

## **2000 years of state and religious authorities opposing God**

Right from the beginning the state has persecuted Christians.

After Calvary the disciples went into hiding

Read through Acts and you'll see the gospel is opposed

The early church scattered to avoid persecution

Stephen was the first Christian martyr

Many others in the early church were executed

This continued for many years

But then in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Emperor Constantine converted from Paganism to Christianity

He declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire

He gave church leaders in Rome enormous religious and political influence

In 445AD Leo Bishop of Rome declared himself heir to the apostle Peter

Declared himself Pope or the Father of all Christians

Meanwhile in 570 AD Mohammed was born

Arguably the most prolific false prophet

He founded the religion of Islam which has persecuted the Church ever since

Open Doors organisation assess the level of persecution in various countries.

In 8 of the top 10 worst countries it is Islamic persecution

Only North Korea and Eritrea do not predominantly have persecution from Muslims

Moving forward to 1054

The Patriarch of Constantinople (the primate of the Eastern Church)

Excommunicated Pope Leo 9<sup>th</sup> of Rome

There were two splinter churches

Western (Roman Catholic)

Eastern (Orthodox)

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*Mark 11:12-19*

Two churches developed separately

Western started adding lots of extra doctrine, now known as Roman Catholicism

Moving forwards a few more centuries

31<sup>st</sup> October 1517

Martin Luther tried to reform the Church and remove false doctrine

There was a fresh emphasis on Bible teaching

Roman Catholic church didn't agree with this

They rejected his view – and forced out protesters

Start of the term 'Protestant'

Catholic Church never encouraged the reading of the Bible

As they felt the church should be the ultimate authority

Faith of our Fathers

"The church is the divinely appointed custodian and interpreter of the Bible. God never intended the Bible to be the Christian's rule of faith independently of the living authority of the Church."

Trouble is nobody seemed to tell God that

The Bible was written in common Greek – God seemed to want his word to be read by the common man

Luther read Romans 1:17 – the just will live by faith

Faith in God was needed for salvation

Catholic church declared him a heretic

Then in 1526 William Tyndale, English biblical scholar and linguist, translated the New Testament into English, aided by the recent invention of the printing press

Catholics didn't like that – fancy letting people read the Bible for themselves.

In 1536 he was convicted of heresy

Executed by strangulation and body burnt at the stake.

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Part of his legacy was a book 'Obedience of a Christian Man' was in part Henry 8's rationalisation for breaking the Church of England from the Catholic Church in 1534.

So what has happened in the last 500 years?

Dissenters from Catholic Church executed heresy blasphemers

Islam had a bigger hold- totalitarian regime.

We had the witch trials, the French Revolution, the Spanish Inquisition (nobody was expecting that). Europe became increasingly secularised.

Many countries retained a nominal Catholic church.

Any alternative Christian group, seen with suspicion, regarded as a cult.

In Western world often the church was not directly persecuted

Marginalised by alternative philosophies

Don't have to be robustly logical positions

If said often enough, vociferously enough, readily accepted – they become default positions

"We live in a time where intelligent people are being silenced so that stupid people won't be offended." Kevin Sorbo.

Offer an alternative philosophy accused of superstition, bigotry, unscientific, abuser of women's rights, non-inclusive – anything ending phobic – wrong seems to have right to free speech,

As long as you don't have anything to say

For example the Bible says Gen 1:1 'In the beginning God'. You don't have to get far into the Bible before being opposed.

However in 1859 Charles Darwin wrote 'Theory of Evolution through National Selection and the Origin of Species.' A default position accepted by science.

It doesn't need defending – disagree and you are wrong.

Pope Francis said this: 'Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with church teaching.'

Richard Dawkins described himself "Intellectually fulfilled atheist" - sees it as a logical statement.

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In other words – evolution is right.

Bible contradicts evolution? Therefore the Bible and Christianity are wrong.

Just 9% of people in the UK believe that 'Humans and other living things were created by God and have always existed in their current form'.

The bible also says Gen 1:27 'male and female he created them.' Biologist agreed that thousands of years empirical truth and demonstrably true.

Truth is now controversial

Flies right in the face of what 2010 Equality Act describes as 'protected characteristics'

We have public organisations promoting and sponsoring pride events (it's the month of it).

In direction opposition to 1 Cor 6:18 which says 'flee from sexual immorality'.

Have a liberal, neutralised church that goes along with it.

Survey of clergy, 49.2% support same-sex weddings. 59% would bless gay weddings. Almost two thirds of the church believe you should not teach that sex belongs only in marriage.

Nothing much has changed in 2000 years. The packaging and circumstances are different.

The state and organised religion actively oppose God's people on the teaching and practice of faith.

Close by picking out some points from 2 Tim 3

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.*

*, 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

*They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.*