

Brexit 1517 Brexit 2017

What can history teach us?

Steve Apted compares the remarkable similarities between the English break from Rome in 1517, and a similar break from the European Union in 2017. The issue of sovereignty, the pressure from big business, the drain of money to the Continent, the desire to spend the money released on social benefits, are examples of how deep-seated characteristics of English culture can cause a change of direction.

In the first two decades of the 21st Century we have marked a number of significant historic anniversaries and events. These include the arrival of a new millennium, the centenaries of the sinking of the Titanic, the first flight by the Wright brothers, the commencement of World War I and most recently Queen Elizabeth II becoming the longest reigning monarch in British history. Many of these events carry significance when examined through the lens of a Christian worldview, but sadly it would take far too long to examine them all in this article.

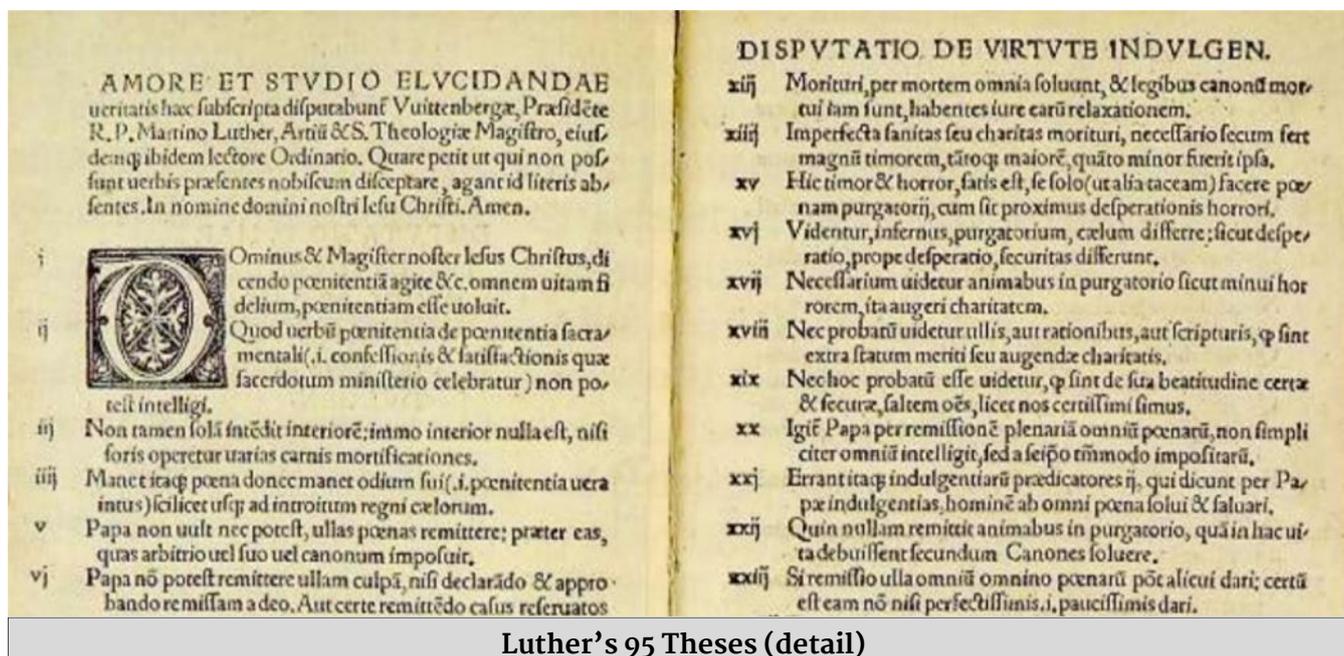
This year sees the 500th anniversary of the trigger event of the Protestant

Reformation. On 31st October 1517 Martin Luther unknowingly fired the starting-pistol that led to a series of events that changed both the Christian world and the geopolitical face of Europe forever. On that day Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg castle church and its commemoration will be marked around the world.

The 16th century Protestant Reformation is a multi-faceted phenomenon that has major Christian, political, social and technological strands. The issues, debates, challenges and changes that occurred at the time of the Reformation bear a striking

resemblance to issues that confront us today in the aftermath of the EU referendum.

In England the Reformation had a double significance. Not only was it the biggest shake-up of the theology and governance of the church since Augustine arrived on these shores from Rome with the message of the Gospel. It also triggered the biggest changes in power politics since the arrival of William the Conqueror in 1066. As we emerge into a new post-Brexit world, working through the longest, messiest and most expensive divorce of all time (trying to part company with our partners in the EU after 40 years) there are a number of



Luther's 95 Theses (detail)