

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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Email: tjtrinityfound@aol.com Website: www.trinityfoundation.org Telephone: 423.743.0199 Fax: 423.743.2005

The Reformation Is Not a Return to Pre-Reformation Positions

By Paul M. Elliott

Editor's Note: the following Review is the first message given by Dr. Paul Elliott at The Trinity Foundation's Reformation at 500 Conference in October 2017. To listen to the message, visit our MP3 Download Lectures page at our web site.

Introduction

During our two sessions today, I have agreed to focus on the topic of "what the Reformation is *not*." I know that this may seem an unusual way to approach the subject of the Reformation, but I think it is appropriate for our time. Here is why I say this: At this time of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, religious leaders around the world are deeply confusing people about the Reformation and its significance. They are telling people they should commemorate the Reformation – but what they are presenting to them is a counterfeit of the Reformation.

Most of the so-called Evangelical church today is not even observing the 500th anniversary of this great fact of church history. But among those who are, most self-described Evangelical and Reformed pastors and church members really have no idea what the Reformation was all about and why it matters. And so, this weekend many of them are celebrating things that have far more to do with the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation than they do with the Protestant Reformation itself. In much of the so-called Evangelical or Protestant church today, the Reformation is utterly dead. But in Roman Catholicism today, the Counter-Reformation is still very much alive and active.

In our two sessions today, I would like to focus upon two particular aspects of the ongoing Catholic Counter-Reformation that are poisoning much of the church and society at large in our time. These are things that the Protestant Reformation is *not*.

First of all, in this session, I want to call our attention to the fact that, contrary to what is being presented and promoted in our time, the Protestant Reformation is *not*, and cannot involve, a return to the pre-Reformation position of the church. But that is what is happening today. Even what would be viewed as some of the most conservative and theologically orthodox sectors of the church today are returning to the tragic condition of the church before the Reformation began. And so that will be the focus, God willing, of this session.

In our next session, I would like to focus our attention upon another phenomenon of our time that is most certainly a product of the ongoing Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, and that is the evil falsehood of co-belligerence among all religions in an effort to combat the political and social evils of our time.

I want to begin this first session by calling our attention to the passage of Scripture that is found in the book of *Romans* 11:33 through 12:2. In the original text of the Scriptures, of course, there were no chapter divisions. The words that we are about to consider are one continual, logical, progression of thought in the words of God the Holy Spirit that are given to us through the Apostle Paul:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How

unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

“For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?”

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Giving the Reformation an Ungodly Makeover

We hear a great deal in contemporary society today about transformations. We can hardly escape advertisements enticing us to buy “makeovers” of various kinds. What was once called “home remodeling” or “home redecorating” is now “an extreme makeover for your house.” Many women go to a spa to get a makeover. Even some men do it these days. People go to get a new look, a new hairstyle, new makeup, a new wardrobe. A makeover; a transformation; an attempt to escape or conceal what we are by nature.

Many passages in Scripture speak of transformations or makeovers. Scripture speaks *against* many kinds of makeovers. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter one about the unbeliever who changes the glory of the incorruptible God into images of various kinds and worships them. Man tries to do a “makeover” with God. Man wants to create a God in his own image.

Today, the Protestant Reformation is undergoing an extreme makeover. Why is that? It is because the major movements among Evangelicals today say that we need to redefine the church. They say that we need to stop focusing on building up the people already in the pews, the saints that we have. They say that we need to go to unbelievers and ask *them* what the church should look like. We need to ask *them* what the church should preach. We need to ask *them* how the church should worship. We need to find out what will please and impress *unbelievers*. And then, we need to give it to them.

The postmodern makeover movements among Evangelicals go by various names. The Purpose-Driven church, the Emergent church, the New Paradigm church are all makeover movements with a common message: Forget what the Bible says; do the things that will attract greater numbers. In the last few years, over half a

million self-described Evangelical pastors and church leaders have gone to seminars and workshops that tell them how to give their churches this kind of an un-Biblical makeover.

