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On page 20 of the August 2017 issue, Scripture reference "Luke 22:52" should have read "Luke 22:32." We apologize for any confusion.

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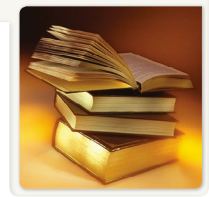
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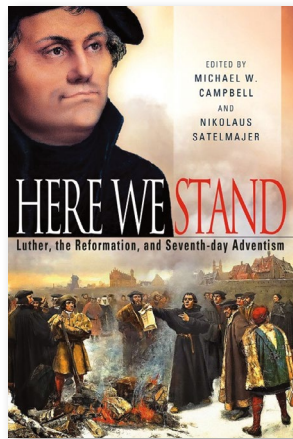
Here We Stand: Luther, the Reformation, and Seventh-day Adventism

Edited by Michael W. Campbell and Nikolaus Satelmajer, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017.

It would have been easy simply to portray the areas where Luther, the Reformers, and Seventh-day Adventists agree and disagree. However, the editors and authors of this ambitious book take a step beyond the simple and easy. They provide an opportunity for a reappraisal of Luther and the Reformation as well as a new look at Adventist teachings in the context of the Reformation.

The book begins with an introduction by George Knight, “Why Luther Matters.” Knight affirms Luther’s relevance to Adventism as well as to the broader Protestant world. He argues that three of Luther’s ideas are still applicable in the current religious climate: a commitment to the authority of Scripture in the face of mere human authority, a biblical understanding of justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers. The volume that follows highlights these three groundbreaking ideas.

The first essay, by Lutheran scholar Timothy J. Wengert, counters the myths that focus the Reformation on Luther’s guilt or on his anger. Wengert argues that Luther began the Reformation with a primary concern about bad teaching and bad preaching. He attests that the occasion for the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses was the exaggerated preaching of indulgences, and the foundation of indulgences was the theological idea that taught that the pope had a right to reduce penalties in purgatory. Luther posted his theses quietly to begin a theological discussion,



but they were, in fact, a frontal assault on the medieval penitential system. Wengert maintains that the resulting conflict was theological, not personal. At the heart of the Reformation was Luther’s theological focus on grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone. Luther asserted that if this theology was appropriately

preached, rather than indulgences, then the gospel would truly awaken faith and justify the sinner.

Subsequent essays compare Lutheran and Adventist understandings of *sola Scriptura*, the priesthood of believers, and justification by faith. These essays cover the relevant material and show the relationship between Lutheran and Adventist teachings. Along with some other essays in this volume, these topics could have been strengthened by a greater reliance on primary sources and fewer quotations from secondary sources.

One outstanding essay describes John C. Peckham’s new approach to understanding *sola Scriptura*. Peckham, an associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, bases his essay on his recently published book, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). Taking seriously the human element in biblical interpretation, Peckham seeks to avoid the twin dangers of individualism and communitarianism, developing

a method whereby individuals and communities continually submit all of their interpretations to Scripture.

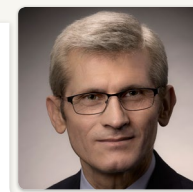
Other essays in the volume address Ellen White’s portrait of Martin Luther, Luther’s understanding of the Decalogue and the Sabbath, Lutheran and Adventist understandings of salvation, and Luther’s complex view of the state of the dead. In addition, important essays deal with Luther’s understanding of missiology, state power, and Islam. There are also significant treatments of the neglected relationship between Anabaptists and Adventism. Among the essays is a notable treatment of Luther’s understanding of righteousness by faith in the book of Romans. In it, Sigve Tonstad suggests that there are exegetical and historical reasons for a new interpretation of Paul’s understanding of righteousness by faith. Like those who advocate a new perspective on Paul, he suggests that the center of Paul’s thought has to do with the faithfulness of God rather than the faith of the believer.

Denis Fortin’s concluding essay details the surprising agreement between Lutherans and Catholics on justification and describes a pathway whereby the two communions could come to see each other as complementary opposites, expressing a oneness in diversity.

In short, this impressive volume is a thoughtful review of Seventh-day Adventist teachings in the light of Luther and the Reformation. Its most helpful contributions illuminate Adventist teachings in the context of Reformation and Anabaptist thought. ✓

—Reviewed by **Edward Allen, DMin, PhD**, professor and chair of the Division of Religion at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States.

Pavel Goia, DMin (ABD), is the editor of Ministry.



The heart of the Reformation

I was six and she was three. I noticed her at church and said to my sister, “I like this girl; I am going to marry her.” From that moment on I was in love.

In the seventh grade I sang in the church choir. I sat in the back row, right side. She sat in the front row, left side. During the sermon, instead of facing the pastor, I was looking at her. I would memorize her features so that when I got home I could still remember them. I watched how she walked, how she talked, and then I began talking with her. Some may call it stalking; I call it extreme love.

I dreamt about being with her and prayed about it. I wrote poetry for her. When we would meet, I was at a total loss for words. I would just stare at her and even forget my name. Eventually, I told her I intended to marry her. We dated for more than 3 years and, almost 32 years ago, Daniela and I got married. As time has passed, our love has grown deeper. We pray and study together and talk openly about everything. I cannot function well without her. There is no other joy than to be with her.

That brings to mind the verse from Psalm 27:4 “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple” (NIV).

It is easy to say or think that we love God. But, do you desire Him so much that you start dreaming of being with Him? Real relationships are based on quality time spent together. When you are with Him, are you thinking only of your needs, or is there a deep desire

and passion for His presence? When you pray, do you seek answers, or do you seek Him? Eternal life is to know Him (John 17:3), to have a continual, intimate relationship with Him, to be happy in His presence.

Love is about the heart. God promises that if we seek Him with all our heart, He will let Himself be found (Jer. 29:12–14). Throughout the Bible, God emphasizes His desire to communicate with His people. There is no transformation without prayer. “We may be assured of this, that the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.”¹

All major revivals have started with and been based on prayer. Human power and wisdom alone cannot do God’s work. Revival and reformation is not a new phenomenon. It was manifested through Martin Luther in the great Reformation five hundred years ago, and it continues today. Luther said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”² He began and sustained the Reformation through prayer, and today’s Christians should do the same.

Articles in this issue deal with how the principles of the Protestant Reformation, such as righteousness by faith and the priesthood of all believers, are continued and deepened in our lives in very practical ways, especially through our proclamation of the three angels’ messages. Yet we are reminded, “If we would accomplish the great work before us, it is essential that we present to God fervent and effectual prayer; for it availeth much.”³

As the new editor of this wonderful magazine, I need your prayers and

There is no power or wisdom on earth that can accomplish God’s work, except through prayer.

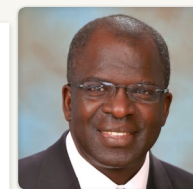
help. There is no power or wisdom on earth that can accomplish God’s work, except through prayer. “Those who do not learn every day in the school of Christ, who do not spend much time in earnest prayer, are not fit to handle the work of God in any of its branches.”⁴ This is no time for anemic Christianity. We need prayer, real prayer. “The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer, and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife.”⁵

I pray that *Ministry* will be a wonderful blessing to your heart and a significant tool in your hands; that it will continue the Reformation in our churches and will help us finish our mission. 🌱

- 1 Unknown Christian, *The Kneeling Christian* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2013), 6.
- 2 Jansen Trotman and Gloria Trotman, *My Weekly Walk With God* (Fort Oglethorpe, GA: TEACH Services Inc., 2017), 9.
- 3 Ellen G. White, “Friendship With the World Is Enmity With God,” *The Review and Herald*, August 23, 1892, par. 7.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 169.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 251.

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Ganoune Diop, PhD, serves as the director of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department and secretary general for the International Religious Liberty Association, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Reformation principles for an end-time ministry

What Seventh-day Adventist Church member, let alone pastor, does not believe in the principles of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation? However, Ellen White states, “Young ministers may speak the truth fluently, and yet have no real sense of the words they utter. They do not appreciate the value of the truth they present, and little realize what it has cost those who, with prayers and tears, through trial and opposition, have sought for it as for hid treasures.”¹

In this reflection, we ask the question, Does our understanding of pastoral ministry conform to the foundational principles of the Reformation?

1. *Sola Scriptura*

For Luther, the *sola Scriptura* principle was the conviction that all church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the divinely inspired Word of God, and all believers are equal before it. The depth of Scripture is ever unfolding until perfection comes and faith becomes sight (Prov. 4:18). Ellen White states: “There are many at the present day thus clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers. When the Lord sends them additional light, they refuse to accept it, because, not having been granted to their fathers, it was not received by them. . . . We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for

us, and we are accountable also for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the word of God.”²

The principle of *sola Scriptura* allows a framework whereby God’s thoughts and purposes can be received unmixed with human theories and worldviews. Instead, a biblical worldview emerges from delving into the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15).

To what extent do you preach the Word of God, and not human speculations and cultural perspectives woven into interpretations of Scripture?

2. *Sola gratia*

The *sola gratia* principle (grace alone for salvation, not grace with merits) reminds us of the depth of God’s love manifested in unmerited favor He grants to those created in His image.

Here, Luther was not advocating antinomianism. He stated, “The law is divine and holy. Let the law have its glory, but yet no law, be it never so divine and holy, ought to teach me that I am justified, and shall live through it.”³ But, like Paul, Luther preached grace so convincingly that his hearers asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1, KJV). Luther’s position finds its echo in the words of Martin Lloyd-Jones: “The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it. There is no better test as to whether

a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do. . . . This is a very good test of gospel preaching. If my preaching and presentation of the gospel of salvation does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel.”⁴

Those who receive God’s grace are called to be gracious people. An attitude of gratitude should pervade the life of the pastor and all Christians, as consistent with the principle of grace (Col. 4:6).

To what extent does your preaching on grace expose you to misunderstanding? How is grace showing in your life?

3. *Sola fide*

For Luther, justification by faith alone (not faith with works) was central to his doctrine, as it is to ours (Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). Ellen White states, “Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.”⁵ She further states, “By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it

means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness . . . which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.”⁶

The righteousness of Jesus Christ, the qualification to enter heaven (cf. Matt. 5:20), is the model for the pastor. “The ministers must be converted before they can strengthen their brethren. They should not preach themselves, but Christ and His righteousness. A reformation is needed among the people, but it should first begin its purifying work with the ministers.”⁷

To what extent do you, as a preacher and teacher of the Word, partner with God to emphasize the vital importance of righteousness by faith?

4. Solus Christus

Asserting *solus Christus* means that a Reformation Christian recognizes Christ as the only One who can offer eternal life and effect change. Paul acknowledged, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Rom. 7:18, 19, NKJV). Ellen White affirms, “It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart. . . . There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone.”⁸

To what extent are you trusting self while preaching Christ?

5. Soli Deo gloria

The principle *soli Deo gloria* (only God is worthy to be worshiped and prayed to, not spirits, angels, Mary, saints, priests, or pastors) stands in opposition to the veneration of creatures instead of the Creator.

Since salvation is solely the gift of God, Luther believed no human being

was worthy of such glory or praise. Instead of seeking popularity, power, or prestige, pastors are called to validate their ministry by embracing the humility of Christ who, even though the only One entitled to be glorified, did not seek His own glory. This was part of His *kenosis*, His emptying of Himself for the sake of revealing God, the Father (Phil. 2:5–8).

Ellen White says, “Keep the eye fixed on Christ. Do not fix your attention on some favorite minister, copying his example and imitating his gestures; in short, becoming his shadow. Let no man put his mold upon you.”⁹ The pastor’s life, and that of every Christian, can take no legitimate turn other than to empty self for the sake of God’s glory.

To what extent is your ministry, in all things, focused on the glory of God alone?

6. Presbyterii fidelium

The premise of the *presbyterii fidelium* principle, the priesthood of all believers, is that in the new covenant, God graciously grants access to Himself through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19, 20).

Ministry is no longer based on lineage or belonging to a tribe or guild. All services are now available to all children of God, indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit and endowed by His fruit and gifts (1 Cor. 12:7). “To every man—and that means every woman, also—He has given His work, and this work each one is to perform according to his several ability.”¹⁰ In the final analysis, pastoral ministry is about equipping all Christians for their growth in Christ through the Holy Spirit for the sake of the mission of uplifting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit before the world so that all people may be attracted to God.

To what extent are you training your members, or paying lip service to, this doctrine?

7. Ecclesia semper reformanda

The *ecclesia semper reformanda* principle states that the church is in a continuous process of reformation until God makes all things perfect again.¹¹

Christ alone will be able to complete the Reformation, given His prerogative to renew all things at His Second Coming. In this perspective, reformation, restoration, and renewal are inseparable. The two original institutions, Sabbath (God’s day, not man’s) and family (God’s way, not man’s) are to be restored according to God’s original intent (Isa. 58:11–14; Mal. 4:4–6).

