

# A Condemnation of the Glorious Reformation?

## Revelation 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup>And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

<sup>2</sup>Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

*SARDISEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.7, p.281*

*Now here, indeed, is a very strange thing. In every age to this point the Spirit has first of all praised the true believers, and then denounced the false vine. But in this period there is evidently such wanton disregard for the Lord and His Word that the entire message to this fifth age rings with condemnation.*

<sup>3</sup>Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

<sup>4</sup>Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

<sup>5</sup>He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

<sup>6</sup>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

*SARDISEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.7, p.292*

*Now from this verse which shows the elect of God to be a "Few Names," you can see clearly what we have been teaching about this age. It was chaotic. It was UNFULFILLED. It was split scores of ways, and God rebuked it almost in its entirety. It was weak and sickly and ready to die. **It was not the glorious era that carnal minded Protestant historians have tried to make it.** One quick look at that tree saw it was cankered and blighted, denuded of leaf and barren of fruit except for some deformed and wormy fruit that was fast dropping to the ground. But hold a moment! Look closer. There at the top, in the light of the sun, were some 'first fruits'--a 'Few Names'--perfect in Him for they were born of Him, filled with Him and walking with Him by His Word. Thank God for 'those few.'*

To evangelical Christians the age of the Reformation seems an age of great victories for the faith, led by mighty men of God such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and many more. It is therefore ironic that when Bro. Branham speaks from Revelation 3, he has hardly anything positive to say about the Reformation. Why is that? In the Sardisean age, God began the process of pulling the Church out of the darkness and errors they'd sunk to in the Thyatirean age. **The Sardisean age was an age of beginning and much was left uncompleted. An important lesson of the Sardisean age is that we should not mistake a beginning work of God for His perfect plan.**

The elders of Israel made such a mistake when they refused to move past Moses to follow Jesus Christ. At Sinai, God met the children of Israel where they were and began the laborious task of teaching them their need for Him. That was the beginning point, not the end. Likewise, many denominations mistake the Reformation as God's completed work. It was the starting point of God's restoration, but in itself was far from being the complete restoration. That was still to come, for those who would have ears to hear what the Spirit would have to say in the future church ages!

## The works of the previous church ages continue into the Sardisean age.

It is interesting to note that Christ acknowledges the *works* of this church, rather than the *fruit* of the Spirit's work among them. (Cf. Galatians 5:18-23, the flesh has works, but the Spirit bears fruit.)

The works of the Pergamean and Thyatirean ages continue into the Sardisean age (p.281).

- Human hierarchy supersedes the leadership of the Holy Spirit
- Creeds, dogmas, and church orders deposes the pure word of God
- Worship in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit pushed aside by the liturgy and pagan feasts

- Maryolatry assumes a greater place in Christian worship: she and the Pope take the place of Christ as being the intercessor between man and God.

To this church who for ages had known nothing but the leadership of corrupt men, God speaks again through men. Yet at the beginning of this angel's message, God reminds us that it is the Spirit of God speaking, not the man. This age will continue to struggle with human leadership, stopping at the man instead of following the God the human messenger is pointing to. This is the importance of verse 1 in Revelation 3. *These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars....* The star is meant to guide us through the dark, but don't focus on the star, but on the light cast by the star.

SARDISEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.7, p.282

God raised up many mighty men of which Luther was but one. Calvin and Zwingli were two other luminaries and besides these were many, many more who are not so well known. However, though all this was not in vain, the mighty work of God was actually hindered by these very men. For one thing, they did NOT oppose the Church-State marriage of the Nicene Council but actually fostered that union.

The defense of the Gospel by the state was welcomed though there was no Word for it. And though we can see "the wrath of man praising God," in such events as Henry the Eighth taking up for the reformation and the rejection of papal authority, it was a far cry from the truth of Pentecost and protection of an omnipotent God.

In spite of Luther's constant teaching against outside interference in local church matters he was not able to clear men's minds of the "Bishop, Archbishop" concept of church government. Thus the church took one step in the right direction but still remained shackled, so in short order she was again imprisoned in the same dungeon whence she had attempted to escape.

Still the cup of the abominable works was not yet full. Not only did Luther through poor judgment incite to battle and thereby cause the death of multitudes; but Zwingli's party persecuted unto prison the godly Dr. Hubmeyer, and though it did not commit him to the stake, it was actually responsible in great measure for his eventual death by fire. And Calvin did no less, for he demanded the arrest of Servetus who had seen and taught the oneness of the Godhead. The State then tried this brother, and to Calvin's dismay he was burned at the stake.

## A paradox: thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead....

People were tied to their human leaders instead of to Christ. They made their own names great instead of God's name great.

### Revelation 3:1

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

### Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

### I Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men**, the man Christ Jesus;

### Revelation 17:3

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

ALL.THINGS\_ SHREVEPORT.LA SATURDAY\_ 62-1124E

E-40 God wants to perform His Word by His power. And when the church denies His power, how can He perform and vindicate His Word? When the church explains it away and says it's for some other day, and something, how can God, Who wants to--to fulfill His Word, and perform His Word among the people... And the people deny that He does it. Yet, they go through all the rituals. See?