In the process, the church’s message has gotten an extreme makeover. The gurus of these makeover movements often claim that they are not changing the Christian message, just the methods of communicating it. But the evidence contradicts them. When you begin to tamper with God’s ordained methods, inevitably you will tamper with His message. Much of the Evangelical church no longer preaches that the Bible is totally accurate in all that it says. Much of the Evangelical church today does not preach the one true Gospel in its fullness – the Gospel that saves souls. Much of the Evangelical church today does not train and instruct people to have Biblical discernment – to test everything against the authority of Scripture.

What happens when the church neglects those things? It becomes *the church unplugged*. The church disconnects itself from its Source of true power and authority, the Word of God. The church unplugs itself from the wisdom of God that we find only in His Word, and instead, it plugs into the word of sinful man and the wisdom of the fallen world.

The church unplugged soon becomes *the church uncertain* – uncertain of what it believes. And the church uncertain rapidly becomes *the church ineffectual* – impotent in its genuine mission of preaching the Gospel to the world and building up the saints in sound doctrine. The church unplugged from the Word of God, uncertain of what it believes, and ineffectual in its calling, becomes ill-equipped to do spiritual battle. It soon finds itself *the church in retreat* – retreating from the contest against the enemies of the truth.

The church that reinvents itself to meet the specifications of unbelievers may attract hundreds or even thousands of them. But it does not lead them to Christ. It has no Gospel message to offer. And while it seeks to please the unchurched, it neglects the saints. The sheep are not fed. The saints are not built up in sound doctrine.

A church that adopts this new paradigm places itself in a deadly downward spiral. We can see it in Evangelical churches all over America today, and the American church has exported this tragic phenomenon to the wider world. As the church caters more and more to the way in which unbelievers want the church to look, feel, and preach, the percentage of unsaved people in the congregation continually expands. The laws of mathematics being inexorable, at the same time the percentage of genuine Christians in the congregation continually shrinks toward zero. Within a surprisingly

short time, sometimes just a few years, the thinking and practices of an unsaved super-majority can and will dominate what may once have been a sound church.

As we think today about the great historical fact and the significance of the Protestant Reformation, it is vital for us, first of all, to look back and understand the state of the church *before* the Reformation. Why? Because *the vast majority of the nominally Evangelical church today is rapidly returning to the pre-Reformation position.*

What characterized that position? What was the church like, 600 years ago? What constituted the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages? I want to call our attention to four things.

Biblical Illiteracy

First, the pre-Reformation position was built on Biblical illiteracy. Before the Protestant Reformation, the Bible was un-translated. You could only have it in the original Greek or Hebrew, or in the Latin of the church's scholars. And that unreadable Bible was literally, physically, chained to the pulpit. People could not read the actual Word of God in any language, much less in their own language.

What is the position in our day? The postmodern movements among Evangelicals are also built on Biblical illiteracy. It manifests itself in two ways.

The first way is through the deception of the Bible paraphrase. The modern church makeover movements encourage Biblical illiteracy by using and promoting so-called Bible versions that are not faithful translations of the Word of God, but man-centered paraphrases. One that has become quite popular through the modern church makeover movements is called *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Tens of millions of copies of *The Message* have been sold.

But *The Message* is actually not a Bible at all. It is one man's paraphrase. And the author of this Bible paraphrase is Eugene Peterson, a long-time pastor in the liberal Presbyterian Church, USA. He does not believe the Gospel. He does not preach the Gospel. He does not truly believe in the deity of Christ. Eugene Peterson recently declared that he is quite willing to perform so-called homosexual marriage ceremonies. This is the theology of the man who wrote the most widely-read Bible paraphrase in print today. That is the first way that the modern church makeover movements are encouraging Biblical illiteracy, a return to the Pre-Reformation position. They give people something to read that says "Bible" on the cover, but it is not the authentic Bible inside. Spiritually speaking, is no better than the unreadable Latin Bible of the Middle Ages.