Regarding the Sabbath, Ellen White writes, “In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. . . . God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God.”¹²

Regarding the family, she wrote, “Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation.” “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal.”¹³ Restoration in the family provides a model for the church (Eph. 5:31, 32). Christians in general, and pastors in particular, are called to continue the work of restoration, an inseparable aspect of the Reformation.

To what extent are you participating in or hindering the continual process of restoration?

8. The doctrine of the sacraments

Catholics maintain seven sacraments that they believe confer grace upon God’s people.

Luther maintained two sacraments, baptism and Communion and believed they did not confer grace but were signs pointing to Christ and His grace (Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25). For Catholics, the prerequisites for Communion are baptism and confirmation. Protestants, on the other hand, practice open Communion and come to the Lord’s table as sinners, not saints. “There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not

be forbidden.¹⁴ Protestants come to baptism as sinners, not as saints.

Whether the table of the Lord or the water of baptism, we do not clean up ourselves and then come to Christ; we come as “just as I am without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me.”¹⁵

To what extent does your ministry extend the grace that baptism and Communion point to?

9. The principle of equality

The principle of equality is based on the fact that God makes no difference among God’s children.

Heinrich Gelzer states that Luther believed in “the unconditional equality of all, through the abolition of all distinctions; all the divisions among men . . . were to be lost in the divine unity of his original nature.”¹⁶ The principle of human rights, recognized by the international community in declarations and treaties, is grounded in the premise of equality. This equality is beautifully captured in the words of the apostle Paul: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26–28, NKJV).

Nothing less will be acceptable for today’s church, which is far more accepting of differences. Young people are passionate about diversity, tolerance, and justice.¹⁷ Their religion is defined not merely by doctrine and policy but by fairness, nondiscrimination, and mercy.¹⁸

*To what extent does your ministry promote the principle of equality?*¹⁹

10. Freedom of conscience

The principle of freedom of conscience is the cornerstone of the Reformation. The Reformation could not be completed without a comprehensive and consistent adoption of freedom of conscience.

The famous declaration of Martin Luther on the pivotal role of conscience is in order: “‘Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason . . . my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.’”

“According to tradition, Luther is then said to have spoken these words: ‘Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.’”²⁰

Lack of conformity to this principle has tarnished the tremendous legacy of the Protestant Reformation. By siding with princes in the massacre of peasants, by allowing the murder of Anabaptists and the burning at the stake of Michael Servetus, the early Reformers violated the principle of freedom of conscience. This principle is an antidote against the violation of the right to believe differently or not to believe at all (1 Cor. 7:12, 13).

To what extent does my evangelism embrace tolerance and reject manipulation?

11. The principle of legitimate authority in belief and practice

The Reformation set limits to every authority and tradition.²¹

The adoption of Plato and Aristotle’s philosophies brought an understanding of Christianity based on tradition rather than truth and emotion rather than devotion.²² Luther declared, “You should not believe your conscience and your feelings more than the Word which the Lord who receives sinners preaches to you.”²³ A critical aspect of ministry is the ability to place principle above passion, and faith above feelings (Prov. 14:12; Matt. 15:9).

“Counterfeit holiness, spurious sanctification, is still doing its work of deception. Under various forms it exhibits the same spirit as in the days of Luther, diverting minds from the Scriptures and leading men to follow their own feelings and impressions rather than to yield obedience to the law of God. This is one of Satan’s most

successful devices to cast reproach upon purity and truth.”²⁴

To what extent have you adopted God’s Word as the source of authority in your beliefs, relationships, and ministry?

12. The principle of human dignity

The infinite worth of human beings, through creation in God’s image, undergirds every other principle of the Reformation.


God’s love motivates the incarnation to save the human family God created for fellowship. This principle is the foundation of human dignity, which in turn is the justification for all human rights. Pastors recognize people as temples of the Holy Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:19): “Think it not lowering to your dignity to minister to suffering humanity. Look not with indifference and contempt upon those who have laid the temple of the soul in ruins. These are objects of divine compassion. . . . The love that is inspired by our love for Jesus will see in every soul, rich or poor, a value that cannot be measured by human estimate.”²⁵

To what extent do you uphold the principle of human dignity in your dealings with those you encounter?

Conclusion

These Reformation principles irreversibly changed the Christian faith. Now “God calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles which have a reviving, restoring influence, which will restore in us the moral image lost through disobedience.”²⁶ This is revival and reformation: a restoration of the Edenic model where the character of Christ is perfectly reproduced in His people, that He might come to take us home (Ps. 51:10–13; Mark 4:28, 29).

Earth’s final message will then parallel that of Martin Luther, E. J. Waggoner, and A. T. Jones. “The end is near! We have not a moment to lose! Light is to shine forth from God’s people in clear, distinct rays, bringing Jesus

before the churches and before the world. . . . One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other,—Christ our righteousness.”²⁷ 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Assn., 1995), 27.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 164.
- 3 Martin Luther, quoted on Grace Quotes, accessed Sept. 20, 2017, gracequotes.org/quote/the-law-is-divine-and-holy-let-the-law-have-its-glory-but-yet-no-law-be-it-never-so-divine-and-holy-ought-to-teach-me-that-i-am-justified-and-shall-live-through-it-i-grant-it-may-teach-me-that-i/.
- 4 D. Martin Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 6: The New Man* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1972), 8.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), 63.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), 312.
- 7 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 469.
- 8 White, *Steps to Christ*, 18.

- 9 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 630.
- 10 Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), 134.
- 11 Cf. Michael Stangeland, "Ecclesia Reformata—Semper Reformanda (The Church Reformed, Always Reforming)," *Lutherans for Life*, Feb. 24, 2015, lutheransforlife.org/article/ecclesia-reformata-semper-reformanda-the-church-reformed-always-reforming/.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), 678.
- 13 Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 99, 231.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), 656.
- 15 Charlotte Elliott, "Just As I Am."
- 16 Heinrich Gelzer, *The Life of Martin Luther, the German Reformer* (Cambridge, MA: N. Cooke, 1855), 72.
- 17 Cf. Adventists for Social Justice website at adventists4socialjustice.org/index.html.
- 18 Cf. Libna Stevens, "Do Millennials Care About Issues Affecting the World Today?," *Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Adventist News Network, Aug. 28, 2017, news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-08-28/do-millennials-care-about-issues-affecting-the-world-today/.

- 19 Cf. "ANN Video Full Episode—September 8, 2017," *Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Adventist News Network, Sept. 8, 2017, news.adventist.org/en/all-episodes/episode/ml/ann-english/ann-video-full-episode-september-8-2017/.
- 20 "Martin Luther," *Trinity Lutheran Church*, accessed Sept. 20, 2017, trinitylutheranboonsboro.org/martin-luther/.
- 21 Cf. Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," in *Luther's Works*, trans. J. J. Schindel, rev. Walther I. Brandt, vol. 45, *Christian in Society II* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 81, 109, 110, 113, 114, 118, 120, 121, 126–129.
- 22 Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority," 210.
- 23 "Quotes of Author: Martin Luther," *Grace Quotes*, quote 11, accessed Sept. 20, 2017, gracequotes.org/author-quote/martin-luther/.
- 24 White, *The Great Controversy*, 193.
- 25 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 279.
- 26 Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1967), 286.
- 27 Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955), 259.

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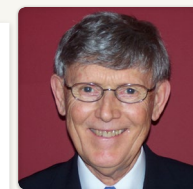
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Another look at the three angels' messages

The Protestant Reformation began on October 31, 1517. Martin Luther adhered his Ninety-Five Theses against indulgences to the Wittenberg church door. The papacy was furious. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) flung anathemas at Protestantism to destroy it. This only hardened Protestants against the papacy. Centuries passed.

Then the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) tried a new tactic. It welcomed other churches as separated brothers. Common doctrines were gradually agreed upon. Differences were swept under the rug. The new tactic worked—so well, in fact, that on October 31, 2017, Pope Francis and many ecumenical leaders desire to pronounce the Reformation over.¹

How could this happen? What would the martyrs think, many of whom were burned at the stake because they believed that Christ and Scripture are counterfeited in the Roman system? What would those think who rejected Rome's theology of salvation through the papal church, where human traditions were placed above divine revelation? In the sixteenth century, the Magisterial Reformers were unanimous in identifying the papacy as the anti-christ—*against* and *in place of* Christ. What happened? Has the Reformation lost its identity?

Change and relevance

We live in a postmodern age. Emergent church leaders believe that churches are irrelevant if they do not change to interface with postmodern culture. In other words, they believe changing worldviews dictate the way in which churches operate to be relevant *within* changing culture. Postmodernity represents a new worldview. It rejects absolutes, including absolutes in Scripture. Yet the Bible is like no other book. God does not change (Mal. 3:6), and “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).²

A consistent biblical worldview, found throughout Scripture, is that of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This is concrete, unchangeable, and relevant. It materially affects church identity. Scripture says, “Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). This verse immediately follows the three angels' messages (vv. 6–11). How relevant are these messages in our post-Vatican II, postmodern, ecumenical age? Are they important or merely optional?

Three angels' messages

One of the main identifying features of Luther's doctrine is righteousness by faith. This same feature has

characterized Seventh-day Adventist teachings through the years, though with varying degrees of conviction. Ellen White states, “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. . . . I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers. . . . Christ and His righteousness—let this be our platform, the very life of our faith.”³

She added, “Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel's message in verity.’ . . .

“This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. . . . It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”⁴

White concludes, “There must be no toning down of the truth, no muffling of

the message for this time.”⁵ Thus, the three messages constitute the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventism’s *raison d’être* stands in danger of becoming “muffled” if we forget our identity and tone down God’s revelation in Scripture concerning the falsehoods of the historic papacy that reformers like Luther laid down their lives to expose. Adventists’ love for Catholics and Protestants should reflect God’s love for the world (John 3:16). Rightly understood, the three angels’ messages are good news for all, Protestants and Catholics alike, if they are understood in a Christ-centered context. Consider the good news.

The first angel’s message

The first angel has “the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). This clearly indicates that the gospel message is consistent throughout human history. The same gospel is given “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” Therefore, like the biblical worldview, the biblical gospel is relevant to all cultures. Both are unchangeable!

“Fear God . . . , for the hour of His judgment has come” (v. 7a), proclaims the first message. Some fear this judgment, but it is also part of the everlasting gospel. The gospel means that Calvary is the decisive and irreversible judgment day (John 12:31). The pre-Advent judgment (along with the millennial and post-millennial judgments) are not added judgments to the Calvary judgment. Nothing needs to be added to Calvary. The three judgments after Calvary merely reveal who has accepted or rejected Christ’s crucifixion judgment. Those who accept Christ’s death for them have no fear of any subsequent judgment (John 5:24).

So, “Fear God” means to reverence Him. Reverence and “worship Him who made heaven and earth” (Rev. 14:7b). In overflowing gratitude, we worship our Creator and Redeemer—the one who gives us life and eternal life. But there is more: “worship Him who made

heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (v. 7b). These words are found in the Sabbath commandment: “In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:11; cf. Gen. 2:1–4).

We worship the Creator, whose “memorial of creation” is the seventh-day Sabbath.⁶ God’s law is immutable, unchangeable. Christ declared, “Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no

[Satan, Rev. 12:9] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2b).

Then “all the world marveled and followed the beast. So, they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast” (vv. 3b, 4a). A death decree condemns those who refuse to worship the beast (v. 15). In ancient Babylon, king Nebuchadnezzar issued a death decree for refusing to worship his image (Dan. 3:1–28). That was a local type of the global counterfeit worship and decree to come.

Rightly understood, the three angels’ messages are good news for all, Protestants and Catholics alike, if they are understood in a Christ-centered context.

means pass from the law” (Matt. 5:18). God’s law stands as “a transcript of His character.”⁷ God and His law remain relevant to every changing culture. Soon, faithfulness to “the Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty.”⁸

The second angel’s message

The second angel’s message declares: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city whose evil influences all nations” (Rev. 14:8).⁹ The climax of this evil is reached in the third message, which exposes false worship (v. 9). A wild beast (*therion*, v. 9) is worshiped in place of the Lamb of God, our Creator Redeemer, Christ (first message). This wild beast (*therion*), introduced in Revelation 13:1a, is blasphemous (v. 1b). “The dragon

“Babylon the Great” is “drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev. 17:5, 6). No wonder the “wrath of God” will be “poured out full strength” on this wild beast and its followers (Rev. 14:10, 11; 16). By contrast, there are “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12b); and those “who have the victory over the beast [*therion*], over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name” (Rev. 15:2b; cf. Rev. 13:14b; 14:9). These are the ones who sing the “song of Moses” (Exod. 15:1–21) and the “song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:3, 4)—two miraculous deliverances!

