

An illustration of the completeness with which Protestantism was destroyed in Italy is provided by the fate of a book entitled, The Benefit of Christ's Death. At one time as many as 40,000 copies of this book were circulating in Italy. The inquisition condemned the book and ordered that all copies be destroyed. So completely was the work carried out that for a number of centuries it was thought that every copy had been destroyed, so that no one even knew precisely what the contents of this godly book had been. Then a lone surviving copy was discovered in the British Museum.

The Counter-Reformation put a complete stop to the preaching of the Gospel in southern Europe. Areas in which all through the centuries there had been groups of Christians saved by faith in Christ alone were brought into such a situation that for about 30 years it was absolutely impossible for any individual even to hear the preaching of the pure Gospel. These areas sank back economically and politically, and came to occupy a secondary role in Europe instead of the primary position that had formerly been theirs. Meanwhile, in the countries of northern Europe, as a result of widespread preaching of the Gospel, outstanding Christian character and honesty became the rule rather than the exception, and freedom of thought was encouraged instead of being repressed. Inevitably these countries progressed far beyond those of southern Europe.

THE NEED OF REFORMATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The situation in the 20th century is in some respects very similar to that in the 16th century and in some respects quite different. In the 16th century the Gospel had in many areas been completely overshadowed by superstition and tradition. It was necessary that the clear teaching of the Bible again be brought into prominence.