

the  
REFORMATION

Vol. 57, No. 4

herald

A portrait of Martin Luther, a central figure of the Protestant Reformation. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a black cap and a black robe with a high collar. He has dark, curly hair and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer with a serious expression. The background is a textured, light blue color.

*Sola Scriptura  
Sola Fide  
Sola Gratia  
Solus Christus  
Soli Deo Gloria*

Christ Alone • Glory to God Alone • The Principles of Protestantism for Today

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 57, Number 4

## IN THIS ISSUE

- **Editorial** 3  
*Principles of Reformation.*
- **The Setting of the Reformation** 4  
*A need addressed by a courageous monk.*
- **Sola Fide: By Faith Alone** 7  
*Developing a saving faith.*
- **Sola Scriptura: The Bible Alone** 9  
*"It is written" is to be our watchword.*
- **Solo Christo: Christ Alone** 14  
*Our only Saviour, our eternal Best Friend.*
- **Sola Gratia: By Grace Alone** 16  
*Grace brings favor to the undeserving and strength to the helpless.*
- **Soli Deo Gloria: Glory to God Alone** 20  
*Human pride to perish; the God of Heaven to be glorified.*
- **The Principles of Protestantism for Today** 23  
*Developing courage to stand for divine truth in our day.*
- **Freedom of Conscience and the Third Angel's Message** 28  
*Making wise use of our opportunity right now.*
- **Children's Corner** 32  
*The Conscience of a Child.*



Official Church Publication of the  
Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement  
"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."  
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

Editor D. P. Silva  
Assistant to the Editor B. Montrose  
Layout and Design D. Lee

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>  
E-mail: [info@sdarm.org](mailto:info@sdarm.org)

THE REFORMATION HERALD® (ISSN 0482-0843)  
features articles on Bible doctrine that will enrich the  
spiritual life of those who seek to know more about God.  
It is published bimonthly by the Seventh Day Adventist  
Reform Movement General Conference, P. O. Box 7240,  
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240, U.S.A.

Printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing  
Association. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes,  
subscriptions, payments, and donations should be mailed to  
the address below or call 1-540-366-9400. To older online,  
please visit [reformationherald.com/subscriptions](http://reformationherald.com/subscriptions)

Subscription rates:  
United States U.S. \$16.95  
Foreign (air mail) U.S. \$30.00  
Single issue U.S. \$ 4.50

Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Reformation  
Herald, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.

Vol. 57, No. 4; Copyright © 2016 July-August issue.

Illustrations: Wikipedia on the front cover; Adobe Stock on  
pp. 2-4, 7-9, 12-17, 20-32; Advent Digital Media on p. 29.



# PRINCIPLES OF *Reformation*

**I**n the gospel “is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

Martin Luther had already spent a long time trying to be righteous to be accepted by God and had failed miserably. His friend Johann von Staupitz was used by the Lord to explain to Luther the need of trusting in God’s grace and not in himself in order to obtain salvation. However, it is not easy to get rid of wrong principles and wrong doctrines.

Luther started reading the epistle of Paul to the Romans, and he interpreted the word “justice” of God as something that God demanded from people in order to accept Him, and Luther associated “justice” with the wrath of God against sinners.

When he read Romans 1:17 about “the righteousness of God” which is revealed in the gospel, he became terrified again. However, when he understood that instead of **demanding justice** from sinful people, God in reality was **offering His righteousness** as a gift in Christ to the repented sinners, he said:

“At last, as I meditated day and night, God showed mercy and I turned my attention to the connection of the words, namely—‘The righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith’—and there I began to understand that the righteousness of God is the righteousness in which a just man lives by the gift of God, in other words by faith, and that what Paul means is this: the righteousness of God, revealed in

the gospel, is *passive*, in other words that by which the merciful God justifies us through faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’ At this I felt myself straightway born afresh and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself.