The pre-Advent judgment of the first message was predicted in the time of ancient Babylon (Dan. 7:1–28). Daniel 7:1–8 gives the background to

Revelation 13:1, 2. The court hands down a decision against the counterfeit salvation system, and “in favor of the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:22; cf. vv. 26, 27). The counterfeit system will be destroyed (v. 11, cf. third message, Rev. 14:9–11), and Christ’s kingdom will be everlasting (Dan. 7:14, 27; Rev. 19:11–21; 21; 22:1–7).

Third angel’s message

Prophecy speaks of end-time cultural demands—global Sunday enforcement and a death decree for noncompliance (Rev. 13:1–15; cf. Dan. 3:1–27; 6:6–24). The third angel’s message contains God’s response: His wrath poured out without mercy. Here is the global showdown between the two sides of the cosmic controversy, which includes the second advent of Christ. Where do we find the everlasting gospel in this showdown? We find it in Christ on the cross.

Isaiah spoke of a reality in covenant history: “your iniquities [sins] have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you” (Isa. 59:2, RSV). On the cross Christ “who knew no sin” became “sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). As such, Christ suffered the greatest separation from His Father’s love ever experienced. White comments: “It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. . . .

“ . . . The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. . . . It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life.”¹⁰

God’s wrath without mercy will be poured out on Babylon (Rev. 14:9–11). However, all sins of humanity that Christ bore caused God’s wrath without mercy to be poured out on Him as the Sin Bearer. This reveals God’s hatred of sin. Christ, our Sin Bearer, hates sin. No wonder Christ’s life was crushed through the staggering load of global sins. This means that on Calvary, Christ bore the sins of Babylon.

God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9b). For Christ “is the expiation [sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2, RSV). “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). Sadly, the overwhelming majority of sinners refuse to accept Christ’s sin-bearing on their behalf.

Christ paid the awful price for sin so that all could be saved—if they accept the gift. Those who accept are free to enter an everlasting relationship with their loving Redeemer. This “everlasting gospel” message needs to reach professed nonbelievers and sincere believers alike. Ellen White states, “Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation.”¹¹ To those in Babylon, the invitation pleads: “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). Who will bring this invitation to them?

If not us, then who?

Ellen White states, “Those who have held the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end will be wide-awake during the time that the third angel’s message is proclaimed with great power. During the loud cry, the church, aided by the providential interpositions of her exalted Lord, will diffuse the knowledge of salvation so abundantly that light will be communicated to every city and town.”¹² Seventh-day Adventists are heirs of the Reformation. We cannot drop the baton or cloud the issues. Luther delivered the message for his time. Now, “in a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”¹³

May God help us all, beginning with us as pastors, to reclaim our Reformation heritage and proclaim our apocalyptic message with compassion but without apology. 🌱

1 Harriet Sherwood, “After 500 Years of Schism, Will the Rift of the Reformation Finally Be Healed?” *The Observer*, October 29, 2016, theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/29/reformation-luther-pope-francis-catholics.
 2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture texts in this article are from the New King James Version.
 3 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), 190.
 4 White, *Evangelism*, 190, 191.
 5 White, *Evangelism*, 230.
 6 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1907), 437.
 7 White, *The Great Controversy*, 434.
 8 White, *The Great Controversy*, 605.
 9 Author’s translation.
 10 Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 224, 225.
 11 White, *The Great Controversy*, 390.
 12 Ellen G. White, “The Closing Work,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 13, 1904.
 13 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 19.

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Prayer and finishing the mission

Editor’s Note: Prayer is the way God’s people, including Martin Luther, have accomplished their mission in all generations. **“From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation. There, with holy calmness, the servants of the Lord set their feet upon the rock of His promises. During the struggle at Augsburg, Luther ‘did not pass a day without devoting three hours at least to prayer, and they were hours selected from those the most favorable to study.’ In the privacy of his chamber he was heard to pour out his soul before God in words ‘full of adoration, fear, and hope, as when one speaks to a friend.’ . . .**

“. . . The Protestant Reformers had built on Christ, and the gates of hell could not prevail against them.”¹ We share the following article with the conviction that just as the Reformation was founded on prayer, so God’s work will be finished through prayer.

Before Jesus returned to heaven, He gave His followers one mission: Go into all the world—to make disciples of all peoples (Matt. 28:19) and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14). Today, two thousand years later, the Christian church faces the reality of an uncompleted mission.

What can we do now? How is it possible to reach more than seven billion people with the gospel, as Jesus had commanded us to do?

J. Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary to China, summarized the challenge we face. “We are asked to do an impossible task . . .” *Impossible?* Yes, but he continued, “We work with Him who can do the impossible.”²

That’s it, isn’t it? The task is impossible. We will never accomplish it on our own, even with all our clever plans, wonderful productions, and sheer hard work. We need power that comes from the One who can accomplish the impossible. How do we get it?

At the foot of the mount of transfiguration, Jesus’ disciples faced a difficult situation, healing a demon-possessed boy. It proved to be impossible *for them*. Later, after Jesus had cast out the evil spirit, He reminded

them that “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29, ISV). Today, we need the power of God in an unprecedented way. This power becomes accessible only through prayer.

My prayer journey

Like other Christians, I grew up surrounded by prayer. I learned about prayer intellectually and experientially, beginning with the familiar definition, “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”³ Wonderful! No one can have too many friends. I also learned that “prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse.”⁴ Storehouses are where treasures are kept, and prayer provides access to heaven’s riches. Finally, I learned that “prayer is the breath of the soul.”⁵ Breath is natural and automatic. I’m never too tired or busy, preoccupied or frustrated, hurried, or hungry to breathe. I breathe day and night. This is life—no breath, no life. Together, these definitions became the foundation of my personal understanding of prayer.

To these basic definitions, I added the prayer experiences of others—particularly Bible stories. These amazing accounts increased my confidence in prayer. There was Moses, who prayed

the Red Sea open; Joshua, who prayed the walls of Jericho down; David, who prayed a giant to defeat; Elijah, who prayed fire down from heaven; Elisha, who prayed iron to float; Esther, who prayed a disastrous decree into a glorious victory; Daniel, who prayed the mouths of hungry lions shut; Jesus, who prayed water into wine, demoniacs to sanity, and, after four days in a grave, Lazarus to life. Lastly, there were Peter, James, John, Paul, and hundreds of others who for centuries have prayed sinners into saints. What a weight of evidence to the power of prayer!

Through the years, I added my own experiences with prayer, starting with the search for a lost toy when I was a child. Later, I prayed for courage, comfort, and counsel. During my years in the mission field, I saw demons cast out, people healed, students converted, and overwhelming difficulties overcome in answer to prayer. Through all these experiences, I developed the conviction that prayer is real. It works! “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16, NIV).

Yet, there were times when I questioned prayer. Some of these questions grew out of the pain and the disappointment of unanswered prayer. Others

came from facing seeming inconsistencies and apparent unfairness on the part of God. I faced intellectual and theological questions. What really happens when we pray? How do we reconcile prayer and free will with God's sovereignty? Questions arose that I couldn't answer, and prayer waned. I wrestled with the questions, but based on the weight of evidence, I ultimately came out believing. I was comforted by the story of the man who confessed, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24, NKJV).

Prayer and the mission of Jesus and His disciples

Jesus and His disciples modeled prayer for mission. In the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles, we discover that they prayed in secret and in public, alone and in groups. There was prayer for personal needs and intercessory prayer. Prayer permeated their lives and ministry. They prayed without ceasing.

In their personal prayers, these early missionaries prayed for wisdom, deliverance from enemies, and power to stand in all kinds of dangers and troubles. In their intercessory prayers, the list is even longer. In the churches they had established, they prayed for their new converts by name, as well as for their persecutors. They prayed for those who would someday believe (that includes us), and they prayed for the message to go rapidly. They prayed for God to open doors of opportunity in impossible situations. Over and over they prayed for the Holy Spirit and for miracles. Prayer was the most important thing they did.

Prayer and our mission

How does prayer relate to the activities in which leaders engage? Instead of facing demoniacs, angry mobs, crippled beggars, and poisonous snakes, today's leaders face an endless chain of emails, nonstop committees, and the making of torturous decisions. We preach, administer, teach, lead—this describes our work. It's how we use our spiritual gifts, and we are good at it.

So what, then, is the role of prayer in *our* mission?

During my early days as a teacher, leader, and pastor, I was inexperienced and unsure of myself and my undeveloped skills. Every assignment was a crisis. Prayer was not a luxury or an option. It was a basic survival skill. But then I saw something that truly helped me.

The movie *The Spirit of Saint Louis* tells the story of Charles Lindberg and the first trans-Atlantic flight in 1927. Charles is trying to teach a priest friend to fly. His friend is not good at it, yet the priest is not worried. He has a prayer for everything—for taking off, for navigating, for flying in fog, and, above all else, a prayer for landing. He asked Charles, "Don't you pray?"

Charles replied, "You pray because you don't know how to fly. I know how to fly."

I've thought many times about this answer. Much of my early experience in prayer was simply for crisis management and emergencies. Now that I've "learned to fly," do I need to pray less? When we can rely on our skills more, do we need God less?

The answer, we know, is obvious. Everyone needs to pray, even when we are doing things we are competent to do. Prayer was not intended just for emergency use. It is what empowers our work and makes it effective.

When faced with the challenges of ministry in a disbelieving world, what do we need most? First Corinthians 13 points to one thing—love. Is it possible that leaders lack love for those we are called to serve? Are we just doing a job—without compassion? If this is the case, we need renewal, but how does that happen? There is only one way—renewal by the Holy Spirit—for love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 3:22). No mission movement has been launched or survived without a renewal of compassion and spirituality.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Christians scattered throughout Europe—Wales, Scotland, Germany, and Scandinavia—sensed the need for a deeper spiritual experience. But there were no structures in place to offer solutions; only a few concerned Christians. Among these was a man in Wales who began praying 30 to 60

minutes daily for renewal. He prayed alone and later was joined by two or three friends. For more than a year, they prayed daily for the Holy Spirit, and then He came in power on their entire area. Hundreds were converted. Dying churches came to life. People, driven by the Spirit and filled with compassion for the lost, volunteered to go and serve God wherever they were needed. Spirituality and compassion for the lost were reborn.

What would happen if for one year, prayer for renewal became the major focus of our work (as leaders) and our worship (as churches)? No matter how well-organized and doctrinally correct we are as individuals or as a church, only the Holy Spirit can make our best efforts effective. Missionary Hudson Taylor asked, "How often do we attempt work for God to the limit of our incompetency rather than to the limit of God's omnipotence?"⁶ We can be eloquent and clever. We can be good leaders and organizers, but we cannot touch and transform people's hearts. Only the Spirit can do that. "We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power that does the work. While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer . . . will in the end prove to have been efficient for good."⁷

Prayer and the great controversy

Because of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, prayer has become a vital necessity. It is a life-and-death matter because we are dealing with the supernatural. Satan is like a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). He knows he has but a short time (Rev. 12:12). We are not dealing with flesh and blood but with principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). We are no match for Satan. We need supernatural power and protection. We are in a war. Around the world, we are faced with challenges that can be met *only* by earnest prayer. "While engaging in our daily work, we should lift the soul to heaven in prayer. These silent petitions rise like incense

before the throne of grace, and the enemy is baffled. The Christian whose heart is thus stayed upon God cannot be overcome.¹⁸ By constant connection with God through prayer, the enemy becomes baffled—that’s exciting!

Prayer and the power of God

Those we are reaching for Christ need to see God’s power. They need to see that God is trustworthy. They need to see living models of faith and prayer. When setting up the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor chose to establish the mission on prayer and faith. He did not do this because he felt it was superior or more spiritual; he did it because he wanted the Chinese converts to see a living example of the power of God. Even today, we see power encounters in which the power of God and the power of evil come face to face. Through prayer, the power of God is unleashed.

Narinee was a first-year student at our secondary boarding school in North Thailand when we had a series of experiences with devil possession. One night, as the struggle between the power of darkness and the power of light raged in the room next to hers, she found strength and freedom from fear by praying and reading Psalms with another frightened student. Months later, she decided to be baptized. She told us that it was when she saw the power of God at work through prayer that she knew, without a doubt, that she wanted to follow and serve a powerful God whom she could always trust. Unbelievers need to see God’s power at work.

Prayer and evangelism

Another role prayer can have in mission is as a means of evangelism, an entering wedge. At a mission conference in a crime-ridden city, some students went out to witness on Sabbath afternoon. They went door to door and stopped people on the streets, asking whether there was anything for which the people needed prayer. The response was amazing. People opened their hearts and shared needs with these young people. As an initial point

of contact, prayer draws people to a loving, prayer-hearing God who can heal shattered lives. It opens hearts. During my years in Thailand, I observed that many of our Buddhist students began praying long before they were ready to become Christians.