Here's what's happened. God wants to perform by the Holy Ghost, and vindicate His Word; and the church wants to perform. They have to deny the Holy Ghost. They want to perform to make a big organization, and what else? To bring membership, no matter what you have to baptize sinners, drunkards, bootleggers, anything else, and take them into the body of the church. No wonder Revelation 17 said this old prostitute woman, that had a bunch of daughters, that she was full of names, or blasphemous names. Churches, or daughter-calling the names of her daughters...

People who join churches and call that "got salvation," it's a blasphemy. Now, I know the King James here said, "names of blasphemy," but you look in the Diaglott, and see if it is. It says, "Blasphemous names." There's quite a difference. She is full of those. She's got nine hundred and something different organizations in her, plenty of blasphemous names. Got away, by some man-made tradition got away from the true worship, power out of the...

RETURN.AND.JUBILEE\_ SHREVEPORT.LA THURSDAY\_ 62-1122

E-34 In Revelations the 17th chapter, if you'll read in the "Diaglott," the "Emphatic Diaglott" of the original Vatican manuscripts, you'll find there in Revelations 17 (in the King James version), it says, "And she was full of names of blasphemy." The prostitute church, a daughter, she had daughters, many daughters associated with her, and she was a prostitute. The first organized religion ever was, was organized at Nicaea, Rome, at the Nicaea, after the Nicene Council, then she become an organization, a universal Christian church of an organization. She had daughters.

And you see there the King James put it, "She had names of blasphemy." But in the original "Diaglott," it said, "She was full of blasphemous names." What a difference from "names of blasphemy" to "blasphemous names." That means to me, I don't know, I... If I'm wrong, God forgive me, but it means churches that has took on the names of Christianity, that live like the world, and act like the world, and do the things of the world, and has brought a disgrace upon the true church of the living God. And they join those. You might join the Methodist lodge, Presbyterian lodge, or the Pentecostal lodge, but you cannot join the church. You must be born into the church by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is true.

The only name Christians should take on is Jesus Christ, and it is only in His name that God will meet man.

**Principle: We sacrifice to God where He chooses to place His Name.**

#### Deuteronomy 16:1-2

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

#### Deuteronomy 14:22-25

<sup>22</sup>Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

<sup>23</sup>And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

<sup>24</sup>And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

<sup>25</sup>Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

<sup>26</sup>And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

GOD'S.CHOSEN.PLACE.OF.WORSHIP\_ JEFF.IN V-5 N-7 SATURDAY\_ 65-0220

16 Now God told them, when they... before they established the temple and whatever they did, "I will choose the place of My worship, and I'll put My Name in it." And that's the only place that God would ever meet anybody, was by His Own choosing. He chose His place. And where He chose His place, He put His Name. The 2nd verse here tells us that, "He would put His Name in the place that He had chosen for people to worship Him in." Now, the thing of it is, we want to find where that place is.

17 With nine hundred and something different ideas, being that we're bypassing all heathen religion, and just speaking of Christian religion. Which, I have a feeling for the heathens, or I certainly wouldn't be going over there and talking to them. But, they're wrong. Christianity is the only religion that's true, is Christianity. And I'm saying that not exactly because I am a Christian; because, I believe that to be the Truth. It's the only religion that's right.

GOD'S.CHOSEN.PLACE.OF.WORSHIP\_ JEFF.IN V-5 N-7 SATURDAY\_ 65-0220

79 What a great lessons that these things would be if we take time to break them out! Now notice, not one word of the shadows fail. Not one word ever failed, of the shadow. Everything typed perfectly.

He is God's chosen place of worship, and God's Name is given to Him. He is God's place of worship, and God's Name is given to Him. He is the Word of God, and He is the Name of God. He is both the Word of God and the Name of God. "He was the Word made flesh." He was the Word of God, Lamb of God, Name of God, and was God. That's what He was, the chosen and only place of worship to God.

80 And God refuses any other place besides in Jesus Christ; you cannot worship Him anywhere. He said, "In vain they do worship Me, teaching for Doctrine the commandments of man." Today we have creeds, dogmas, and everything, that teaches this is the way and that is the way.

And Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no man can come to God except by Me." In other words, "I am the Door to the sheepfold. All without are thieves." He is the only approach. He is the Door. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life, all that there is; the only entrance, the only place, the only worship, the only Name.