“And now, in the same degree as I had formerly hated the word ‘righteousness of God,’ even so did I begin to love and extol it as the sweetest word of all. Thus was this place in St. Paul to me the very gate of paradise.”<sup>1</sup>

How is this possible? Paul explains: “For [God] hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Being clear about the righteousness which saves us, Luther was used by the Lord to start the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

During that reform movement, the following principles were developed and established: *sola gratia* (sinners are saved solely by grace); *sola fide* (man is justified before God solely by faith); *sola scriptura* (the Bible is the only basis for faith and practice, and not human traditions); *solus Christo* (Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man); the priesthood of the believer (we do not need any human intercessor to have access to God. By believing in Christ everyone can reach the throne of grace); *solus Deo gloria* (all the glory must be dedicated to God for our salvation), and *freedom of conscience* (no one has the right to control someone else’s conscience).

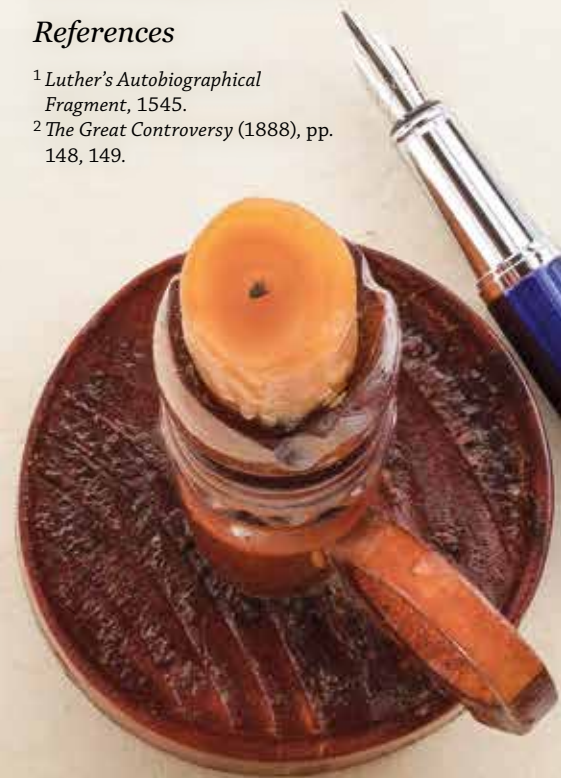
The Spirit of Prophecy declares that “the Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.”<sup>2</sup>

May the Lord give us grace through the baptism of the Holy Spirit to continue the work of Reformation started during the 16<sup>th</sup> century!

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Luther’s Autobiographical Fragment*, 1545.

<sup>2</sup> *The Great Controversy* (1888), pp. 148, 149.





# THE SETTING OF THE *Reformation*

By T. Stockler

## **Paying off a huge ecclesiastical bill**

It costs money to build a church. Building the most expensive church on the planet costs a lot more money. One may visit the Vatican today and observe the beautiful Basilica there named after the apostle Peter. Filled with columns and paintings and sculptures and intriguing design, this building stands out as one of the great feats of human engineering and achievement. St. Peter's Basilica was started in 1506 and has been for most of its existence the largest church of so-called Christendom. But funding such a large building in the sixteenth century was difficult.

The pope at that time pressed anyone who owed the church money to pay his or her debts as one of the ways to raise money. Naturally, he turned to the most important officer in the papacy outside of the pope and his legates, Albert, archbishop of the important eastern Germany city of Mainz. The church leader determined that the best way to raise money to pay his debts to the church was to send out one of his assistants to collect that money from the peasants in the surrounding countryside. Johann Tetzel went to the surrounding towns selling "Indulgences"—or "the right to do wrong."

## **A hoax at large**

God states unequivocally that all sin is paid with death. The only escape from that death is repentance toward God and acceptance of His grace. There is no

act offered in Scripture that can lessen or eradicate guilt after sin is committed. All sin deserves eternal death and will be punished that way unless we are forgiven by the blood of Jesus and redeemed by the grace of God.