Praying for others

The majority of recorded prayers of Jesus and the early apostles were for other people. What would happen if a church took intercessory prayer seriously? In *Operation World*, Patrick Johnstone challenges the church to pray systematically for the people of the world. He recites a biblical story that deals directly with intercessory prayer. At the inauguration of Saul as king of Israel, the prophet Samuel concluded his farewell speech by making a promise: “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12:23, NKJV).

Is praying for people so important that failure to do so would be considered a sin? The thought is sobering. Perhaps the underlying question is, “Do we believe in intercessory prayer?” I have struggled with this because I didn’t always understand how prayer works. After much struggle, I finally reached the point where I simply accept it by faith. We are commanded to do it. Jesus did it, and it works.

What would happen if leaders and believers around the world began interceding daily for unreached people in cities and countries all over the world? What would happen if we prayed regularly for the more than 50 percent of the world’s population who have never been introduced to Jesus in a meaningful way—the millions in China and India and in the Muslim world and the more than 50 megacities with more than five million inhabitants?

Prayer challenge


There are many ways an intercessory prayer ministry could happen. Believers in every church, from tiny mountain hamlets and jungle villages to the great cities of the world, can do two things: (1) Choose a specific people group or city anywhere in the world and intercede

daily for a year. In the process, learn about the people group. Study it. Adopt it. (2) Organize prayer walks through the community where your church is located. Divide a city or town into prayer areas. Encourage members to commit to walking prayerfully through their area at least once a week, praying for the residents as they walk.

You may be thinking, *We don’t do things like that!* Stopping other activities to do “nothing but pray” may feel like a waste of time. But if we give more than intellectual assent to Scripture and the example of Jesus, we know that the most important thing we ever do is pray. “It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul.”¹⁹

The question I have to ask myself is simply, *Do I believe in prayer? Really believe? Do I believe that “it is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask?”*²⁰

When the China Inland Mission was facing superhuman challenges to begin work in an unentered province in China, J. Hudson Taylor wrote to a discouraged missionary, “If you would enter that province, you must *go forward on your knees*.”²¹

Wherever we live and work, that is the role of prayer for each of us as we seek to finish God’s mission. 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 210.
- 2 Hudson Taylor, quoted in Rosalind Goforth, *Goforth of China* (n.p.: The Revival Library, 2013), 80.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), 93.
- 4 White, *Steps to Christ*, 94.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 254.
- 6 Hudson Taylor, quoted in Goforth, *Goforth of China*, 102.
- 7 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), 362.
- 8 White, *Gospel Workers*, 254.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), 146.
- 10 White, *The Great Controversy*, 525.
- 11 Hudson Taylor, quoted in Goforth, *Goforth of China*, 80.

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The priesthood of believers: Our proclamation and practice

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation affords us a marvelous opportunity to revisit the teaching on priesthood of believers, championed by Martin Luther. The theological implications of this teaching are rich and essential for the church today. It is critical that we ask not only what must constitute our proclamation but also what should compose our practice.

First Peter 2:9 reads: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”¹ The text may be divided into two parts: first, it describes *who* the believers are; secondly, it describes *what* they do.

What we are called to be

Regarding who the believers are, Luther makes a rhetorical inquiry: “I ask, who are these who are called out of darkness into marvelous light? Is it only the shorn and anointed masks [ordained priests]? Is it not all Christians?”² He recognized that the term *laity* is derived from the Greek *ho Laos*, which means “the people of God.” The simple conclusion was that the church does not have a ministry; rather, it is a ministry.

Luther’s revelations were not only radical for their day; they are

revolutionary even today. The contemporary term *lay* carries a pejorative connotation, far removed from its ancient context. The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* states that the “Greek word *laos*, from which the word *laity* is derived, had nothing to do with an amateur or secondary status within the church. Rather it included the entire people of God. A false and artificial distinction separated the work of the church from the laity and placed it in the hands of the clergy, as if the work of ministry is the responsibility of a paid professional.”³

Luther held that not only were believers of equal standing with priests, believers did not even need priests to facilitate or mediate their access to God. Russell Burrill expounds: “This is the joy of the new life in Christ. Because of His redemptive ministry, the believer has direct access to God and all rights of the ministry. No longer is direct access and ministry to be the exclusive domain of the clergy. The privilege of living in the New Testament era is that every Christian can be his own priest. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary put an end to the distinction of the priest, and the people. Christ broke down every wall including the wall that separated clergy from laity. In Christ’s kingdom there is only one class—the priestly class into which

all believers are born when they accept Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. In the New Testament the church does not have priesthood—it is priesthood. The priesthood of all believers is the only authorized priesthood in the New Testament. All of God’s children have access to God, and all of God’s children have a right to ministry.”⁴

We may appropriately ask, if everyone is a preacher, what, then, is the pastor’s task? On the one hand, can a pastor sit in the pew on Sabbath morning and still fulfill his or her role as a pastor? On the other hand, how does a pastor share the proclamation task with his or her congregation, who are equally called to proclaim the gospel? Is the pastor’s task to proclaim week after week to a congregation, or is it also to empower them for a proclamation to which they are called? Ellen White affirmed that the praises of God’s people should be held in the high esteem that attends the pastor’s preached word. “In many of our churches in the cities the minister preaches Sabbath after Sabbath, and Sabbath after Sabbath the church members come to the house of God with no words to tell of blessings received because of blessings imparted. . . .

“There are times when it is fitting for our ministers to give on the

Sabbath, in our churches, short discourses, full of the life and love of Christ. But the church members are not to expect a sermon every Sabbath. . . .

“ . . . Let church members, during the week, act their part faithfully, and on the Sabbath relate their experience. . . . When God’s people see the great need of working as Christ worked for the conversion of sinners, the testimonies borne by them in the Sabbath service will be filled with power.”⁵

Our views of the proclamation may be gradually narrowing since the time of the Reformation. Luther was responding to the situation of his time. The reading and preaching of the Word

to preach the Word of God. . . . So as there is no other proclamation in the ministry of the word than that which is common to all, that of the wonderful deeds of God, so there is no other priesthood than that which is spiritual and universal, as Peter here defines it.”⁶

What does it mean to “proclaim,” according to 1 Peter 2:9? The Greek word used, *exangellō*, may be translated “proclaim” or “report.” It carries a nuance that emphasizes the unknown or secret nature of what is being proclaimed.⁷ It may also refer to gossip. A synonym, *katangellō*, coming from the same root, has a nuance that emphasizes the ceremonious

God (1 Peter 2:5). Paul urges Christians to offer not bulls, goats, and sheep but their bodies in loving ministry for the Master, acts of spiritual worship, what Paul calls their reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Thus, according to Peter and Paul, ministry is not only the right and privilege of every New Testament believer; it is a natural result of being a Christian. Consequently, Ellen White could state, “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.”¹⁰

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not call for the pastor to be displaced; rather, it calls for him or her to be duplicated.

were specialized: they were for the trained clergy only. By translating the Bible into German, Luther had the goal of ensuring that the common people could read the Bible for themselves: in other words, function in the priestly role. Luther was empowering his congregation not only to read Scripture for themselves but also to have this reservoir from which to “proclaim the praises” of the One who called them.

What we are called to do

In Luther’s time the clergy took a central place in ecclesiastical matters, with little or no room at all for lay involvement. This was corrected by Luther and his companions as they studied God’s plan and purpose for His church. To Luther, “Peter not only gives them the right, but the command, to declare the wonderful deeds of God, which certainly is nothing else than

style of proclamation. This word is used in 1 Corinthians 11:26 to refer to the practice of breaking of bread in Communion as a mode of proclamation.⁸ These two words are used in two separate contexts, but their meanings are interchangeable. Therefore, by proclaiming the Word, and by the act of breaking bread, the believers are carrying out the purpose for which they are called.

The Greek word *hopous* translated “that” is a conjunction of purpose, and it connects the two parts of 1 Peter 2:9.⁹ Juxtaposing Peter and Paul seems, then, to bring a healthy and balanced picture to our proclamation, at least as seen in these two words we have just examined. In other words, our preaching and practice of Christianity should be in harmony with each other. Peter states it is the privilege of every believer to offer a spiritual sacrifice to

Discipleship requires all of God’s people to be involved in ministry. “The gospel commission was clearly intended for all Christians, not just the disciples to whom it was first addressed, nor to a select group of professional ministers.”¹¹ Ephesians 4 says that God gave spiritual gifts to His church (v. 8). He gave pastor-teachers “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (v. 12, KJV). The pastor’s role, and that of a church leader, is to equip the members for the work of their ministry.

Ellen White pleaded, “I now call upon presidents of conferences and men in responsible positions to set in operation every possible means by which the members of the churches may learn how to work for the perishing. Let those who have had experience teach those who are inexperienced. Let

them pray together, and search the Word of God together. . . . Have we lost all sense of our position as the Lord’s chosen people, who are to represent Christ and to proclaim to the world the last message of mercy? ‘Ye are a chosen generation.’”¹²

Many church members would tell the pastor that they are praying for the success of the pastor’s ministry, not realizing that “success in pastoral leadership is tied to the ability to motivate volunteers.”¹³ Thus, White states, “if pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting, and also avoid more causes of friction.”¹⁴ Currently, some members seem content to let the pastor do the work of ministry, while they sit and watch, and some leaders seem comfortable with them doing so.

God has ordained that the pastoral leadership of the church has a distinct function and role to play in the church, not to rule but to train. White states, “Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men.”¹⁵ The biblical model for God’s church is laity and clergy working together.

It is an amazing reality to confront that, in spite of Christianity’s glorious launch (Pentecost), Christianity’s dramatic relaunch (Luther), and early Adventism’s reaffirmation (White), the notion still prevails that the work of ministry in the church is only for those who are clergy. Burrill states, “Hiring pastors to do the work of the ministry while the laity pay, attend and observe is not God’s plan for the Adventist church.”¹⁶ The consequence of such thinking, as Findley Edge notes, is far from academic: “God has called the laity to be his basic ministers. He has called some to be ‘player-coaches’ . . . to equip the laity for the ministry they are to fulfill. This equipping ministry is of unique importance. One is

appointed to this ministry by the Holy Spirit; therefore it must be undertaken with utmost seriousness. This is a radical departure from the traditional understanding of the roles of the laity and the clergy. The laity had the idea that they were already committed to a ‘full-time’ vocation in the secular world, [and] thus they did not have time—at least, much time—to do God’s work. Therefore they contributed money to ‘free’ the clergy to have the time needed to fulfill God’s ministry. This view is rank heresy. If we follow this pattern, we may continue to do God’s work until the Lord comes again and never fulfill God’s purpose as it ought to be done.”¹⁷

Conclusion

Luther, therefore, explains both the “who” and the “what” parts of 1 Peter 2:9, identifying both the messengers and the message they bear. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not call for the pastor to be displaced; rather, it calls for him or her to be duplicated. The pastor’s role is to train the members for service. The apostle Peter challenges the elders, including himself, to shepherd the flock in such a way that they would be “examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2, 3). Such pastoral examples would be radically different from those of Peter’s day, or Luther’s. “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you’ ” (Matt. 20:25, 26a). A facilitator, but a follower of Christ; a scholar, but a servant of Christ—the pastor thereby requests of his or her members, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

Scripture records, “Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘Is that you, O troubler of Israel?’ ” (1 Kings 18:17). While Luther’s contribution during the Reformation period may be considered deeply “troubling,” it is nonetheless deeply valued as part of the history

of the Christian church. Others have since added to his contribution to make 1 Peter 2:9 relevant for our time, and God is still in the business of revelation. “God’s workers today constitute the connecting link between the former workers, the church of history, and the church that is to be called out from the world and prepared to meet their Lord. . . . And God is continuing to impart precious light. . . . All the excellencies that have come through the belief of the truth from past ages to the present time, are to be treated with the utmost respect.”¹⁸

While some churches have gone to the extreme of minimizing the pastoral role in the wake of the important ideal set out in 1 Peter 2:9, so-called troublers of Israel are still needed today. ❧

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture texts in this article are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.
- 2 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Conrad Bergendoff and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 40, *Church and Ministry II* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 21, 22.
- 3 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 1997), 107.
- 4 Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church: Unleashing the Awesome Power of Lay Ministry* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 23.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 18, 19.
- 6 Luther, *Luther’s Works*.
- 7 Colin Brown, “Proclamation,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 45.
- 8 Brown, “Proclamation,” 47.
- 9 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 301.
- 10 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1925), 68.
- 11 *Minister’s Handbook*, 107.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate), 449.
- 13 *Minister’s Handbook*, 108.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 198.
- 15 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 110.
- 16 Burrill, *Revolution in the Church*, 12.
- 17 Findley B. Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1993).
- 18 Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*—no. 7, 11.