Everything is tied to Jesus Christ. All the Old Testament is tied to Him. The New Testament tied to Him. And the Church today is tied to Him, by the Word of His commandment. There is not another place, or another Name, or anywhere, where God ever promised to meet a man; only in Jesus Christ, His chosen place of worship.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a leader of the Czech Brethren named Jan Amos Comenius gave a condemning critique of the movement we now know as the Reformation. In the Church Age Book, Bro. Branham quotes at length from Comenius's pamphlet, "One Thing Needful."<sup>1</sup>

**We must still beware of a mentality "I am of Paul," "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas" !**

SARDISEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.7, p.284-285

Now I just said that this era gave tremendous growth to the denominational spirit. If the Corinthian attitude of "I am of Paul, I of Cephas" was ever exhibited, it was now. There were Lutherans, Hussites, Zwingli's party, etc. Such fragmentation of the Body was deplorable. They were living a name but were dead. Certainly they were dead. They died the minute they organized. The great groups organized and tied themselves in matrimony to the state. That did it. They were finished. Here were those Lutherans who had criticized the Roman Church. They knew the unrighteousness of political and spiritual unions--yet Luther (as when Peter was overbalanced by the Judaizers) went right ahead and made the state instead of God, the defender of the faith. This is the first denomination of repute that came out of the harlot, but when Luther died it was not long until it had a hierarchy like the one it had fought. This move of God, by the time the second generation came along was right back under the wing of her mother. She had gone back and did not even know it. They had taken on their own name above His Name. They were living their own name, too. And all the denominations are doing that very thing today. They are living their own name, and not the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is easily seen for every church is known by the way it worships but none are known by the power of God. There is your test. And I want you to notice right here that this era did not have the signs and wonders amongst them. They gave up the power of God for the power of the state. They clung to their own name; they made their names great. It was that old spirit of getting everyone into its fold. Today the Baptists want the Methodists to come over to the Baptists. The Methodists are out to proselytize the Presbyterians. And the Pentecostals want them all. Each claims to offer the most and to hold out the greatest hopes--a sort of door to heaven, or at least, the way to a more abundant entrance. How tragic it all is.

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In closing our comments on this verse, "thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead," I cannot impress upon you too strongly that this age, though it brought the reformation, was most sternly rebuked by God instead of being praised, because IT SOWED THE SEED

<sup>1</sup> A full text can be found at the website of the Moravian Archives, <https://moravianarchives.org/images/pdfs/Unum%20Necessarium.pdf>.

OF DENOMINATION THAT ORGANIZED RIGHT BACK TO THE HARLOT, after God had opened a door of escape. When the move away from the Catholic Church took place, it was not truly Spiritual as a whole, but more political. Most of the people took up with Protestantism because as I have stated, they hated the Roman system of political and financial bondage. Thus, instead of this being a great Spiritual move with all the earmarks of Holy Spirit influence as when God used purely Spiritual means to accomplish His ends at Pentecost, it was indeed a WORK WHEREIN THE WRATH OF MAN PRAISED GOD, and the results paralleled the history of Israel when she left Egypt and wandered in the desert, not making it to Canaan Land. However, much was accomplished in that where the yoke of Rome was even partly broken, men could now receive the Word of God and yield to the influence of the Spirit without such great fear as formerly. This opened the door to the great missionary age that followed.

**The Jezebel of Thyatira was in no mood to give up her hold upon the people, and thus we see her daughter Athaliah raise her head in the Sardisean Age with the hopes that she would be able to strangle the true seed by her schemes of organization.**

## We should never mistake the beginning of God's work for His completed work.

In the Law, God met the people of Israel *where they were* and He gradually took them to the place where He wanted them to be (God with them, even in them). Yet because the church leaders mistook the first work of God—the Law—as His perfect and completed work, they missed God's ultimate goal for them.

Similarly, Bro. Branham calls the Sardisean/Reformation age an unfulfilled age. It was the starting point of God's restoration, but in itself was far from being the complete restoration. That was still to come, for those who would have ears to hear what the Spirit would have to say in the future church ages!

SARDISEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.7, pp.286-287

I wish it could be said that the Sardisean Age was a restoration instead of a reformation. I cannot say that. The Word does not call it a restoration, but certainly calls it a reformation. Had it been a restoration, that age would have been another Pentecostal age. But it was not. The best that could be said of it was, "Strengthen that which remains, that is ready to die."....

This was the reformation period. But fear not little flock, God said, "I will restore," and this reform was going to be the start of it. He was going to (according to His promise) take the church back from the depth of Satan in the Dark Ages to the Depth of God that they had at Pentecost and in the first few years of the existence of the church.

Now be careful, and get this. It says in this second verse that I read, "For I have not found thy works perfect before God." Do you know what the meaning of 'not perfect' really is? It is 'unfulfilled.' **This age was an unfulfilled age. It was just the start of getting back. That is why I said the Bible called it Reformation—not restoration.** It had started out in the doctrine of justification which meant salvation was all of God. Oh, how Luther preached the sovereignty of God and election. He knew it was all of grace. He separated the church from rule by ecclesiastical hierarchy. He tore down the idols. He cast out the confessions to the priests. He denounced the pope. It was wonderfully good, as he started, but God had said 1500 years before, "Luther, you are going to start things, but your age will see it all unfulfilled, I am leaving that to later." Hallelujah, our God reigneth! He knows the end from the beginning. Yes, Luther was His messenger. It didn't look like it, as we examine the flaws. But there was a man called Jonah, he had flaws in his life too. He was a prophet though you and I might not want to say so on the basis of how he acted. But God knows them that are His and He has His way just as He did with Jonah. He had His way with Luther in that age, and He will have His way until the consummation.

**Now this was an unfulfilled age. It was an age of reformation. But that is how God wanted it.**

### John 8:31-32

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.