

American Council of Christian Churches  
73rd Annual Convention, October 21-23, 2014  
Bible Presbyterian Church, Apollo, Pennsylvania  
“Resolution on Refo500”

October 31, 2017 will be the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s act of nailing his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in what was then the Electorate of Saxony, now part of Germany. Although Luther had no conception of the significance of his action at the time, it set in motion the chain of events that became known in history as the Protestant Reformation. With this milestone anniversary approaching, people with various interests in the Reformation launched in 2010 a cooperative effort to sponsor commemorative events in the years leading to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They labeled this effort Refo500.

From its outset, Refo500 did not resemble a forthright restatement of Reformation heritage as much as it assumed the mantle of an ecumenical mishmash of people across the theological spectrum, each with a particular agenda. At the launch of the movement in mid-February 2010, one of the most notable elements of the occasion was the very public presence of Roman Catholic clergy. One of them, Dutch Bishop Gerard de Korte, addressed the gathering and erroneously affirmed the following: “In the past half century a lot has happened in ecumenism. The old walls between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians have been increasingly demolished. Yesterday’s papists and heretics have today become brothers and sisters in the one Lord. Personally I see this development as the work of God’s Spirit.” Later, he said, “But hopefully Refo500 won’t be just for historians and theologians. A clear view on the past can help every Christian in furthering ecumenical dialogue. In the Netherlands we live in a secular culture of the majority. Confessional Christians have become a minority. This further increases the importance of the ecumenical meeting between Christians of different backgrounds. Only when we continue to overcome our mutual divisions can we give a believable witness of Christ and His gospel. We are facing the challenge to show that living in friendship with Christ makes a real difference” (<https://incaelo.wordpress.com/tag/refo500/>).

On the nominally Protestant side, the leading figure in the effort is Herman Selderhuis, a Dutchman who has displayed no compunctions about promoting cooperation with Roman Catholics in Refo500. Some have suggested a special exhibit to demonstrate how the Council of Trent served to advance the cause of the Reformation by providing a useful

corrective to the excesses of the Reformation’s early years. Selderhuis has served as a magnet to attract some professing evangelicals into the movement, and though some have departed after becoming aware of the Roman Catholic involvement, not all have done so.

The Roman Catholic apologists for Refo500 acknowledge that there are still significant differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, but they tend to minimize those differences and to emphasize what they say are the areas in common, such as belief in the Bible and the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no mention of the major differences over the terms of the gospel, however. How Martin Luther would have reacted to such statements provides an interesting point of speculation. He made a complete break with Rome, and Rome made a complete break with him. Now, one has to wonder if the way is being prepared for the declaration that from being a heretic and outlaw of the Holy Roman Empire, Luther has somehow made the journey to being a saint of the Roman Catholic Church.

Such ecumenical monstrosities as Refo500 manifest the theological bankruptcy that blankets the religious world in our time. Any stand against the gross heresy of Roman Catholicism faces harsh condemnation from those who proclaim that they favor love and kindness. But to embrace a movement like Refo500, however deceitfully it appears, is to deny that for which the Reformers risked their lives. They urged a return to the doctrine of the apostles, a recovery of the gospel from the man-made traditions that have obscured it, and a reassertion of the truth that salvation is of the Lord by faith in Christ alone without works.

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches, at its annual convention, October 21-23, 2014, at the Bible Presbyterian Church of Apollo, PA, resolves to continue its opposition to ecumenical efforts by standing against Refo500. We hear again the call to take our stand with the Lord Jesus Christ, outside the camp of false religion, and in so doing to pay true honor to those who, at the risk of life itself, took their stand for the Savior.



American Council of Christian Churches  
P.O. Box 628 – Orwell, OH 44076  
[info@acc4truth.org](mailto:info@acc4truth.org)  
[www.acc4truth.org](http://www.acc4truth.org)