The second way these makeover movements encourage Biblical illiteracy is through their attitude

toward Scripture. The man who wrote *The Message*, Eugene Peterson, says this: "Christians...should be studying [the Bible] less, not more. You just need enough to pay attention to God."¹ One wonders, how can you pay attention to God unless you read His authentic Word? Well, the postmodern Evangelical makeover movements say that you "pay attention to God" by going to a church service that is not a worship service, but a staged entertainment event.

The postmodern movements that are doing an ungodly makeover on the Reformation may not physically chain the authentic Bible to a pulpit, but they just as effectively keep people from reading, hearing, and understanding it.

Church as an Experience

That brings us to the second way the church is returning to the pre-Reformation position. *The pre-Reformation position emphasized going to church as an experience.* In the 15th century this had to do with the pomp, the ceremony, the robes, the ornate altars and statues, the incense, the great cathedrals, the grand processions. In the 15th century, you did not hear the Word of God preached, you did not really worship God, you were not confronted with Biblical, declarative truth about God and Christ – but you had an emotional experience.

Today, the church is going back to the pre-Reformation position of emphasizing the church as an experience. Today, to go to many Evangelical churches is to enter into the experience of a carefully produced "show." The emphasis is on performed music, often in the style of *American Idol* or MTV, rather than congregational singing of the great hymns that teach and reinforce sound doctrine. The emphasis is on the stage setting, the lights, the sound system, the special effects.

Today there is a magazine called *Church Production* that tells churches how to do this. Every year there is a convention – actually a trade show – where thousands of Evangelical pastors spend several days finding out how they can turn their church services into a multi-media entertainment production.

I attended one of these conferences as an observer a few years ago. There was a massive trade show associated with this conference, occupying a huge area of the convention center. Nearly a hundred companies were exhibiting the products and services that they provide, in order to help churches implement this counterfeit doctrine of worship.

¹ Michael J. Cusik, "A Conversation with Eugene Petersen," *Mars Hill Review*, Issue number 3, Fall 1995, 73-90, as reproduced at <http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr03/peter1.html>.

Some of the biggest names in technology were there – Sony, Philips, Epson, Panasonic, and Yamaha, just to name a few. These and other large corporations now have dedicated teams of sales people who are focusing on what they call the “worship market.” The “worship market” is now a multi-billion-dollar business.

What were they selling to the “worship market”? They were selling the same kinds of laser light systems that they sell to theme parks, nightclubs, and theatres. They were selling stage scenery and props. They were selling strobe lighting. They were selling image projection systems so that you can use big-screen visuals to help set the mood of the service – or change the mood at will. They were selling big moving globes – so your church can have one on the platform, just like Joel Osteen. These are the idols of the so-called “new worship.” Thousands of pastors and church leaders attending the conference moved excitedly from one vendor’s exhibit to another.

But none of these were the most popular product that was being exhibited. The most popular product in this big exhibit hall was fog machines! You can generate fog in your church service – even different colors of fog, on the platform and throughout the congregation, throughout the building, to create the desired mood in a so-called worship service.

Those fog machines were a metaphor for the entire so-called worship conference. Thousands of pastors and church leaders, enthusiastically taking all of this in, talking excitedly about what they were going to do with these worldly devices when they got back to their churches, were in a thick fog of utter confusion about the true nature of Biblical worship.

I might also add that more and more churches are adding the trappings of Rome back to their services – the robes, the altar, the incense, the banners, the processions, and all of that. So you have two different cases in the 21st century, one emphasizing un-Biblical formalism in place of true reverence, and the other emphasizing the un-Biblical abandonment of a sound mind and self-control. But in both cases the emphasis is once again on experience, not on the preached Word of God.

Pluralism

Thirdly, *the pre-Reformation position was pluralistic.* Rome was, and is, the great chameleon. Rome has always been, and continues to be, quite willing to adjust its message and methods, even to bring pagan practices into the church, in order to get people under the authority of the Catholic church. Today, Roman Catholic churches in Indonesia and other parts of the Muslim world use the name “Allah” in the mass, instead of “God” or “Jesus Christ.” They do that quite comfortably.