But Satan tempts us to believe that God in fact can be influenced, bribed, corrupted from carrying out justice by a little effort, charm, and good works on our own part. In its milder form, this lie leads to attending church, praying, reading the Bible, and being kind and thoughtful to other people with the motivation to manipulate God into abandoning our punishment. In its wilder forms, this lie can lead to a piece of paper giving "permission" to commit a crime without being punished by God. In the instance of Mr. Tetzel, that is just how it worked. As the Dominican preacher traveled around, tricking many a hard-working farm worker or a businessman out of his savings for a piece of paper, one man purchased from Tetzel an indulgence to steal. Later the same day, the man waited for Tetzel to leave town for the next place, and robbed him of all of the money that Tetzel was carrying. Tetzel immediately took the man to court for robbery. The man showed the judge the paper that he had purchased from Tetzel offering an indulgence to steal. The judge dismissed the case and Tetzel lost his money.

Not everyone purchased an indulgence to steal, but thousands of men and women and children could see that it was unfair to take poor farmers' savings and give them a piece of paper in its place. They had no idea

that the money was going to Rome to build the most beautiful and expensive church building ever built for the papacy. The people of eastern Germany would have been even angrier had they known the whole story.

But they could tell that all those pieces of paper didn't make life safer or more comfortable. It made some faraway church leader richer, but all those paper indulgences were taking away the money from the business people and farm help that they would otherwise pay to the doctor, or for furniture, or for food.

The pandemic known as the "black death" plague had randomly killed millions of people for at least 150 years before Tetzel sold indulgences in eastern Germany. Probably every family that bought indulgences from Tetzel had buried one of their loved ones in recent generations because of this terrible disease. Hygiene and medicine would nearly stop the plague in later times, but paying money to the church for a paper never did.

War had killed many of Europe's people who survived the plague. Purchasing an indulgence did not stop European wars.

Indulgences made the church richer but did nothing for the people, except to make them poorer. Everyone agreed something was wrong and that someone should stop what was taking place. No one knew what to do.

No one thought about challenging the church. That seemed impossible. The church was more powerful than

any government we know about today. There were no checks and balances. There was no opposition party. The governments of the time did anything they wanted as long as the church approved, and anyone who objected disappeared or died. The church did anything it wanted and people cried but could not escape.

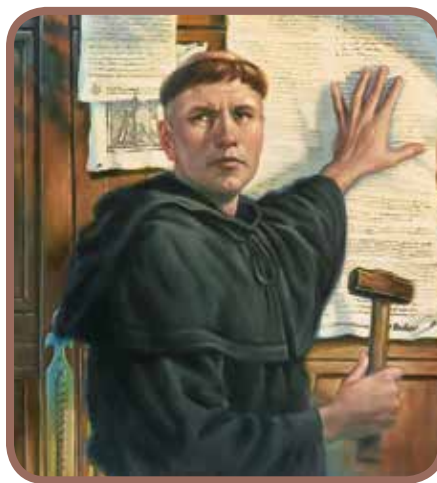
It is hard for us to comprehend how difficult life was, when every idea was terrible except the ones that came from the friends of the government and the church. People are not smarter today or more intelligent. They are free, free to carry out their own choices and learn from their mistakes and successes. Anyone who is free appears more intelligent because he or she can use his or her intelligence without being punished for doing so. People in eastern Germany felt that they could develop better tools and build grander machines and houses. But they did not know how to be free. They did not know how to say “no” to the tyranny of the church and the state.

Today there is much concern for the poor and the suffering. How little we really understand how poor those suffering Germans and other Europeans were centuries ago. No one could invent better technology without the experts in the government stopping his or her. No one could study science without risking death from the government. The local and national governments were married to the controlling church of the time. And those people that did not comply with whatever the government wanted were tortured and even killed.

