God Himself had commanded*, to Sunday, the first day of the week!

“Del Fosso declared that this proved Tradition to be more important than the Bible—*for Church Tradition had presumed to change the very law of God itself*—and had apparently succeeded! And what is more—Del Fosso climaxed—*the Protestants were obeying Rome and keeping Sunday also!* [Itals. mine]. They were obeying Catholic Tradition, which totally proves Tradition to be superior.

“That morning, Del Fosso made it clear that **Sunday sacredness was the pivotal proof of the entire doctrinal structure of Catholicism.** [emphasis mine].

The Protestant Reformation that begun in the Old World, Europe, mercifully ending the untold bloodshed perpetrated by that most terrible of engines of the Inquisition by the Church of Rome, about a quarter of a century before 1798—the end of the 1260 years of the Dark Ages, is dead.

As prophesied, the united protest of the once-Protestant churches and denominations against the excesses and false doctrines of the papal Church Rome has, for all intents and purposes, not only dissipated but turned into acceptance of that which their forbears gave up their lives. The later generation the leaders of these churches and denominations have accepted the primacy of the pope in the name of “healing of old wounds and divisions,” ecumenism, and “Christian unity.”

What or who has changed? Not the *Roman* Church but the once-Protestant churches and denominations. The Church of Rome will never change, according to prophecy, as clearly stated in their claim to infallibility. “The church has never erred, and will never err.”

One by one they yielded the recognition of earthly spiritual authority to the pope.

#### NEWS ITEMS:

Source: The Washington Post, Dec. 24, 2016 by Kate Shellnut. **“Megachurch pastor ignites debate after suggesting that Christianity does not hinge on Jesus’ birth.”**

“The pastor of one of America’s largest megachurches stirred up Christmas controversy over preaching that the story of Jesus’ birth is not crucial to the Christian faith.

“ ‘If somebody can predict their own death and resurrection, I’m not at all concerned about how they got into the world,’ Andrew Stanley said in a Dec. 4 sermon at the North Point Community Church, which draws 36,000 attendees across 6 locations in suburban Atlanta. ‘Christianity does not hinge on the truth or even the stories around the birth of Jesus. It hinges on the resurrection of Jesus.’

“In the days leading up to Christmas, fellow Christians defended the significance of the virgin birth. Southern Baptist Theology President Al Mohler addressed Stanley’s remarks about the Virgin Mary on his podcast, saying:

‘If Jesus was not born of the virgin then the Bible cannot be trusted when it comes to telling us the story of Jesus, and that mistrust cannot be limited to how he came to us in terms of the incarnation. The fact is that *biblical* Christianity and ultimately the Gospel of Christ cannot survive the denial of the virgin birth. Because without the virgin birth, you end up with a very different Jesus than the fully human, fully divine savior revealed in Scripture.’

“The Baptist Press wrote that Stanley ‘doesn’t have a problem’ with the people who doubt the biblical story. In his sermon, Stanley acknowledged that some people dispute the miracle of the virgin birth as a later addition or because it does not appear in two of the Gospel accounts, those of Mark and John.

‘I am often misunderstood because of my communication style. I frequently verbalize what I know unbelievers and those who have left the church believe, assume or remember a college professor saying, ‘Stanley said in a response to Friday to the Washington Post.

“Some of the common arguments against the virgin birth he referenced in his sermon were raised by Nicholas Kristof on Friday as he interviewed New York Pastor Tim Keller in his latest New York Time column. Kristof has questioned this particular Christian teaching in his writing since at least 2003 (and Mohler has faithfully come to its defense).

“Keller’s response in Friday’s column was similar to Mohler’s. “If it were simply a legend that could be dismissed, it would damage the fabric of the Christian message,’ the Redeemer Presbyterian pastor said. He pointed to the belief in the Resurrection and the Apostles’ Creed---which affirms the Jesus ‘was born of Mary’---*as generally the best measures of Christian faith.*’

“Annual nativity scenes and Christmas pageants commemorate the story of Jesus birth as recounted in the Bible, and historians and scholars have long debated the authenticity of the virgin birth [but not evolution and the Big Bang theory and its ilk!]. Following Old Testament predictions that God would send a sign to the people of Israel (‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive’), and angel told Mary that she would give birth to a child, even though she was a virgin [Luke 1: 25 quoted].

“This is not the first time Stanley, the son of First Baptist Church of Atlanta pastor and former Southern Baptist Convention president Charles Stanley, has had to defend remarks from his sermons. Earlier this year, after critics accused him of downplaying the authority of scripture, the *nondenominational* pastor attributed the issue to his nontraditional preaching style.

‘The real story is the handful of Southern Baptist professors and writers (not so much preachers) who seem to have nothing else to do but listen to bits and pieces of my messages,’ he said in a statement to The Post. ‘Anyone who listens to all three (sermons in the series) will know that I stand within the orthodox Christian tradition regarding the incarnation of Jesus---including the birth narrative as presented [in] Matthew and Luke.’

“Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that the Christmas story, which recounts Jesus being born to a virgin and laid in a manger, ‘reflects events that actually happened,’ according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey. Among Christians, 8 in 10 believe in the Christmas story and virgin birth, and among the unaffiliated, 2 in 10 still believe.

