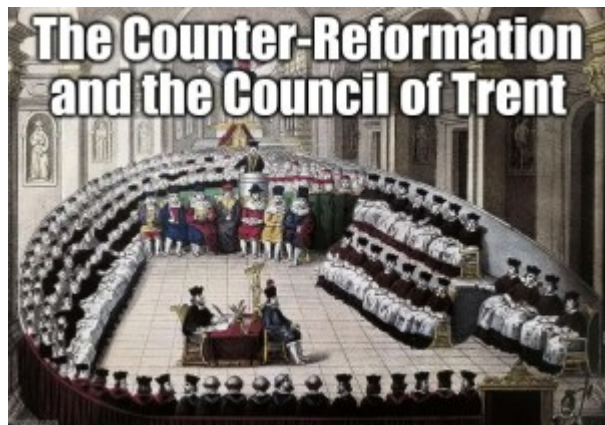


# [The Counter-Reformation – The Source of the Futurist View of Prophecy](#)



This is the next chapter of the book, [The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy – By Michael de Semlyen](#)

## Chapter 3

### **The Counter-Reformation – The Source of the Futurist View of Prophecy**

The Roman Catholic institution had been rocked and shaken by that great movement of the Spirit, as the new printing presses poured out Bibles, books, and tracts, and the great truths of the gospel swept across the Western World. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone, the supremacy of the Bible, and the church's identification of the Papacy as the Antichrist revealed in Scripture, were transforming the religious and political map of Europe. Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Switzerland, and England had become Protestant. France, Poland, Bavaria, Austria, and Belgium were swinging that way as well. In consternation the Papacy looked around in every direction for help. The Lord, in His mysterious sovereignty, allowed the desperate prayers of the Roman Church to be answered in the person of the remarkable man who was to lead the Counter-Reformation, Ignatius Loyola, born in the very same year as Martin Luther (1483).



Martin Luther and Ignatius Loyola

*The Council of Trent* (1545-1564) was called to take drastic measures to deal with the crisis. The Jesuit Order, established by Loyola in 1540 and instituted to prosecute the Counter-Reformation, dominated the Council. Accommodation or compromise with the spread of Protestantism was not on the agenda. Anthony Froude, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University in the 1890s, described the Council:

“It met no longer with a pretense of desiring peace, but to equip and renovate the Roman Communion for the reconquest of its lost dominions. It met to split nations into factions; to set subjects against their sovereigns and sovereigns against subjects. The history of Europe for a hundred years was the history of the efforts of the Church, with open force or secret conspiracy, with all the energy, base or noble, which passion or passionate enthusiasm could inspire, to crush and annihilate its foes. No means came amiss to it, sword or stake, torture chamber or assassin’s dagger. The effects of the Church’s working were seen in ruined nations and smoking cities, in human beings tearing one another to pieces like raging maniacs, and the honour of the Creator of the world befouled by the hideous crimes committed in His Name.”

The Jesuits, founded and led by Ignatius Loyola, were utterly single-minded in their determination to re-establish the divine rule of Rome and bring about the infallibility of the Pope. As author Benjamin Wilkinson has suggested:

“Ignatius Loyola came forward and may well have said in substance to the Pope: ‘Let the Augustinians continue to provide monasteries of retreat for contemplative minds; let the Benedictines give themselves up to the field of literary endeavour; let the Dominicans retain their responsibility for maintaining the Inquisition; but we, the Jesuits, will capture the colleges and the universities. We will gain control of instruction in law, medicine, science, education, and so weed out from all books of instruction, anything injurious to Roman Catholicism. We will mold the thoughts and ideas of the youth. We will enroll ourselves as Protestant preachers and college

professors in the different Protestant faiths. Sooner or later, we will undermine the authority of the Greek New Testament of Erasmus, and also of those Old Testament productions, which have dared to raise their heads against tradition. And thus will we undermine the Protestant Reformation.”  
(*From Our Authorised Bible Vindicated*: Benjamin G. Wilkinson, Ph.D.)