There were no lawsuits against the government. For example, the archbishop Albert helped crown Charles V as Emperor of much of Europe. Charles V then ruled Spain, most of Italy, Germany, and Holland. His parents had financed the travels of Christopher Columbus as he discovered the Americas. The young emperor apparently intended to unite all of Europe and the New World under his rule. His kingdom was perhaps the first government in the world since the Flood to be so broad that the sun never set on it.

But the agreement made with Christopher Columbus to give him wealth from and rulership of the New World was broken by the parents of Charles V. So Christopher Columbus’s son sued the Spanish government. It took 28 years for that lawsuit and its appeals to finish. More lawsuits would continue for the next 150 years. None of the lawsuits restored the original agreement.

Civil rights were impossible. There were no rights except the right of the government to do anything it wanted. People’s lives depended on whether the prince or the king had had a good night’s sleep and happened to be in a good mood. An archbishop with indigestion



was as dangerous as the plagues of disease that swept through the land. No one and no thing was completely safe because there was no method to hold powerful people accountable for their use or abuse of power. Knowledge and technology could not advance because there were no protections for those that tried to advance them.

### A courageous monk steps forward

Europe did not know how to be free until a preacher from Wittenberg offered a solution. He offered to come back the fifty miles to the town where he went to school and debate anyone to prove that the indulgences were unreasonable and unbiblical. The monk dared to oppose Tetzal and offered to travel to where Tetzal had just been selling those indulgences. Martin Luther had 95 reasons why no one should buy

an indulgence. And he offered them to the public on the local bulletin board of the church door. He also sent a copy to the Archbishop of Mainz, Tetzal’s boss.

It just happened that the printing press was a new technology that was spreading across Europe at the time. Somehow this technology escaped the destruction of the church (although they did try). No one was used to having news travel from one place to another except by traveler’s gossip. People simply did not hear what happened in other places. Ignorance was part of the price of slavery to tyranny, of living without freedom. But now there were these new printing presses just waiting to print something. (There wasn’t much to print when no one was used to being able to print.) And suddenly they had something to work with. They received a copy of the Wittenberg preacher’s challenge to debate indulgences.

This was exciting! No one dared to challenge the church. No one! Suddenly someone had done what no one dared to do. And the people wanted to find out for themselves what was happening. Suddenly they started spending their money on the new reading material instead of the paper of the indulgence. These new tracts cost a lot less. Not everyone could read them. But people were trying. It was exciting to see someone stand up to the powerful church. In about three weeks, the 95 Thesis (*Luther’s Disputation on the Power of Indulgences*) had traveled across Europe and reached Scandinavia. That was unheard of at that time.

Suddenly, Luther, Melancthon, and others could speak in eastern Germany and the whole of Europe could hear what they were saying within two or three weeks. Printing also meant that the Bible was now available in many places where previously there had been only the opinion of experts.

### The conscience set at liberty

With the availability of the Bible and the new Protestant writings, thousands of Europeans realized that the church should not control them, nor should the



national government. They were free to think and do what they thought. The church and the government deserved respect and cooperation, but neither had any business micromanaging the everyday lives and decisions of the people. God and God alone should guide humans. Each person should read the Bible and learn to recognize God's guidance for himself and for herself. People needed to be decent, productive, moral people. But each person is responsible to God for every life choice, not to other humans.

Protestantism was founded in civil disobedience guided by a moral dedication enlightened by the search of the Scriptures. Civil disobedience is a risky idea. To reject authority is to dance with anarchy. Protestantism demonstrated a motivation higher than obsession with pleasure, peer pressure, or fear. It demonstrated a power stronger than that which any human could exercise over another human. But it manifested a self-discipline and character of respect that made that personal power safe. And it demanded the accountability of every human, including the powerful, to morality and to the God of morality. Men and women were to be guided by respect for God rather than regulated by the church or the state.