“The Christmas accounts in Matthew and Luke---familiar to anyone who’s watched ‘*A Charlie Brown Christmas*’ [instead of studying the Bible itself!]---get cited as evidence that Jesus was born according to the Old Testament predictions about a coming Messiah.

“The virgin birth also relates to the Christian understanding of Jesus as fully human and fully God. ‘If his birth were like any other human birth---through the union of a human father and mother—we would question his full divinity,’ wrote Pastor Kevin DeYoung in a post explaining the theological significance of the teaching.

“Evangelical magazine Christianity Today has written previously on how the belief that Jesus was ‘conceived by the Holy Spirit’ and ‘born of Virgin Mary’ has broader implications for Christians:

‘First, that in the coming of Jesus we neither a mythological marvel nor a natural possibility, but a true work of God, and, second, that as Jesus was born from above, so all members of the new humanity must be born again to newness of life in him.’

“Skepticism over the virgin birth is more prevalent among Christians who do not take the Bible literally (or maybe do not consider the Bible inerrant or literally true), including some in mainline denominations. Some argue that it’s a mistranslation of the word ‘young woman’ for ‘virgin,’ while others attribute it to the common trope of applying a miraculous birth to major historical figures.

**“The Catholic Church teaches that Virgin Mary was also conceived without sin to carry Jesus (the ‘Immaculate Conception’ applies to hers, not his) and that she was ‘assumed’ into heaven at the end of her life. Catholics name Mary as ‘blessed among women’ and venerate her as a saint for her miraculous life.”** (end of Washington Post news quote)

**“NBC PLACES PHONE CALL TO THE HEAVENS; ASTRONAUTS ANSWER.”** Oct. 26, 2017. This news report had 13 paragraphs (in my smart phone). The 11<sup>th</sup> paragraph is very interesting, to say the least (emphasis mine):

“Francis’ papacy has been marked by his concern for the environment and he has echoed his predecessors in stressing the *absolute compatibility of faith and science, and the compatibility of the Big Bang theory with ‘God’s divine act of creation.’*”

First, true faith and true science are compatible biblically. The defining word is “true” for there is only one truth and many counterfeits that openly place tradition, century-old Christianized pagan superstitions, church authority, and the “wisdom of men” which Paul said is “foolishness to God” over the Holy Scriptures. The questions we should ask ourselves as we “examine and prove ourselves whether we are in the faith,” as Paul says in 2 \_\_\_\_\_.

**What is the “faith” being referred to?** Is it the faith *in Christ*, the sinners’ and mankind’s *only* Savior, Redeemer, one-and-only Sacrifice as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world,” the ascended all-merciful High Priest, and all-powerful Advocate and Mediator, and, soon-coming King of kings and Lord of lords? ?

Or is this the person’s “own faith,” meaning his “beliefs” based on his own expressed or professed or even acted interpretations, viewpoints, interpretations independent of the vetting of the Bible, God’s word? Such a faith is as varied as individuals are and cannot be quantified except for general lines and contours of popular beliefs—and loosely called “faith.” Such faith is subject to extremism and fanaticism. The Munzer Movement that disrupted the smooth progress (but failed to stop it before its time) of the Protestant Reformation in Germany led by Dr. Martin Luther, was a product of fanaticism.

Or is the faith, trust and obedience to the papacy and the teachings of the Roman Church, regardless of being shown the fallacy from both Scriptures and history—as the Protestant reformers, in love for Christ and zeal for “the truth as it is in Jesus” (Acts\_\_\_\_) did? For instance, as cited above in the WAPO news, the Catholic Church’s teaching that “*Mary was conceived without sin*” and that the “Immaculate Conception applies to her, not to Jesus,” making her superior to Christ, whom angel Gabriel told Mary, that “His name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people *from* their sins,” and “Emmanuel, being interpreted, *God with us.*” Matt. 21, 23, K.J.V.

Catholic News Service (CNS) “**Pope Designates September 1 as World Day of Prayer of Creation.**” By Cindy Wooden, CNS.

“Like their Orthodox brethren and sisters, Catholics will mark Sept. 1 as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis has decided.

“The day of prayer, the pope said, will give individuals and communities and opportunity to implore God’s help in protecting creation and an opportunity to ask God’s forgiveness ‘*for sins committed against the world [?] in which we live.*’

“Pope Francis announced his decision to add the annual prayer day to the Catholic calendar in a letter to cardinal Turkson, president of the Pontifical

Council for Justice and Peace, and to cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*.

“The text of the letter, dated Aug. 6, was released by the Vatican Aug.10.

“Pope Francis said he was instituting the prayer day for the Catholics because he shares the concern of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who initiated a similar prayer day for the Orthodox Church in 1989.

“Metropolitan John of Pergamon, who represented the patriarch at the public presentation on June 18 of Pope Francis’ encyclical, ‘*Laudato Si*,’ had suggested that *all Christians* join in prayer September 1.

“This would work a step toward further *oneness* among them,’(emphasis mine) he said.” (end of news quoted from CNS).