The goal is to gain numbers, whatever it takes. Do you want to worship Allah? Under Rome, one can come to the mass and worship him.

Today, the Evangelical church is rapidly moving back to this pre-Reformation position of inclusivism and pluralism. The church is bringing in all sorts of worldly practices, just to get people to come. And the Evangelical church makeover movement is pluralistic about beliefs. We see the results today. According to several reliable surveys in recent years, nearly two thirds of self-described Evangelicals in America today do not believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life.

Dr. Timothy Keller, the PCA minister who is admired by many Evangelicals today, said in a television interview that there may very well be some “back door way to Heaven” as he put it, other than Jesus Christ. Keller embraces every major tenet of liberation theology, the evil blending of Roman Catholicism and Marxism.

Two years ago, John Piper, the well-known author and pastor, wrote that people are, as he put it, “made right with God” by faith – but they gain entry to Heaven by their works.

Both of these statements are heresy. The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Galatians condemns these things as “another gospel, which is not another” – and he goes on to say, in *Galatians* 1 beginning at verse 8,

But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Deeds Instead of Doctrine

Fourth, *the pre-Reformation position emphasized deeds instead of doctrine.* The 15th century position was that good works and acts of penance will get you to Heaven. Do not worry about doctrine, the Catholic church said. Just do what we tell you to do.

Once again, the Evangelical church is returning to the pre-Reformation position. Let me quote Rick Warren, the man who is the acknowledged world-wide leader of the Purpose-Driven church movement:

You know, 500 years ago, the first Reformation with Luther and then Calvin, was about creeds...[the new reformation that we’re bringing about through the Purpose-Driven church] will be about deeds.... The first one was about what the church believes.... This one will be about what the church does.

The first Reformation actually split Christianity into dozens and then hundreds of different segments.... This [new reformation] is actually going to bring them together. Now, you're never going to get Christians, of all their stripes and varieties, to agree on all of the different doctrinal disputes and things like that, but what I am seeing them agree on are the purposes of the church.

And I find great uniformity in the fact that I see this happening all the time. Last week I spoke to 4,000 pastors at my church who came from over 100 denominations in over 50 countries. Now, that's wide spread. We had Catholic priests, we had Pentecostal ministers, we had Lutheran bishops, we had Anglican bishops, we had Baptist preachers. They're all there together and you know what? I'd never get them to agree on communion or baptism or a bunch of stuff like that, but I could get them to agree on what the church should be doing in the world.²

What Rick Warren is actually advocating and leading is a return to the pre-Reformation position. One church, under one head – and that head is not the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two years ago, on September 26th and 27th, 2015, Pope Francis was in Philadelphia on a Sunday. It happened that I was preaching in Philadelphia the same Sunday the Pope was there. The Pope's congregation was at least ten thousand times bigger than the one I preached to. But at least the congregation I preached to was made up of regenerated, Bible-believing, blood-bought saints of God.

Who was the keynote speaker at the Pope's final Sunday service in Philadelphia? The keynote speaker, invited by the Pope himself, was Rick Warren – Southern Baptist pastor, the man behind the Purpose-Driven Church movement. Hundreds of Roman Catholic cardinals, bishops, and priests, and the Pope himself, filed into the hall where the service was held, in a great procession in all their regalia.

When Rick Warren got up to speak, he called these men, "brothers in Christ." He said, "We (Evangelicals and Catholics) need to minimize our differences, we need to mobilize our members, we need to evangelize

the lost."³ It does not matter to Rick Warren that the Roman Catholic church preaches a false gospel that leads souls to Hell.