The papacy fought against these principles of life with everything that she could offer. She sent the best of her speakers to try to counter-argue the Protestants. She tried to bribe and manipulate national and local leaders into silencing and even killing the dissenters. But her success was not equal to her efforts. The strongest arguments that she could offer for her power and choices turned out to be her own will and thirst for control. Those arguments were weak and self-serving in the face of the Bible. Her attempt to use force and politics were no match for the humble prudence and quiet determination of those who depended on God. Along the way, it sometimes appeared as though there were some unseen chess match taking place for the lives of the Germans particularly and Europeans more generally. Along the way, there were a

series of attempts to destroy the new quest for freedom and corresponding deliverances from those attempts. Victory for Protestantism, for freedom, knowledge, and technology was not obvious. At times it seemed that corruption and wars would stop all those that disagreed with the pope.

At one point along the way, a number of rulers in Germany felt threatened by the papacy and chose to express their solidarity and demand for freedom to the highest governmental authority, the emperor. They offer what has come to be known as a Protest. That declaration would come to define the Protestants and to provide them with their name.

“The principles contained in this celebrated Protest [of Spire] . . . constitute the very essence of Protestantism. Now this Protest opposes two abuses of man in matters of faith: the first is the intrusion of the civil magistrate, and the second the arbitrary authority of the church. Instead of these abuses, Protestantism sets the power of conscience above the magistrate, and the authority of the word of God above the visible church. In the first place, it rejects the civil power in divine things, and says with the prophets and apostles, ‘We must obey God rather than man.’ In presence of the crown of Charles the Fifth, it uplifts the crown of Jesus Christ. But it goes farther: it lays down the principle that all human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God’ (J. H. Merle D’ Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, b. 13, ch. 6). The protesters had moreover affirmed their right to utter freely their convictions of truth. They would not only believe and obey, but teach what the word of God presents, and they denied the right of priest or magistrate to interfere. The Protest of Spire was a solemn witness against religious intolerance, and an assertion of the right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences.”<sup>1</sup>

Truth is not the intellectual property of experts. No human nor a group of humans owns reality. Persistence and hard work may open

knowledge to us, but God alone determines what is true and what is real. We humans ought to consider ourselves privileged to be able to learn truth and identify reality directly from God. Experts can share their experience and insight. They can inform us. But they have no right to determine our actions or control our thoughts. Autonomy with its sister, Responsibility, are the right and therefore the duty of every human in religious as well as civil matters.

To hold civil government and church administration accountable to the protection of the autonomous exercise of the conscience is not a recipe for chaos. It is the best protection from confusion. But it is never a license for rebellion or sedition. To think and act freely, based upon our Christian convictions, requires a voluntary respect for civil and religious authority so long as that authority does not force the conscience. And when the conscience is attacked, we ought to resist in a way that demands the respect of those who try to force us.

Europe was freed to a large extent from the danger of unaccountable power and tyranny. This allowed knowledge to increase and technology to develop. And it established the principles on which freedom can exist even in this world of sin and tyranny: personal respect for law and authority, divine morality as a higher authority than human legislation, morality never forced on the individual, but every individual held accountable for any transgression of morality that injures another human.

It is easy in our day to forget what destroyed human society so much that a Reformation became necessary: faith in human experts, the exercise of social and political power without accountability, the dependence on humanity and the rejection of the Divine. Though it is easy to forget, we do so at the terrible cost of repeating their mistake.

God help us to understand, appreciate, and live the great truths of the Reformation.

## Reference

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 203, 204.



# BY FAITH ALONE

*By H. Paredes*

## God's most marvelous gift to us

Many sincere Christians are trying to prove themselves worthy of eternal life by doing good works. This was the case of many religious people during the time when Jesus walked upon the earth. The Holy Scriptures clearly present before us the only condition by which salvation can be obtained. There is but one name under the sun by whom we can be saved, and that is the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by His amazing grace. This grace can be obtained through faith alone. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

If salvation is by the grace of God, a free gift to all people—and this is received by faith—we must conclude that the only thing that we can do in order to obtain that salvation is to devote all our efforts for the exercising of that saving faith. It is very important, then, to have a clear understanding of what faith is. Here is the biblical definition of faith: It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:1, 3).