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Morris Venden, deceased, was associate speaker at Voice of Prophecy and a beloved pastor of many congregations, including Southwestern Adventist University church, Keene, Texas, United States.

Our editorial team has chosen to reprint this article from 1986, on the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. As the Reformation continues, we need ongoing dialogue on righteousness by faith, the “one subject [that] will swallow up every other.” We welcome the opportunity to hear from you on how this powerful truth functions in your daily spiritual experience and practical pastoral ministry.

95 theses on righteousness by faith

(apologies to Martin Luther)

Preface

In these final hours of earth’s history “one interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other—Christ our righteousness.”— *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 259.

To help fulfill this statement we present these theses on Christ and righteousness by faith. Our author, Morris Venden, pastor at Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, Texas, presents these not as the last word but as a discussion stimulator. In particular we would appreciate your editing any or all of these theses. When you respond, please change or add supporting scriptural references if needed. If a significant number of changes are offered and accepted we will reprint the list in the future. So please write, act, react, submitting your views whether in letter or article form. We want to hear from you.

- No. 1:** A Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one (John 15:5).
- No. 2:** Righteousness equals Jesus. We have no righteousness apart from Jesus (Rom. 1:16, 17).
- No. 3:** The only way to seek righteousness is to seek Jesus. (Rom. 4:4, 5).
- No. 4:** Christianity and salvation are based not on what you do but on whom you know (Rom. 3:28).
- No. 5:** Doing right by not doing wrong is not doing right. Being good by not being bad is not being good (Matt. 23:27, 28).
- No. 6:** Righteousness will make you moral, but morality will not make you righteous (Matt. 5:20).
- No. 7:** Our good works are not what cause us to be saved. Our bad works are not what cause us to be lost (Rom. 3:20).
- No. 8:** Everyone is born sinful (or self-centered) because everyone is born separated from God (Ps. 58:3).
- No. 9:** God does not hold us accountable for being born sinful (Eze. 18:20; John 1:9).
- No. 10:** We sin because we are sinful; we are not sinful because we sin (Rom. 7:14-20).
- No. 11:** Sin (living apart from God) results in sins (doing wrong things) (1 John 3:6).
- No. 12:** Whoever lives life apart from God is living in sin (John 16:8, 9).
- No. 13:** The best definition for faith is trust. Faith is depending upon Another (Matt. 15:21-28).
- No. 14:** Knowing God results in trusting God. If you don't know Him, you won't trust Him; if you don't trust Him, you don't know Him (2 Tim. 1:12).
- No. 15:** Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of the person. It is not something we work on or work up (Gal. 5:22).
- No. 16:** Positive thinking does not produce genuine faith, but faith will produce positive thinking (Rom. 10:17).
- No. 17:** Surrender is giving up on ourselves, not giving up our sins. Giving up our sins is the result of giving up on ourselves and seeking God (Rom. 10:3, 4).
- No. 18:** Working to give up our sins can keep us from giving up on ourselves (Rom. 9:31, 32).
- No. 19:** No one can crucify or bring himself to surrender. Someone else has to do that for us (Gal. 2:20).
- No. 20:** We are controlled by God or Satan. The only control we have is to choose who is going to control us (Rom. 6:16).
- No. 21:** The surrender of the will is the surrender of the power of choice, but we use our power of choice to surrender it. We give up our power of choice toward behavior; we keep our power of choice toward relationship (Phil. 2:13; Rom. 6:11).
- No. 22:** The only deliberate effort in living the Christian life is in seeking God—spontaneous effort toward other things will result (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).
- No. 23:** Growing Christians experience on-again, off-again surrender—sometimes they depend on God and sometimes they depend on themselves (Luke 9:54; Matt. 16:16, 17, 22, 23).

- No. 24:** Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit that produces a change of attitude toward God and creates a new capacity for knowing God (John 3:3-8).
- No. 25:** Conversion leads to a changed life (Eze. 36:26, 27).
- No. 26:** Conversion (as well as repentance) is a continuing experience, not once only (Luke 9:23).
- No. 27:** Repentance is sorrow for sin and turning away from sins. Repentance is a gift; therefore, sorrow for sin and turning away from sins is a gift (Acts 5:31).
- No. 28:** We do not change our lives in order to come to Christ; we come to Him just as we are, and He changes our lives (John 6:37).
- No. 29:** God gives us repentance before He gives forgiveness (Acts 3:19).
- No. 30:** Worldly sorrow is being sorry we broke a law and got caught. Godly sorrow is being sorry we broke a heart and hurt our best Friend (2 Cor. 7:10).
- No. 31:** The only known sin that can't be forgiven is the one for which we don't repent and ask forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- No. 32:** Forgiveness is no good for the sinner unless it is accepted by the sinner (Ps.86:5).
- No. 33:** God's forgiveness is not limited, but our acceptance of His forgiveness can be (Matt. 18:21, 22).
- No. 34:** Those who are forgiven much will love much; those who love much will obey much (Luke 7:41-43; John 14:15).
- No. 35:** Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap; it cost the life of God's dear Son (John 3:16).
- No. 36:** God forgives sinners, not sins, but the Bible calls this the forgiveness of sins. Jesus died because sins could not be forgiven (Isa. 53:5-6, 8).
- No. 37:** Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).
- No. 38:** The cross made it possible for God to be just and to forgive anyone (Rom. 3:23-26).
- No. 39:** The death of Christ was necessary in order for us to be forgiven (John 3:14, 15).
- No. 40:** We can add nothing to what Jesus did at the cross, but God can add plenty (Heb. 7:25; 9:11, 12).
- No. 41:** Staying with Jesus is just as important as coming to Him (John 15:4).
- No. 42:** Assurance of salvation continues through the personal daily relationship with Jesus (1 John 5:11, 12).
- No. 43:** Christians should know that they have the assurance of salvation today (John 6:47).
- No. 44:** The Bible teaches "once saved, always saved," as long as you keep saved (Matt. 24:12, 13).
- No. 45:** Peace does not come from victory; victory comes from peace (John 8:11).
- No. 46:** One reason we keep sinning is because we don't believe we are forgiven. Assurance leads to victory, uncertainty leads to defeat (1 John 3:2, 3).
- No. 47:** Righteousness by faith is an experience, not simply a theory (Phil. 3:9, 10).
- No. 48:** The devotional life of the Christian is not optional. The relationship with God is the entire basis of the ongoing Christian life (John 17:3).
- No. 49:** If we don't take time for the Bible and prayer, we will die spiritually (John 6:53).
- No. 50:** Just because you read the Bible and pray doesn't mean you'll have a relationship with God, but you won't if you don't (John 5:39, 40).
- No. 51:** The primary purpose of prayer is not to get answers but for communication—to know Jesus (Rev. 3:20).
- No. 52:** The primary purpose of Bible study is not to get information but for communication—to know Jesus (Rev. 3:20).
- No. 53:** Until we learn to seek Jesus for His sake, not ours, things often get worse when we pray (Job).
- No. 54:** Anyone who gets discouraged with his relationship because of his behavior is a legalist (Rom. 7:14-24).
- No. 55:** True obedience is a gift from God—the robe is free! (Matt. 22:11-14).
- No. 56:** Real obedience comes from the inside out not the outside in (Matt. 23:25, 26).
- No. 57:** Genuine obedience is natural and spontaneous; it comes only through the faith relationship with Christ (John 14:15).
- No. 58:** One who is depending on God for power doesn't have to try hard to obey; he would have to try hard not to obey (1 John 3:6).
- No. 59:** Obedience that is only external is false obedience (Matt. 5:20).
- No. 60:** When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience (1 John 2:3).
- No. 61:** Anyone who tries to live the Christian life apart from Christ is not a Christian; he is a legalist (whether conservative or liberal) (Gal. 3:1-3).
- No. 62:** There is no power for genuine obedience in the law. Mount Sinai is ineffective without Mount Calvary (Rom. 8:3).
- No. 63:** Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, but not the end of the law (Rom. 10:4).
- No. 64:** Good works done apart from Christ are bad works (Matt. 7:22, 23).
- No. 65:** The purpose of good works is not to save us but to bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16).
- No. 66:** When it comes to genuine faith and works, you can't have one without the other (James 2:17, 18, 26).
- No. 67:** Faith grows in quantity not in quality; growth is in the constancy of dependence upon God (Luke 17:5, 6).
- No. 68:** You don't grow by trying to grow (Matt. 6:27).
- No. 69:** Christians grow stronger by realizing their weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).
- No. 70:** We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, but without Him we can do nothing (Phil 4:13; John 15:5).
- No. 71:** Satan has no power to cause those who depend on God to sin, but those who depend on themselves are easily defeated (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).
- No. 72:** The abiding daily relationship with God leads to abiding surrender or moment-by-moment dependence on Him (John 15:2).

- No. 73:** Looking to self is always the point of separation from God and breaks the moment-by-moment dependence on Him (Matt. 14:28-30).
- No. 74:** God will never separate from us, but we can choose to separate from God (Rom. 8:35, 38, 39).
- No. 75:** The reason God wants us to witness is primarily for our good (Matt. 11:29).
- No. 76:** The desire to share comes naturally for the genuine Christian (although methods may vary) (2 Cor. 4:13).
- No. 77:** The happiest person in the world is the one whose life is most involved in serving others. The most miserable person is the one whose life is most involved in serving self (Mark 8:35).
- No. 78:** Christian service in the spiritual life corresponds to exercise in the physical life (Acts 3:6-9).
- No. 79:** The “gospel of the kingdom” is the good news of righteousness by faith (Matt. 6:33).
- No. 80:** The real issue in temptation is whether to live a life apart from Christ (John 16:8, 9).
- No. 81:** Temptations become sins when we consent to them in our minds (Matt. 5:21, 22, 28).
- No. 82:** Jesus was tempted to do right, but in His own power, and so are we (Matt. 4:2, 3).
- No. 83:** The Lord knows how to deliver the godly, not the ungodly, out of temptations (2 Peter 2:9).
- No. 84:** Temptations are overcome not at the time of the temptations, but always before (Heb. 4:16).
- No. 85:** Victory is not something we achieve; it is something we receive (1 Cor. 15:57).
- No. 86:** In the Christian warfare we are active toward the fight of faith and passive toward the fight of sins (Eph. 6:10-18).
- No. 87:** Real victory is getting the victory over trying to get the victory (2 Chron. 20:15, 17).
- No. 88:** Perfection of character is not our work; it is God’s work in us (Heb. 13:20, 21).
- No. 89:** Perfection can be a dangerous topic if it focuses our attention on ourselves and our own works (Gal. 3:3).
- No. 90:** Jesus was like Adam before the Fall in that He had a sinless nature—He was not born separated from God. Jesus was like Adam after the Fall in physical strength, mental power, and moral worth (Luke 1:35; Heb. 2:17, 18).
- No. 91:** Jesus had no advantage over us in overcoming temptations (Heb. 4:15).
- No. 92:** Jesus overcame temptations in the same way that we can overcome—by the power above Him rather than the power from within Him (John 14:10).
- No. 93:** Jesus found sin repulsive. So long as we are depending on God, we also find sin repulsive (Heb. 1:8, 9).
- No. 94:** We can never be as Jesus was, but we can do as Jesus did (John 14:12).
- No. 95:** The problem of sin is a broken relationship between man and God—the goal of salvation is to restore the relationship between God and man (Rev. 19:7-9).

Lest we forget

Waggoner, Jones, and the Whites stood in harmony with each other on the proper way to resolve theological issues. All held that the Bible is the only determiner of Christian belief. As a result, they were united against the attempts of the traditionalists to utilize any other form of authority to settle biblical issues.

Ellen White was particularly insistent on the need for Bible study in dealing with theological disputes. In April 1887, for example, she wrote to Butler and Smith that “we want Bible evidence for every point we advance. We do not want to tide over points as Elder Canright has done with assertions.”¹ In July 1888, she set forth her position with the greatest clarity when she published in the *Review* that “the Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine.”²

And on August 5, 1888, she told her readers to “search the Scriptures carefully to see what is truth,” adding that “the truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the Word of God speak for itself, let it be its own interpreter.” “The Word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. *The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine. . . . We are to receive no one’s opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith. It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies.*”³

Ellen White also drummed home that message during her last presentation at Minneapolis: “The Scriptures must be your study, then you will know that you have the truth. . . . You should not believe any doctrine simply because another says it is truth. You should not believe



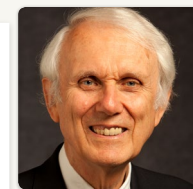
it because Elder Smith, or Elder Kilgore, or Elder Van Horn, or Elder Haskell says it is truth, but because God’s voice has declared it in His living Oracles.”⁴ She could have as easily added her own name to that list, given the position that she had taken during the meetings.