Even all of this would not be enough, however. The printing and widespread distribution of the Word of God was rendering persecution less effective, and sometimes even counter-productive. “*All that walk godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted;*” (2 Timothy 3:12); “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*” (Psalm 116:15) The newly published Scriptures encouraged true Christians greatly, showing plainly the great privilege accorded to servants of Christ, being chosen to suffer for the Master, and showing, too, the source of the persecution. “*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus...*” (Revelation 17:6a) Luther’s Babylonian Captivity of the Church underlined the truth revealed throughout Scripture of the identity of “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Revelation 17:5)

### **The Battle for God’s Word**

Pursuing and punishing “heretics” (true believers) was counter-productive. It was clear that the Counter-Reformation needed to take on the very Word of God itself. The Jesuit Bible of 1582, the *Douay-Rheims Version*, brought out to combat the much loved *Tyndale Version*, like the Roman Catholic Spanish Armada six years later, succeeded in making little impact on a Protestant people nurtured on the solid food of the pure Word and utterly convinced of the identity of Antichrist. The Jesuits concluded that it was essential to devise a counter-system of interpretation that would nullify the revelation in Scripture of the Antichrist identity of the Papacy. However, this was easier said than done. The Word of God, providentially preserved through the centuries, was jealously guarded by His saints.

Harvard Bible scholar, Edward F. Hills, wrote about the cosmic spiritual warfare waged throughout the Christian era in graphic terms:

“The history of the New Testament text is the history of conflict between God and Satan. Soon after the New Testament books were written, Satan corrupted their texts by means of heretics and misguided critics whom he had raised up. However, these assaults on the integrity of the Word were repulsed by the providence of God, who guided true believers to reject these false readings and to preserve the true text in the majority of New Testament manuscripts. At the end of the Middle Ages this true text was produced in print and became the Textus Receptus (the Received Text), the foundation of the glorious Protestant Reformation.”

“But Satan was not defeated. Instead, he staged a clever comeback by means of ‘naturalistic New Testament textual criticism’. Old corrupt manuscripts, which had been discarded by the God-guided usage of the believing Church, were brought out of their hiding-places and re-instated. Through naturalistic textual criticism, also the fatal logic of unbelief was set in motion. Not only the text but also every aspect of the Bible and of Christianity came to

be regarded as a purely natural phenomenon. And today thousands of Bible-believing Christians are falling into this devil's trap through their use of modern-speech versions, which are based on naturalistic textual criticism and so introduce the reader to the naturalistic point of view. By means of these modern-speech versions Satan deprives his victims of both the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and leaves them unarmed and helpless before the terrors and temptations of this modern apostate world. What a clever comeback! How Satan must be hugging himself with glee over the seeming success of his devilish strategy."

The critics that Dr. Hills refers to were the mainly German "higher critics" of the Counter-Reformation who attacked the Received Text and exalted the Alexandrian text. Among these critics were Schleiermacher, Griesbach, Wellhausen, Tischendorf, and Tregelles. They were the new Gnostics<sup>10</sup> who helped build the shaky foundations of the bible intended to replace the Authorised Version.

The adoption of the Futurist system of prophecy in the period leading up to the 1881 Revised Edition of the Bible undoubtedly increased the pressure in the demand for revision. Spurred on by Newman and other leaders of the Oxford Movement, the Anglo-Catholic led Revising Committee were intent on assisting the re-interpretation of great prophetic passages of antichrist such as the Apostle Paul's description of the *man of sin* of 2 Thessalonians 2. Clearly the proposed new bible was designed to less readily lend itself to the Protestant reformed prophetic portrayal of the Papal Antichrist.

### **Futurism Aided by Modern Versions of the Bible**

The Futurist interpretation of the Bible has gained further currency and authority as a result of the modern versions that have proliferated during this last century. The many variations among different renderings of the prophetic passages of Scripture have inevitably caused doubt about their true meaning. When in doubt, it is natural to avoid controversy. The historical view, that the Papacy is clearly revealed in Scripture, is controversial. Almost without exception, the translators of the new bibles have held to a Futurist theology. Their translations inevitably reflect this. The familiar wording of the Authorised Bible has been replaced in most modern versions to an extent that makes it difficult to recognise the "man of sin" or the "little horn" of Daniel as did our forefathers in Christ. As part two of this book will seek to show, the new translations or modern versions, in marked contrast to the Authorised Version, have so altered the Scriptures identifying the Papacy and Romanism, that the traditional Historicist and Protestant view is difficult to sustain. No wonder so few evangelicals hold to it today!

This impoverishes true history. Although the Bible clearly directs us in many different ways to "*remember the things of old*", we rarely do so today. "*One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts,*" (Psalm 145:4) wrote the psalmist, but our magnificent Christian heritage is virtually discarded. Many of the great deeds of God of the past, including the deliverances in England of 1588 and 1688 and the selfless sacrifice of countless martyrs of the faith, have become an embarrassment for

those who now wish to offer and receive a “love gospel” unhindered by uncomfortable truths.

Continued in [Futurism Devised across the Centuries by the Jesuits](#)

## **All chapters of The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy**

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