One of the privileges that humanity lost because of transgression was the sweet communion enjoyed in paradise with the Creator. God in His mercy made a plan by which the fallen race could receive an opportunity to regain the lost friendship through the marvelous gift of faith. By faith, every human

being can become a temple for the indwelling of the divine presence and "be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

Every soul born into this world is endowed with the precious gift of faith. This is one of the manifestations of the great love of God for humanity. Through faith in Christ, we can appropriate the amazing gift of eternal life as well as every other good gift. "According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

## What do we do with the measure of faith?

Even though the Creator so graciously has bestowed upon all a measure of faith, it is important to notice that everyone receives a measure and it is to be exercised in the right way. Our duty is to develop that faith and to make it grow as if it were a little plant. Faith must be nourished and strengthened by the exercise of it in every aspect of the life. The failure to develop the precious gift of faith will deteriorate the character and weaken the intellect. Human beings, created in the image of God will fall in the fearful condition of losing the sensibility to appreciate the many other gifts of God. "And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith" (2 Thessalonians 3:2).

Ever since transgression came into this world by the disobedience of our first parents, people became unjust or unrighteous and began seeking to

find the way of justification before God. Many are trying to regain the favor of God or be justified by the mere adherence to God's moral law of the Ten Commandments. Those who try this are trying that which is impossible. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

Only Christ can restore in the soul the peace that was lost because of the transgression. In order to be saved, the sinner must accept Jesus Christ by faith in His atoning sacrifice. Christ must be received as a personal Saviour and as the only ruler of the entire life. Then the repented sinner will be able to say like the apostle Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The Author and the great center of the plan of our salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is by Him that we have ample access to God's eternal kingdom. This salvation is made possible by faith in His atoning sacrifice on Calvary where He paid the penalty for our sin. By faith in Christ and His righteousness, we can become righteous, too, to obtain "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and

come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3:22–25).

## Understanding belief

The cry that is heard everywhere is “only believe.” This statement is true as long as we understand the real meaning of believing or having faith. We need to understand the difference between faith and presumption. This two are very easily confused by many sincere believers. Genuine faith is always accompanied by other essential elements. “And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). This means that when the sinner accepts the faith of the gospel, the next work is to fill his or her character with the pure love that flows from Christ. This is where many fail to understand the real power of faith. Genuine faith, if received in the life, will transform the entire soul and this will be manifested in works of love.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a simple theory by which people claim to believe without any effect in their life. To accept Jesus Christ is to make Him the only ruler of the life. Then the sinner will comply with its conditions. It is extremely important to understand every aspect of the gospel of Christ as stated in the Word of God. The apostle Paul defines the gospel with the following explanation: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17). According to this statement, believing the gospel will reveal also the righteousness of God and this will compel the sinner to seek the righteousness that is the property of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Faith in Christ as the world’s Redeemer calls for an acknowledgment of the enlightened intellect controlled by a heart that can discern and appreciate the heavenly treasure. This faith is inseparable from repentance and transformation of character. To have faith means to find and accept the gospel treasure, with all the obligations which it imposes.”<sup>1</sup>

Those to whom by faith in Christ’s most precious blood are cleansed will always received the faithful recommendation to go and sin no more. From then on, they are to “continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety” (1 Timothy 2:15). “So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.”<sup>2</sup>

## Understanding righteousness

The word “righteousness” signifies the right doings of Christ that humanity does not naturally possess. Our human nature is the opposite of righteousness, and it is naturally bend toward evil. Unless we come to the full knowledge of the principles of the gospel, we may never receive the transformation of nature that God wants to bestow to everyone who receives it. Again, this is obtained by the beautiful gift of God, which is faith and faith alone. This is how the just shall live by faith. Believing will inspire the sinner with the desire to live the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, “for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