Thank you, Lord, for Your Word in the Bible. Today we want to recommit our lives to the daily study of it with more persistence and energy. 📖

—Reprint of George R. Knight, *Lest We Forget* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Pub. Assn., 2008).

1 Ellen G. White, Letter 13, 1887.
 2 Ellen G. White, “The Value of Bible Study,” *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1888; emphasis added.
 3 Ellen G. White, Letter 20, 1888; emphasis added.
 4 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 15, 1888.

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The ancient Waldenses: Did the Reformation predate Luther? ¹

In 2017, as many Protestants celebrate the five hundredth year of Martin Luther's nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, it is appropriate to ask, Did the Reformation really begin with Luther?

While significant attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church had taken place before Martin Luther, Luther with his 1517 work, the Ninety-Five Theses, is widely acknowledged to have started the Reformation. But there were others, before Luther, who preached similar reforms but did not succeed in changing the Roman Church of their time. To the names of Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, and John Wycliffe we may also add a nearly forgotten group of reformers—the ancient Waldenses.

Peter Waldo

The Waldenses lived throughout Europe, especially in the Alpine regions of Spain, France, and Italy. Many historians date their origin to the twelfth century and to a rich merchant, Peter Waldo of Lyon, who, after his conversion, shared his wealth with the poor. He and his followers were called the “Poor of Lyon.” They wore simple clothing and shared the teachings of the Bible in the common language of the people, a practice outlawed by the Roman Catholic Church. While this is a popular scholarly view, others believe Waldo's followers joined with the “Vaudois” (Waldenses), people who had similar convictions and

had already inhabited the Alpine valleys from earlier times.

These Waldenses opposed many teachings and worship practices of the Catholic Church that were not biblical. They rejected the doctrine of purgatory, the Mass, the use of holy water, ashes, candles, kissing of relics, and the celebration of papal holy days, or festivals. They shared the Scriptures, or portions of them, in the common language of the people and were known for insisting on the Bible as their only rule of doctrine and life, calling on fellow Christians to reform and embrace the teachings and simplicity of the New Testament.

As a result of the Waldenses' call for reformation, from the twelfth century onward, Catholic councils condemned them as heretics,² resulting in severe persecution. Consequently, they fled to more hospitable regions, further spreading their biblical teachings to countries as far-flung as England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, and Bohemia. This underlines why several Protestant historians consider the ancient Waldenses precursors of the Protestant Reformation.³ Unlike other reform-minded groups of the Middle Ages, the Waldenses were not annihilated or absorbed into other movements but continue until today.

The *insabbatati* or *sabbatati*

From the end of the twelfth century, opponents of the Waldenses began

calling them *insabbatati*, *sabbatati*, or similar names. Throughout the centuries two major streams of interpretation have been proposed for the meaning of these names.

One interpretation considers the Waldenses a new heretical movement whose members distinguished themselves by wearing a peculiar type of shoes. It identifies Peter Waldo of Lyon as the originator of this movement, which broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. It assumes that the Waldenses had adopted this unique style of dress to impress upon people that they were a religious order intent on restoring the simplicity of the New Testament gospel of Christ, with their simple style of footwear distinguishing them from other Catholic orders and giving them the appearance of being genuine apostles of Christ.

The other interpretation holds that these names describe the Waldensian faith as a movement that rejected all nonbiblical traditions, festivals, and holy days designated as sabbaths that the Roman Catholic Church had instituted. This view argues that the Waldenses were not a new movement and that their presence was already known before Waldo, and their teachings were based on the Bible and the Bible only.

The first time the word *insabbatati* was used for Waldenses was in an 1192 edict against heretics by King Alfonso II of Aragon (1152–1196). This identified them as “*Insabbatatos*” and “the Poor

of Lyon.”⁴ The edict did not explain why the Waldenses were called *Insabbatatos*.

The next source was an 1197 edict against heretics by the son of King Alfonso, called King Peter II of Aragon (1174–1213). This time the Waldenses were called “*Sabbatati*.”⁵ This edict also did not give any explanation of *sabbatati* or why the prefix *in* is absent. The fact that neither edict explains these names indicates that people must have known their meanings at that time.

The second, and more plausible, interpretation of *insabbatati* and *sabbatati* comes from historians who associate these words with the Waldenses’ persistent refusal to observe Catholic traditions, festivals, and holy days, or sabbaths.

During the time that Ebrardus introduced the shoe theory, another explanation was in use that has not caught the attention of historians. At the Council of Tarragon (1242), *insabbatati* was mentioned in connection with the “Waldensian sect” in Spain. The council defined the term as those “who refused to swear an oath, or to obey ecclesiastical or secular powers, or denied that a corporal punishment could be inflicted in any case.”⁶

Instead of referring to the wearing of unique shoes, *insabbatati* pointed to the Waldensian faith and rejection of nonbiblical Catholic practices and teachings. The fact that this term was first used in Spain a decade and a half before the shoe controversy’s short life and continued to be used to describe Waldenses after that period until the Reformation suggests that *insabbatati* must have another meaning than the wearers of unique shoes. The following arguments support this theory.

Sabbath keepers?

Because their earliest records were destroyed during times of persecution,⁷ the first Waldensian testimony about the designation *insabbatati* comes from the Waldensian pastor and historian Jean Perrin (1580–1648). In 1618 Perrin wrote, “The Waldenses rejected the Romish festivals, and observed no other day of rest than Sunday; whence they were

named ‘Insabbathas,’ regards not of the Sabbaths.”⁸

Perrin’s explanation showed that the prefix *in* of the word *insabbatati* expresses a negation of the root word *sabbat*, indicating that the Waldenses rejected Catholic holy, or rest, days, called sabbaths.⁹ Perrin’s explanation reflected the historic Waldensian self-image of being followers of the simple apostolic teachings.¹⁰

Prior to Perrin, the Huguenot historian Nicolas Vignier wrote in his *Bibliothèque Historiale* (1588) that Waldenses “were called Insabbathaires, because they despised the [Catholic] feasts.”¹¹ Dutch Reformed historian Balthasar Lydius (1577–1629), following Vignier and Perrin, argued that since Waldenses “observed no other day of rest or holiday, than Sunday, they were styled *Insabbathi* or *Insabbathas*, that is, *Sabbathless*, for not observing [Catholic] Sabbaths.”¹² Even some Catholic authorities mentioned Waldensian rejection of Catholic holy days. Several nineteenth-century historians also maintained this view.¹³

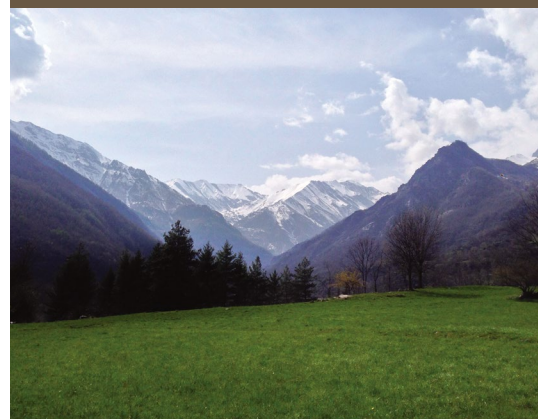
With few exceptions, Waldensians today deny that the ancient Waldenses kept the seventh-day Sabbath. However, historical evidence indicates that many did observe Sabbath during the Middle Ages. During the early part of the seventeenth century, the Swiss historian Melchior Goldastus (1576–1635) commented on Emperor Frederic II’s Constitution of 1220 against heretics. He reasoned that the label *insabbatati* was used to describe heretics during the thirteenth century “because they judaize on the Sabbath,” that is, they kept the Sabbath like the Jews. He mentioned that the “Valdenses” were often called “*Insabbatati*,”¹⁴ indicating that during that time there were Waldenses who kept the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as a day of rest.

A Sunday defense

One of the most significant primary source evidences for the presence of a substantial group of Waldensian Sabbath keepers during the first half of the thirteenth century was brought



The rugged Alpine mountains, a place of refuge for the Waldenses



The Alpine meadows in spring against the snow capped mountains. The mountain on the right is the Barion near the village of Bobbio Pellice, where Catholics pursued Waldenses during times of persecution, throwing them from the top of that mountain.



The entrance of a cave in the Valley of Angronia near Torre Pellice, where Waldenses worshiped during times of persecution. It could contain about 200 persons. When discovered they were smoked out and died of suffocation.

out in a polemic of five books written about 1241–1244 by the Inquisitor Father Moneta of Cremona, Northern Italy. Moneta defended himself against the criticism of the Cathars (Albigenses) and Waldenses that Catholics transgressed the Sabbath commandment. In a chapter entitled “De Sabbato, & de die Dominico,” he discussed the significance of the seventh-day Sabbath of Exodus 20:8 in contrast to the Lord’s day, by which he meant the first day.¹⁵

In defending himself against their criticism, Moneta asserted that the Sabbath was for the Jews a memorial of Creation and their liberation from Egypt. He argued that this Jewish Sabbath was “a sign and figure of the spiritual sabbath of the Christian people. . . . It must be understood, however, that as the Jews observed the sabbath, so also, we observe the Lord’s day.” He added, “This day we observe as an ordinance of the Church, and it is in reverence to Christ who was born on that day, who rose on that day, who sent the Holy Spirit on that day.”

Moneta defended the observance of the Lord’s day as an ordinance of the Church with the question, “If the Jews declared that we have to keep the sabbath as a memorial of the benefit of their liberation, to honor their liberator, why is the church not allowed to institute a festive day in honor of Christ, in remembrance of the spiritual freedom from the bondage of the devil, accomplished by Christ?”¹⁶

Moneta’s charges against these heretics clearly show that there was a significant group of Waldenses and Cathars in Northern Italy and Southern France during the thirteenth century that was worshiping on another day than Sunday, namely, the seventh-day Sabbath.

Sabbath keeping among the Waldenses was most widespread in Bohemia and Moravia. An inquisitor’s manuscript from the fifteenth century reported that Waldenses in Bohemia “do not celebrate the feasts of the blessed virgin Mary and the Apostles, except the Lord’s day. Not a few celebrate the Sabbath with the Jews.”¹⁷

The Waldenses today

This research about the names of the ancient Waldenses resulted from my yearly church history study tours to the Waldensian communities in the Alpine valleys of Northern Italy since 1994. These tours included the Waldensian Cultural Center, where Waldensian guides recited the history of this unique people. These presentations revealed the stark contrast between the ancient faith of the Waldenses and their descendants today. The ancient Waldenses had a great burden to share their faith in the teachings of the Bible and the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to reform the church, at the cost of their lives. Waldensians today are still proud of their heritage, but they are quick to tell you that they are now part of the wider ecumenical, evangelical community. Today their major contribution is their involvement in noble humanitarian work, but absent is the ancient burden to share the truths and prophecies of the Bible, which will bring reformation in the lives of fellow Christians.

When asked about the meaning of the ancient labels of *insabbatati* and *sabbatati* given by their Catholic persecutors, the Waldensian guides replied that these names described their unique ancient character as displayed by their special shoes. This understanding results from their accepting the opinions of Catholic persecutors—but without investigating the reasons why Catholics called the Waldenses by these names. The continued characterizing of Waldenses as wearing unique shoes has relegated their role in the history of the Christian church to that of an insignificant, late heretical offshoot of the Roman Catholic Church, limited to the Alpine regions of Italy and France.

Conclusion

The analysis of the second major interpretation of *insabbatati* and *sabbatati* as characteristic of the Waldensian faith has led to the following significant findings:

1. Primary sources confirm the Waldenses as a reformation movement that opposed nonbiblical Catholic

practices and holy days, or sabbaths, throughout the centuries.


2. The view in the first finding was the prevalent view in the earliest Waldensian literature and describes the ancient Waldensian custom of refusing to observe Catholic holy days.

3. From a linguistic viewpoint, it is the best explanation for the meaning of the prefix *in* in *insabbatati*, describing the Waldensian mission of reform, of calling people away from the nonbiblical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church to the simple biblical teachings of the New Testament Christians.

4. Primary sources show that, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were two groups of Waldenses—one group that observed Sunday as the Lord’s day, the other that kept the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible. Our research reveals that the title *insabbatati* could apply to (1) Waldenses who rejected Catholic festivals and holy days, or sabbaths, and observed only Sunday as the Lord’s day and (2) Waldenses who, in addition, rejected Sunday as a Catholic institution and kept the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible. The title *sabbatati*, as applied to heretics, was used to characterize Waldenses who stood out because of their observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.