[www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/pope-designates-sept-1-as-wordl-day-of-prayer-for-care-of-creation.cfm](http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/pope-designates-sept-1-as-wordl-day-of-prayer-for-care-of-creation.cfm).

**“Evangelicals Stand by Trump, Catholic Journal Attacks Him.”** By Alexander Nazaryan, Newsweek 7/17/2017. [www.yahoo/news/evangelicals-stand-trump-catholic-journal-045725266.html](http://www.yahoo/news/evangelicals-stand-trump-catholic-journal-045725266.html).

“U.S. president Donald J. Trump has never made especially convincing shows of faith. ‘We love the Bible. It’s the best,’ he said during the presidential campaign, comparing it favorably to another timeless touchstone of Western civilization: ‘We love *The Art of the Deal*, but the Bible is far, far superior, yes.’

“Many on the religious right overlooked Trump’s lack of genuine piety, not to mention a personal life that has included three marriages, multiple allegations of sexual misconduct [which is gaining traction recently], unseemly shows of emotional intemperance and a lust for wealth at odds with the humility Jesus Christ preached.

“Back in March 2016, the pollster Steve Mitchell explained the source of that strange affection: ‘Although certainly not Christ-like, Trump is perceived to be strong and bold; a leader that will help Evangelicals navigate a world they believe is too often adrift and too different from what they want.’

“That affection continues unabated, even as the presidency has called into question the very mettle that supposedly made Trump attractive to *conservative Christians*. In late April, the Pew Research Center found that Trump’s approval with white evangelicals was at 75 percent. At the same time, his approval with the broader American population was at 40 percent (It has since fallen.)

“Evangelicals show no signs of abandoning the embattled president. To the contrary, in a show of their faith in Trump, evangelical leaders prayed over him in the Oval Office last week. Photos posted by some of the invitees show the group surrounding Trump and laying their hands on his shoulders as his head is bent in prayer,’ said a report in CNN.

“But though white Evangelicals continue to stand behind Trump, a Vatican-affiliated publication ran a withering editorial criticizing the U.S. president and the combative worldview he represents. The editorial—which Vatican watchers said could not have been published without the direct approval of Pope Francis—suggests how little traction Trump appears to have with the world’s largest Christian denomination [The Roman Catholic Church].

“The editorial, ‘Evangelical Fundamentalism and Catholic Integralism : A Surprising Ecumenism’ was published in *La Civiltà Cattolica* four days after Trump’s meeting with evangelical leaders. It was written by high-ranking editors Antonio Spadaro and Marcelo Figueroa. Figueroa, a *Protestant*, is a close associate of Pope Francis and like him a native of Argentina. Spadaro, like Francis, is a *Jesuit*.

“The Associated Press called the publication the ‘unofficial mouthpiece of the papacy’ and describes some of the contents of the scathing editorial.

‘Shared desire for political influence between ‘evangelical fundamentalists’ and some Catholics has inspired an ‘ecumenism of conflict’ that demonizes opponents and promotes a ‘theocratic type of state.’ [this, in fact is what the papacy is, the theocracy of the end-times, a church-state!]

“It also took aim at conservative religious support for Trump, accusing activists of promoting a ‘xenophobic and Islamophobic vision that would want walls and purifying deportations.’

“Spadaro and Figueroa took particular aim at Stephen K. Bannon [now no longer at the WH], the conservative Catholic and avowed ‘economic nationalist’ who is Trump’s chief political adviser, criticizing him harshly as a ‘supporter of apocalyptic geopolitics.’

“Pope Francis met with Trump at the Vatican in late May. ‘Francis did not exude his usual warmth and cheerfulness,’ *The Guardian* noted, echoing widely-held view of that meeting.

“It is clear now, just what the Vatican thinks of Trump and his divisive brand of politics. ‘The political strategy for success becomes that of raising the tones of the conflictual, exaggerating disorder, agitating the souls of the people by painting worrying scenarios beyond any realism,’ *the La Civiltà Cattolica* editorial also said, according to a translation of the Financial Times.

“Speaking with the *Jesuit* magazine *America*, Spadaro defended the editorial several days after its publication: ‘Often this fundamentalism is born from a perception of a threat,’ he said, ‘of a world that is threatened, a world that is collapsing, and so it responds with a religion *from a reading of the Bible* transformed into an ideological message , of fear.’ Spadaro noted that such religious fundamentalism is not a singularly American problem.’

“Although some Catholics criticized the article, it attracted attention well beyond the *Vatican’s ramparts*. It was especially striking when considered in contrast with the show of evangelical support for Trump in the White House.

“That’s not to say that Trump lacks for critics among ‘the evangelicals,’ as he calls that denomination.

‘What stuns me is how my fellow evangelicals can rally behind a man whose words and actions are so at odds with the central teachings of our faith,’ wrote Peter Wehner, a political conservative who worked for three Republican presidential administrations before the election.” (end of quote from news)

**We wish you Heaven’s greatest blessings during these Holidays. Don’t ever forget: Jesus is the Reason for the Season—not Santa Claus, or whoever!**