The Pope, in the view of most so-called Evangelicals, has gone from being the Antichrist to being a "brother in Christ." According to recent survey by LifeWay, the research arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, two-thirds of Evangelical pastors in America believe the Pope is a genuine Christian and their brother in Christ.⁴

It is an indisputable fact that the Evangelical church has largely forgotten what it means to be Protestant. Why is that? I submit that it is because *much, if not most, of the Evangelical church has forgotten what it means to be saved from the wrath of God.*

The focus in most of the so-called Reformation celebrations this weekend is not on the Gospel but on man. The focus is on man's alleged power to transform things. But as we gather today we have before us a passage of Scripture that talks about *God's* power to transform. This is power of an entirely different kind. It was by this transforming power that God chose out men from among those who had been conformed to the Roman Catholic pattern for centuries – the pattern of the world, the pattern of false religion. God called out those men, the Reformers, and He renewed their minds by the power of the Holy Spirit. And through those men – Calvin, Luther, Beza, Zwingli, John Knox, and all the rest – God kindled the flames of Reformation that swept across Europe, and brought a faithful remnant of God's people to the truth. And it was this same Reformation that eventually planted the first faithful churches in America.

Be Outwardly What You Are Inwardly

Once again, *Romans* chapter 12 verse 1 and 2:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be *conformed* to this world, but be *transformed* by the *renewing* of your mind, that you may prove

³ Anugrah Kumar, "Evangelical Pastor Rick Warren Speaks at Catholics' World Meeting of Families," *Christian Post*, 9/26/2015, as viewed at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/evangelical-pastor-rick-warren-speaks-at-catholics-world-meeting-of-families-146225/>.

⁴ Lisa Cannon Green, "From Antichrist to Brother in Christ: How Protestant Pastors View the Pope," *Christianity Today*, September 25, 2015, as posted at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2015/september/antichrist-brother-christ-protestant-pastors-pope-francis.html>.

² "Myths of the Modern Megachurch," a transcript of Rick Warren's remarks to the Pew Forum's Faith Angle Conference on Religion, Politics, and Public Life, May 23, 2005, Key West, Florida, as viewed on 2/15/2013 at <http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Myths-of-the-Modern-Megachurch.aspx>.

what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This is Reformational truth.

To fully understand *Romans* 12:1-2, we need to understand three particular words that are used in this passage. You cannot fully understand these familiar verses unless you understand these three words. They are the Greek words that are translated “conformed” – “transformed” – and “renewing” in verse two.

The word translated “conformed” is the Greek word *schema*. This word means “an outward appearance that does *not* represent the inward nature.” In other words, what you see on the outside does not reflect what is on the inside.

Jesus described the religious leaders of His days on earth in exactly this way. He said this, in *Matthew* 23 beginning at verse 27:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful *outwardly*, but *inside* are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also *outwardly* appear righteous to men, but *inside* you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.”

Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of Hell?

In these days, the Pope and other Roman Catholic leaders are joining with so-called Protestants to do just this. They are “building the tombs of the prophets” and “adorn(ing) the monuments of the righteous.” They are speaking well of Luther, and Calvin, and the other Reformers. They are saying, “Oh, if we had lived in those days, we would have treated these good men differently.”

That is a lie from the Pit. True Christians, true Protestants, cannot and will not join in their hypocrisy. The fact is that God is using the ceremonies of this present time to point out the difference between those who are truly His, and those who are not. The men who are engaging in these falsehoods in partnership with Rome today are, as the Greek word clearly implies,

scheming men. Let us never forget that the men of Romanism are the spiritual sons of those who killed the prophets of the Reformation. Five hundred years later they are pursuing a hidden agenda of ungodliness – and they now pursue it in the name of the Reformation.

The second word we need to keep in mind in this passage the word translated “transformed.” It is the Greek word *morphē*. It is the opposite of *schema*. *Morphē* means “an outward appearance that truly represents the inward nature.” What you see on the outside accurately represents what is on the inside. If a cup that looks clean on the outside is also clean on the inside, we could say that its outward appearance is *morphē*. What you see is what you get.

What you see here at this conference is what you get. There is no hidden agenda here.

So keep these two words fixed in your minds: *Schema* or “conformed” means that the outside appearance does not agree with what is on the inside. It is a deceiving picture of things. *Morphē* or “transformed” means that the outside appearance agrees with what is on the inside. It is the true picture of things.