5. This research confirms the correctness of Ellen G. White’s statement that “Through ages of darkness and apostasy there were Waldenses who denied the supremacy of Rome, who rejected image worship as idolatry, and who kept the true Sabbath.”¹⁸

6. As for the role of the Waldenses in the history of the Christian church, research shows that they saw themselves as an ancient movement that remained true to the New Testament. Their mission was to reform the Church and to call Christians back to faithfulness to the Bible, in spite of bloody persecutions and massacres that nearly exterminated them. They traveled extensively through Europe and were sowing the seeds that contributed to the coming Protestant Reformation. Their work influenced Wycliffe and his followers and Hus and Jerome and their followers, and

their influence came to full fruition in the time of the Anabaptists, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. They have given Protestants an inspiring example of faithfulness to the Word of God in times of great apostasy and ruthless persecution. Their role in the history of the Christian church is a worthy example for Christians to continue the arrested Reformation, which Luther started five hundred years ago, calling people back to the Bible so that they are ready for the soon return of Christ. 

- 1 This article is based on the author's research published as P. Gerard Damsteegt, "Decoding Ancient Waldensian Names: New Discoveries," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 54, no. 2 (Autumn 2016), 237–258.
- 2 Gabriel Audisio, *The Waldensian Dissent: Persecution and Survival c. 1170–c. 1570* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15–17.
- 3 Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 221; Peter Biller, *The Waldenses, 1170–1530: Between a Religious Order and a Church* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 191.
- 4 King Alfonso II of Aragon, "Edictum contra Haereticos," quoted in Giovanni Gonnet, *Enchiridion*

fontium Valdensium: Recueil critique de sources concernant les Vaudois au moyen age du IIIe concile de Lateran au synode de Chanforan (1179–1532) (Torre Pellice, Italy: Claudiana 1958), 92.

- 5 Ibid., 94.
- 6 C. Baraut, "Els inicis de la inquisició a Catalunya i les seves actuacions al bisbat d'Urgell (segles XII–XIII)," *Urgellia*, 13 (1996–1997), quoted in Damian J. Smith, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition in the Lands of the Crown of Aragon (c. 1167–1276)* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 197.
- 7 Because theirs was viewed as a heretical movement, all Waldensian documents were destroyed during the repeated persecutions, leaving no primary sources for the movement from the Middle Ages. See James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 12 (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1954), 665; Henry Charles Lea, *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages: Its Organization and Operation* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 250, 251.
- 8 Jean Paul Perrin, Robert Baird, and Samuel Miller, *History of the Ancient Christians Inhabiting the Valleys of the Alps* (Philadelphia, PA: Griffith and Simon, 1847), 25. His original work was published in 1618 as *Histoire des Vaudois* (Genève, 1618), 9.
- 9 In this instance the word *sabbath* meant a festival instituted by the Catholic Church, which the Waldenses rejected because the Bible did not mandate them. In the medieval literature, *sabbatum*, in the sense of rest, was sometimes used for Sunday and at other times for Catholic holy days such as Passover Sabbath (*Sabbatum Magnum*) and Palm Sunday (*Sabbatum Vacat*). See Du Cange, *Glossarium*, vol. 4, 718.
- 10 Studies such as Peter Biller, "The Oral and the Written: The Case of the Alpine Waldensians," in *Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 4 (1986), 19–28, and Audisio, *The Waldensian Dissent*, 143–160, have addressed the validity of Waldensian oral tradition, of which Perrin is one of the earliest representatives.
- 11 Nicolas Vignier, *Bibliothèque Historiale* [...], vol. 3 (Paris: L'Angle, 1588), 130.
- 12 D. Balthasar Lydius, *Waldensia, id est, conservatio verae ecclesiae*, vol. 1 (Rotherdam: n.p., 1622), 4, 5, quoted in Thielemann J. van Braagt, *The Bloody Theater, or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians* (1660), trans. Joseph F. Sohm (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1886; repr. 2002), 277.
- 13 See Damsteegt, "Ancient Waldensian Names," 250.
- 14 Goldastus, *Rationale Constitutionum Imperialium* (Frankfurt am Main: n.p., 1607), 78.
- 15 Moneta of Cremona, and Tommaso Agostino Ricchini, *Venerabilis patris Monetae Cremonensis ordinis praedicatorum s. p. dominico aequalis Adversus Catharos et Valdenses libri quinque: quos ex manuscriptis codd. Vaticano, Bononiensi, ac Neapolitano* (Rome: 1743; reprinted, Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1964), 475.
- 16 Moneta and Ricchini, *Venerabilis patris*, 475.
- 17 Johann Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. 2 (München: Beck, 1890), 662.
- 18 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1911), 65.

DATELINE

► After 500 years of schism, will the rift of the Reformation finally be healed?

An ecumenical service in October 2016, led by Pope Francis at Lund Cathedral in southern Sweden, heralded a year of events running up to the 500th anniversary (October 31, 2017) of the Reformation that resulted in the greatest schism in western Christianity and a string of religious wars.

Christian leaders and congregations spent the next 12 months consolidating moves towards greater cooperation and dialogue after centuries of division. In the first papal visit to Sweden in more than 25 years, Francis led prayers asking "forgiveness for divisions perpetuated by Christians from the two traditions."

In Germany, leaders of the Catholic and main Protestant churches issued

a joint text calling for a "healing of memories" of past divisions. The commemorations are the latest step in a slow rapprochement between the Catholic and Protestant traditions pursued by Francis, who has put ecumenicalism and healing past wounds at the heart of his papacy.

A recent document signed by dozens of Protestant evangelicals and entitled "Is the Reformation Over?" says that although cooperation between the two traditions should be encouraged

in areas of common concern, "the issues that gave birth to the Reformation 500 years ago are still very much alive in the 21st century for the whole church." [Harriet Sherwood | *The Guardian*, Oct. 29, 2016]



Photo credit: Osservatore Romano/AP

► Why should we care about the Reformation?

Washington, DC—Dozens of religious freedom scholars, advocates, and supporters met to commemorate and discuss the implications of the Protestant Reformation for religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The one-day event, themed “Commemoration of the 500-Year Anniversary of the 16th-Century Protestant Reformation: Conversations on the Reformation, Christian Identities, and Freedom of Conscience,” sought to delve into the multiple connections between the watershed sixteenth-century event and our ongoing quest for freedom of conscience and worship.

“The 16th-century world lived in the grip of fear, explaining every disease outbreak with all kinds of superstitions,” said **Ganoune Diop**, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Adventist Church. People would ask how they could ever be righteous before God, he said. “The Protestant Reformation was an answer to those questions.”

“The kingdom of God was central to his [Martin Luther’s] beliefs,” said Diop. “His theology expected the end of the world. So, in this doctrine too, he was a Reformer.”

Diop also pointed out that while Luther’s work opened ways for the freedoms we enjoy today, there was a long way to go. “At first, religious freedom was granted to States, not to individual persons,” he said, as he added that such a path often ends in tragedy, resulting



Photo: Maria Bryk

in violence and suffering. “Claim to truth must be paved with the individual freedom to believe or not.”

While Luther was the most obvious reference in the commemoration talks, presenters also emphasized other forerunners of the principles of religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

“George Fox believed that Christian life should inform and affect everyday life,” said **Gretchen Castle**, general secretary of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, in referring to the founder of the Quaker movement in seventeenth-century England. “He believed faith and actions are not separated, which is still reflected in the Quaker’s commitment to making the world a better place.”

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference, summarized the specific Adventist contribution to freedom of conscience and worship.

“Believing that we are created in the image of God is the basis of human dignity,” Wilson said. “All human beings are endowed with dignity and infinite worth, and human conscience is an essential part of it.”

Wilson concluded by saying even when their rights are violated, Seventh-day Adventists seek the welfare of others for God’s sake. “Seventh-day Adventists are determined to help develop a global culture that respects every person’s freedom of conscience,” he said.

This ongoing commitment should inform everything we do in the present, not only in church but especially outside of it, said Castle. “[We] desire a church that is always reformed and reforming,” she said. “This is our spiritual imperative—to act and be active, to take risks for social change, and to choose to love.” [Marcos Paseggi | *Adventist Review*]

► South American Biblical Theological Symposium

Entre Rios, Argentina—Almost 500 years and 7,000 miles (11,300 kilometers) apart from the time and place Martin Luther chose to nail his Ninety-Five Theses—or arguments on justification by faith—to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church, hundreds of South American Seventh-day Adventist theologians passed a consensus statement on the same topic.

On the closing day of the 12th South American Theological Symposium in Libertador San Martin, Argentina, regional theologians reaffirmed “the great principles of God’s gospel” as stated by Paul in his epistle to the Romans. They also expressed a renewed commitment to “the proclamation of the eternal gospel” within the framework provided by the

symposium theme, “The Just Shall Live by Faith.”

“The statement voted reflects our commitment to the Bible, which Luther modeled so well,” said **Adolfo Suárez**, rector of the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (SALT). “As Seventh-day Adventists, we have a total and unrestricted commitment to the Bible. In that sense, we are committed

to the Protestant Reformation, which reinstated the preeminence of God's Word against tradition."

Plenary speakers included church leaders such as **Artur Stele**, a general vice-president of the world church; **Elias Brasil de Souza**, director of the Biblical Research Institute; and **Alberto Timm**, an associate director of the White Estate at the General Conference.

"As a church, we have always valued the Reformation, because, in a sense, we are its sons and daughters," said Stele. "But the Reformation has not ended. It must be an ongoing process, as we keep striving to stay close and go back and again to Scripture."

Timm seconded. "We cannot look at the Reformation as a historical one-time-only event," he said. "The Adventist Church is an heir of that movement, which advocates for ongoing efforts to staying close to God's Word. It is a process that should never stop."

Theologians attending the Argentina symposium expressed their desire to pass a 750-word consensus statement that highlighted their commitment to the principles Luther derived from

his study of the book of Romans, as originally stated by Paul.

"In his epistle to the Romans, Paul presents the great principles of God's gospel," reads the beginning of the document. "It is there that we find the doctrine of righteousness by faith in Christ."

At the same time, the framework provided by the Protestant Reformation was reinforced by distinctively Adventist theological elements, including the overarching notion of "a great controversy between God and Satan" and "the mission of God's remnant church to the world."

The voted document also includes a reaffirmation of participants' beliefs in biblical baptism, a new life in Christ, and God's invitation to become part of His people. Finally, it reasserts participants' confidence in eternal salvation in Jesus Christ at His soon second coming. Quoting Romans 13:11, it reads, "We reaffirm that

our salvation is nearer than when we first believed," something participants think should move every Seventh-day Adventist towards a "total commitment to the proclamation of the eternal gospel."

And it closes by stating, "As we announce [the Gospel], God's grace and justice are revealed, because 'the just shall live by faith.'"

[Marcos Paseggi | *Adventist Review* with contributions by South American Division News and River Plate Adventist University News]

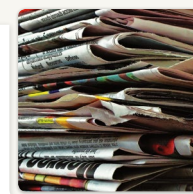


Photo: Mylon Medley/ANN

► The Protestant Reformation continues

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, United States—The Protestant Reformation is not a historical event frozen in a distant past, said a panel of leaders and scholars at the International Religious Liberty Association's 8th World Congress. On the contrary, the watershed sixteenth-century occurrence must be revamped and rethought if we are to make the most of its core principles, they said.

"It is important we include the Reformation in the context of religious, peaceful coexistence," said **Nicholas Miller**, Andrews University Professor of Church History and director of the International Religious Liberty Institute, who moderated the panel. "After all, reformers Luther and Calvin also persecuted Anabaptists."

The brief presentations on the historical aspects and issues of the Reformation and its meaning in contemporary society gathered experts from various backgrounds and training. When it comes to human rights, social justice, and religious freedom, Millennials—a generation between 16 and 36 years old—are a force to be reckoned with. Millennials possess certain traits that make them a unique group of people with the potential to create change, panel experts said.

"We are a generation trying to fight for the rights and beliefs of others," said **Blayre Marley**, a young lawyer from the state of Maryland in the United States. "It's not just about ourselves." Millennials care if people are being fed, care about voting rights, marriage equality, privacy

rights, people who come out of prison, refugee rights, and genocide.

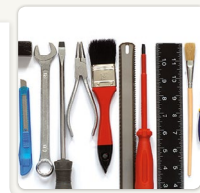
"How can we work to promote religious tolerance?" asked **Elizabeta Kitanović**, the executive secretary for Human Rights and Communication in the Council of European Churches. "We must build trust in communities to fight intolerance."

Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference president **Ted N. C. Wilson** also reminded attendees to not overlook that the Reformation was founded on the availability of Scripture to the people.

"If we want to underscore the wonderful principles of Reformation, we must be connected with God

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The pastor's guide to Martin Luther and the Reformation

When I was young, few things whetted my appetite for church history more than reading Ellen G. White's magnum opus, *The Great Controversy*. First published as *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, in 1858, it went through numerous editions during her lifetime.¹ As someone who had recently accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, I devoured this book and then later other volumes that have so much enriched my life and started me on a path to studying religious history—one that has continued to now.

A natural progression was to read the writings of the nineteenth-century chronicler of the Reformation, J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, specifically his five-volume *History of the Reformation*. Ellen White cites this series numerous times in *The Great Controversy* and in other places where she references the Reformation. Mrs. White also frequently referred to J. A. Wylie's *The History of Protestantism*, as well as the works of other historians.²

Ellen White viewed the Reformation as one of the defining events in church history.³ Christians, she believed, should seek out the best historical resources to better understand and appreciate the significance of Martin Luther's life as well as the broader wave of protest. Obviously, in more than a century since the 1911 edition of *The Great Controversy*, many new historical sources shed light on the life and teachings of Luther. This is especially true because 2017 marks 500 years since Luther disseminated his Ninety-Five Theses, or protests, against indulgences. He scarcely could have dreamed they would have such far-reaching consequences.

In light of such numerous resources, how can a pastor begin to appreciate the life and writings of Martin Luther? Where should one begin? And what

recent resources are there about the Reformation that the pastor can make use of in the context of the local church? This is an introductory guide to acquaint the pastor with some of the best research, including old classics as well as some of the latest sources.

Going deeper into Martin Luther's writings

Besides reading about Luther, it is helpful to read his actual writings. In addition to the initial 54-volume set *Luther's Works*, another 20 volumes have been added (Concordia Publishing House). There is also a series of four volumes in the Library of Christian Classic series that are devoted to Luther's writings. Most people do not realize that a significant amount of Luther's writings remain in Latin and German, which are often available only in major research libraries. A much more accessible approach is the edited one-volume collection by Timothy F. Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Key documents including the Ninety-Five Theses can readily be found there. His three main Reformation writings from 1520 are also available as *Luther: Three Treatises*.⁴

One cannot stress enough about just how much the Reformation was a "religious event" whose deepest concerns were theological.⁵ A great starting point to Luther's theology is a helpful essay by Timothy George in his book *Theology of the Reformers*.⁶ This book not only has an extensive essay on Luther's theology but serves as a point of comparison with chapters on John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Menno Simons, and William Tyndale. Another helpful introductory guide, recommended by Adventist scholar Denis Fortin, is James M. Kittleson's *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career*.⁷ For those who want to

get more in-depth with his theology, see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*.⁸ Another insightful survey is by Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*.⁹

Teaching the Reformation in the local church

Luther was not only a deep thinker in terms of theology but a practical pastor who cared about his parishioners. Luther, furthermore, had a heart for helping fellow ministers. Altogether the Reformation had far-reaching consequences for both the local church and clergy. While some measure Luther's contributions in terms of theology, church historian Trevor O'Reggio argues that perhaps Luther's most influential impact upon Western society concerned his views on marriage and the family.¹⁰ Church ministry has been impacted in such diverse ways as elevating the importance of marriage and family counseling as well as preaching and highlighting the significance of the priesthood of all believers. Even his many hymns, most of which continue to be sung in churches, were written to teach church members the Bible. For those who wish to teach the Reformation today, churches would do well to sing hymns by Luther, such as his best-known hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." Pastors should seek opportunities to introduce members to this remarkable man and the movement he inspired. In so doing, they can learn to appreciate such a significant "turning point" as a particularly rewarding aspect of pastoral ministry.

One way to maximize this impact would be to have a special Reformation Sabbath. It can be on the Sabbath closest to Reformation Day at the end of October, a chance for the congregation to commemorate their Protestant

heritage. Participants can act out the story of Luther—from his conversion to the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses and beyond. Another great option is to show a movie in conjunction with this event. The 1953 black and white movie *Martin Luther* has become a classic.¹¹ There have been several more recent versions, one of the most popular being the German *Luther: Er Veränderte die Welt Für Immer* with subtitles (118 minutes).

Another way to maximize the impact of the Reformation would be to have either a prayer meeting or sermon series. One congregation is planning the whole year to focus on various Reformation themes and is using special guest speakers. While that may be more than what most will wish to do, one could have a series over several weeks. One way to divide up the series is by highlighting major Reformation themes such as the “five solas,” identified as *sola Scriptura* (scripture alone), *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), *solus Christus* (through Christ alone), and *solus Deo gloria* (glory to God alone). Or the series could study the various stages of Luther’s life. Such a series could even include a first-person narrative or a skit. A valuable prayer meeting resource might be to watch the newly released series *This Changed Everything*.¹² The video is actually divided into three parts with study guides and related resources that can be a natural springboard for a pastor to either show the videos or develop and modify his or her own particular talks.

The church could plot out exactly where certain events occurred during the Protestant Reformation such as Wartburg Castle, Wittenberg, and even Rome. My personal favorite reference for this is Tim Dowley’s *Atlas of the European Reformations*.¹³

For those who have a more adventurous spirit, either individually or collectively as a church, persons may wish to visit Reformation historic sites. When possible, try to obtain an experienced tour guide, especially for larger groups. It helps to purchase one of a number of guide books. The two most helpful ones include *Discover Martin*

Luther: Sites and Memorials in Germany Travel Guide by Wolfgang Hoffmann, and Cornelia Dömer, *Traveling with Martin Luther: A Tour Guide to the Reformation in Germany*.¹⁴ A number of more specific guides exist for individual cities and sites. The Office of Tourism for Germany has set up a helpful website, Destination Germany, to help you plan your trip.¹⁵ An easily accessible air, bus, and train system means that even a small church group or family can easily do the tour on their own.

Biographical studies

While there are numerous biographies, hundreds actually, the most popular and enduring is Roland H. Bainton’s *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*.¹⁶ A recent survey of a dozen influential religious historians revealed that this biography remains influential.¹⁷ It is readable, even if dated. I recommend it as the best place to start, especially for someone who may not be familiar with his life.

After Bainton, a much more current treatment of his life from the latest scholarship (while still remaining approachable for the nonspecialist) is Scott H. Hendrix’s *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer*.¹⁸ This volume has become my first choice when teaching a class on Luther and the Reformation, and I am using it as a text for an upcoming Reformation tour. Hendrix does a superb job helping people grasp the world of Luther.

The most in-depth study of Luther’s life, for the person who wants depth of detail, would be the three-volume series by Martin Brecht (and translated by James L. Schaaf): *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521*¹⁹, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*²⁰, and *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532–1546*.²¹ Another classic, but quite dated, would be E. G. Schwiebert’s *Luther and His Times: The Reformation From a New Perspective*.²² Two additional biographies that are much more up-to-date, with a strong emphasis on the medieval mind-set out of which Luther emerged, include Heiko A. Oberman’s


Luther: Man Between God and the Devil,²³ and Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death*.²⁴ Together these books emphasize the multifaceted background that includes a tremendous intellectual and social upheaval that contributed to a series of “Reformations.”²⁵

Naturally, with all of the attention focused on the actual Ninety-Five Theses, there are some great resources to help better appreciate what happened at this particular juncture. Foremost is Timothy J. Wengert’s *Martin Luther’s 95 Theses with an Introduction, Commentary, and Study Guide*.²⁶ Not to be overlooked would be the concise introduction by Martin E. Marty, a leading historian of religious history, titled *October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World*,²⁷ which also includes Ninety-Five Theses. Marty, in essence, argues that the heart of Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses would be Luther’s understanding of forgiveness, which he believes should guide the modern ecumenical movement. Of special interest for those interested in Ellen G. White’s view of end-time events is his explanation of the 1999 Catholic-Lutheran Joint Declaration.²⁸

For those who want the *nitty gritty* details of Luther scholarship, there are several eminent reference works. An easy place to start is the new *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Tradition*.²⁹ Much more in-depth is *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*³⁰, which has been recently complemented by the even more impressive *Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*.³¹ Both reference works will no doubt be important benchmarks in the field for some time. Also useful is *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*³² and the newly released *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation*.³³ For authoritative and exhaustive essays these are helpful reference works.

Summary

In writing such a brief overview essay to resources about Luther and the Reformation, I ran the risk of leaving out a favorite resource that someone else may have found helpful. Hundreds

of biographies and books testify to the significance and legacy of the Protestant Reformation for today. I hope that the resources and ideas expressed here will inspire pastors to share the passionate conviction and faith of Luther to inspire a new generation to study God’s Word anew. The 500-year anniversary of Luther’s protest remains as one of the defining moments in Christian history. Every Protestant should take the time to reflect upon the meaning and relevance of the Reformation. Pastors would do well to capitalize upon this special opportunity, especially the many new resources that can make this process even more meaningful, or perhaps help others discover the story for the first time. 

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- 2 Ellen G. White, “Holiday Gifts,” *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 26, 1882, 788–790.
- 3 A helpful overview of Ellen White’s treatment of Luther is Denis Kaiser, “God Is Our Refuge and Strength: Martin Luther in the Perception of Ellen G. White,” paper presented to the Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation in Seventh-day Adventism Symposium, Friedensau Adventist University, May 10, 2016.
- 4 Martin Luther, *Three Treatises: From the American Edition of Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960).
- 5 Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B and H Academic, 2013), 16.

- 6 George, *Theology of the Reformers*.
- 7 Second edition, Fortress Press, 2016. Denis Fortin tweets that “if you’re looking for a good book on the Reformation to read this year” he recommends this volume. <https://twitter.com/DenisJHFortin> [accessed Sept. 18, 2017].
- 8 Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).
- 9 Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).
- 10 Trevor O’Reggio, “Martin Luther: Marriage and the Family as a Remedy for Sin,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 39–67.
- 11 Allan Sloane et al., *Martin Luther*, directed by Irving Pichel, 105 minutes, distributed by Gateway Films (Louis de Rochemont Associates, 1953).
- 12 *This Changed Everything: 500 Years of the Reformation*, narrated by David Suchet, 180 minutes; (Worcester, MA: Christian History Institute, 2017); available from thischangedeverything.com/.
- 13 Tim Dowley and Nick Rowland, *Atlas of the European Reformations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).
- 14 Wolfgang Hoffman, *Discover Martin Luther: Sites and Memorials in Germany Travel Guide* (Wernigerode, Germany: Schmidt-Buch-Verlag, 2016); Cornelia Dömer, *Traveling With Martin Luther: A Tour Guide to the Reformation in Germany* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2010).
- 15 “Luther,” Destination Germany, accessed Sept. 19, 2017, www.germany.travel/luther.
- 16 Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950). Numerous reprint editions available.
- 17 “Top Five Biography Recommendation From 12 Christian Historians,” The Gospel Coalition, Sept. 6, 2016, blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/evangelical-history/2016/09/06/70-biography-recommendations-from-christian-historians/.
- 18 Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).
- 19 Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985).

- 20 Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521–1532*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).
- 21 Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532–1546*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 1993.
- 22 Ernest G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation From a New Perspective* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 1950).
- 23 Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
- 24 Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (Harvard University Press, 1999).
- 25 For a cursory summary of the issues, see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 150–170.
- 26 Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther’s 95 Theses with an Introduction, Commentary, and Study Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).
- 27 Martin E. Marty, *October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2016).
- 28 See especially Martin Luther’s explanation on pages 27, 53, 70. At the same time, Martin Luther acknowledges that key differences between Lutherans and Roman Catholics remain, most notably their understanding of the Lord’s Supper, or the Eucharist.
- 29 Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).
- 30 Robert Kolb et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 31 Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hilicky, eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 32 Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 33 Mark A. Lamport, ed., *Encyclopedia of Martin Luther and the Reformation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

DATELINE

Continued from page 26

through His Word,” he said. “If we go back to the Bible and refer to what God has indicated, we’ll also fulfill the

wonderful injunction of being true to the Reformation.”

Wilson later delivered a special message to fellow Seventh-day Adventist Church members around the world, stating, “Without being overly dramatic, we need to recognize the times in which we live and ask God for not only protection but the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim God’s last-day three angels’ messages of warning and hope focusing on Christ and His righteousness especially as the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is observed with some people apologizing for the Reformation or saying it is over.

“My brothers and sisters, the Spirit of Prophecy says that the Protestant Reformation was never to end with Martin Luther but was to continue to the end of time. By God’s grace, may Seventh-day Adventists worldwide stand firmly for the principles of the Protestant Reformation—only the Bible, only by faith, only by grace, Christ as our only Mediator, and only God to be worshiped.” [Marcos Paseggi | Adventist Review with contributions by Libna Stevens/IAD and Adventist News Network] 



Photo: Mylon Medley/ANN



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John 20:21, NKJV



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