With those two words in mind, let us look at this passage together. In *Romans* 12 verse 2, Paul exhorts us, “Do not be conformed to this world.” This is the word *schema*. Do not be *schema*-ed to this world. Do not appear to be something on the outside that you are not on the inside. You are not your own. You have been bought with the precious blood of Christ. You are the temple of God the Holy Spirit. That is the inward reality.

And Paul is saying to the church, “Make sure your outward appearance conforms to that inward reality.” How does that apply to the church today? It means what it says: Do not conform yourself to the world. Do not be driven by the world’s agenda. Do not go back to the pre-Reformation position. Maintain your true identity. Be Protestants.

It is also interesting that the form of the word *schema* that is used here indicates having a relationship with something that is transitory, changeable, or unstable. In other words, the church is not to take on an outward appearance that is conformed to a world or to an ecclesiastical leadership that constantly changes its mind about God and His Word. The members of Christ’s true Church must never take on a worldly outward appearance that does not agree with the inward spiritual nature that is ours by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

This world is passing away. Romanism and the Papacy will meet their end in the Lake of Fire. Our focus must not be on that which is dying under the curse. We have no loyalty to these things. Our loyalty is to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true Head of the Church; to the

Word of God, His one true Authority on earth; and to the indwelling Spirit of God, the one true Representative of Christ – the one true Vicar of Christ – on Earth.

If we are truly believers, if we are truly Protestants, acting like the world is a masquerade. Acting like a Catholic is a masquerade. Making common spiritual cause with people who are the religious enemies of Christ is a deception. Our thinking, talking, and actions must unashamedly declare our new life in Christ, and the eternal values that characterize that new life. As Paul writes in Philippians 3, “*our citizenship is in Heaven.*”

Returning to the Reformation Position

Instead of being “*conformed to this world*” – *schema*-ed to this world – we are to be “*transformed by the renewing of [our] minds.*” The word “transformed” here is a form of the word *morphe*. Be on the outside who you are on the inside. Do not hide who you truly are. Be Protestants, and do not be ashamed of it.

To what are we to be transformed? Paul tells us in *Romans* 8:29 that God predestined believers “*to be conformed to the image of His Son.*” “Conformed” in this case is *morphe* – the work of the Holy Spirit on the inside making us more and more like Christ on the outside, in the way we live, as individuals and as the church, in this world.

How are we to be transformed? We should note two things.

First, we are transformed “by the *renewing* of [our] minds.” That word translated “renewing” literally means the *renovation* of our thinking. The church today needs an extreme makeover, but it is not the kind that the Rick Warrens, John Pipers, and Tim Kellers think it needs. They are taking the visible church back to the pre-Reformation position. The church needs the kind of makeover that will establish it as firmly and unashamedly Protestant once again.

Secondly, we must take note of the logic in this passage. The Apostle Paul begins *Romans* chapter 12 by saying, “I beseech you *therefore*...” That is one of the Apostle Paul’s favorite words. He uses it 105 times in his epistles. The way Paul writes is to build one thing upon another, and another, and another. His writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is highly logical.

“I beseech you *therefore*.” What is the basis for this exhortation to truly be on the outside what we are on the inside? To put it in the context of this conference, what is the basis for this exhortation to truly be Protestants? We have it summed up for us in the preceding verses, chapter 11 beginning at verse 33:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How

unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Through the first eleven chapters of the book of *Romans*, the Apostle Paul builds the case for what we today call the five *solas* of the Reformation:

- *Sola Scriptura*: Our doctrine is from Scripture alone.
- *Solus Christus*: We are saved by Christ’s work alone.
- *Sola Gratia*: Salvation is by grace alone.
- *Sola Fide*: Justification is by faith alone.
- *Soli Deo Gloria*: The glory belongs to God alone – “Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Today’s church makeover movements deny all of the *solas*. They are exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

- The modern church growth movements are exchanging *Sola Scriptura* for man’s twisting of Scripture.
- The modern church makeover movements are exchanging Christ alone for Christ-plus-works.
- They are exchanging grace alone for a denial of the merits of Christ.
- They are exchanging faith alone for justification by man’s faithfulness.
- And thus, the modern church makeover movements deny that all the glory belongs to God alone because He is all-wise. They put man on the throne instead of Christ; they remove Scripture from the place of sole authority; human works and human wisdom replace God’s works and God’s wisdom.

True Christians, true Protestants, must oppose all these things with all of their being. We must stand, as the Apostle John did, “*for the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ*” at all costs. We must learn once again what it means to be truly and vigorously Protestant. A number of years ago, a Baptist minister wrote this:

It is my firm conviction that [the word] “Protestant” means absolutely, positively *nothing* unless the one wearing the term believes, breathes, lives, and loves the

uncompromised, offensive-to-the-natural-man message of justification by God's free grace by faith in Jesus Christ *alone*...

In the vast majority of instances today a Protestant has no idea what the word itself denotes, what the historical background behind it was, nor why he should really care. And a label that has been divorced from its significance no longer functions in a meaningful fashion. We need a Reformation in our day that will again draw the line clearly between those who embrace the gospel of God's grace in Christ and those who do not. And how one answers the question "How is a man made right with God?" determines whether one embraces that gospel or not.⁵

The Holy Spirit calls us to be Protestants. Scripture commands us in the most unequivocal terms to be true to the untainted Gospel and the unique authority of Scripture, both long veiled in darkness by Rome but brought back into the light at great cost by the Reformers.

I praise God that The Trinity Foundation takes that kind of a stand today. We need to value what this ministry stands for. And if you are in a sound church, you need to value what you have there as well. But never be afraid to critically analyze what you have, what you are holding onto, against the infallible standard of the Word of God. Why? Because the history we find in Scripture – both Old and New Testaments – and the history of the church since Pentecost, shows us that drift away from the anchor of Scripture is always the natural tendency.

Never be afraid to admit it when you find yourself, or the church, deviating from Scripture in even the smallest point. Preserve and protect that which agrees with the Word of God. Fearlessly jettison anything that does not agree with the Word of God. Seek to propagate the Biblical, Reformation position.

May we be truly Protestants, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove – that we may truly regard as valuable – what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the

presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

New eBook

First and Second Thessalonians by Gordon H. Clark is our latest title to be converted to eBook format. It is available for \$5 download at our web site.

Work is continuing on convert more titles. Stay tuned to our web site for the latest news.

New Trinity Foundation Radio Podcast Available

Episode 2 of The Trinity Foundation Radio podcast is now available to download and / or listen to at our web site. Join host Steve Matthews, author of *Imagining a Vain Thing: The Decline and Fall of Knox Seminary*, as he interviews Stephen M. Cunha, author of *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Richard B. Gaffin Jr's Doctrine of Justification*, the topic book for the 2018 Christian Worldview Essay Contest. Stay tuned for future episodes, as host Steve Matthews interviews authors of *Trinity Review* articles.

Gordon H. Clark Symposium at Covenant College

Covenant College hosted the Gordon H. Clark Symposium April 6, and 7, 2018, featuring a keynote address by Douglas J. Douma, author of *The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon H. Clark*, titled "An Introduction to the Life and Work of Gordon H. Clark." Six students from Covenant and other colleges present philosophical papers, and the conference was concluded with a panel discussion with Dr. William Higgins, Doug Douma, and Dr. William Hall, professor of philosophy at Covenant College. Clark received not only a fair, but even a positive hearing. Recordings of Douma's address and the panel discussion are available on Sermon Audio. Clark's grandson, Nathan Clark George, led in music, even putting one of Clark's poems to music.

⁵ James R. White, *The God Who Justifies* (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2001), 26. Although the author disagrees with Dr. White on many things (including his position on the authentic text of Scripture and his public debates with apostates), I believe he has stated this issue exceedingly well.