The question that many people ask is, “How can we live by faith?” The reality is that faith without works is useless. Believing in Christ implies the determination to be like Christ. It is to closely watch ourselves and measure every action of our life with the life of Christ. One of the most important lessons that Christ taught His disciples is that life is more than physical needs. When He was

tempted with the things that so easily overcome us, “He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

## Living by God’s Word

What does it mean to live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God? This is in reference to the Word that brought creation into existence. Creation declares God’s power manifested in His Word. Now this Word is Jesus Christ, the Creator, Author, and Finisher of our faith (John 1:1, 14). Since Christ, the living Word, is the Author of our faith, we receive faith by reading the Word. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Then we conclude that faith, a gift from God, is received through the channel of His word.

No wonder Christ’s disciples prayed asking for the increase of their faith!

“As the Son of God lived by faith in the Father, so are we to live by faith in Christ. So fully was Jesus surrendered to the will of God that the Father alone appeared in His life. Although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the evil that surrounded Him. Thus we also are to overcome as Christ overcame.”<sup>3</sup>

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). This is the most urging question that everyone needs to answer. I am sure that all want to “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Yes, dear friend, our God is so willing to exercise His saving power in everyone that comes to Him with a humble heart and genuine faith to the foot of the cross, for “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.





# Sola Scriptura

## “THE BIBLE ALONE”

By W. Lukic

### Introduction

A former Augustinian monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, Martin Luther was summoned before the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521. This was his third appearance before the Imperial Diet presided over by the Emperor Charles V and attended by German nobility and ecclesiastical dignitaries. Luther was summoned to renounce or reaffirm the “heresies” contained in his books and pamphlets. After carefully and ably answering the charges to the presiding officer, Johann Eck, Luther uttered first in German and then in Latin his closing words:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive

to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

The decision taken by Martin Luther at that critical time became, as Lord Acton wrote, “the most pregnant and momentous act in our history.” Luther’s words were destined to shake the very foundations of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Roman Empire. Moreover, they were going to have a decisive influence on the course of the Protestant Reformation and the entire Western civilization.

The significance of Luther’s words at that historic moment cannot be properly estimated unless we discover their true meaning. Upon closer inspection, in their very core, we see a confession of a man whose conscience is not and cannot be bound by the word of a human but only by the Word of God. No matter who that human is or that assembly of men

are. The pronouncements of the most illustrious humans and of the highest ecclesiastical councils are still the “traditions of men,” and as such, they can be shown to have erred and to be capable of erring. The eternal destiny of a human soul cannot be entrusted to such an authority. Humans need something higher, better, much more reliable. That sure foundation can only be found in the most precious Word of the living God. That Word we call the Holy Scripture or the Bible.

The principle invoked by Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, that the Holy Scripture and the Scripture alone, is the highest authority in all matters of doctrine and practice is known by its Latin name, *sola scriptura* (“Scripture only”). That principle was not invented by Martin Luther but rather has always been the watchword of Jesus Christ Himself and of His true followers.

## Judaism and the source of divine authority

When we survey the history of divine revelation and the human response to that revelation, first in the Old and then in the New Testament dispensation, we can observe a very similar pattern. God's special revelation to the human race had initially been preserved and handed down from generation to generation in an oral form. Only with Moses that special revelation, the Word of God committed to humanity, began to take a written form. The work commenced by Moses was continued by God's faithful spokespersons—the Old Testament prophets who, in addition to the Law (Torah), produced two subsequent, fully inspired bodies of literature known in Judaism as Prophets (Nebi'im or Nevi'im) and Writings (Ketubim or Ketuvim). To that division of the Old Testament canon Christ refers in Luke 24:44, "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

Following the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity to their homeland, a new period in the history of the Old Testament canon had emerged. That period is called "intertestamental period" by the Protestants and "deuterocanonical period" by the Catholic and Orthodox Christians. It spans the period of approximately 400 years, from the ministry of the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi (c. 420 B.C.), to the appearance of John the Baptist in the early first century A.D. In the Protestant community this period is also known as the "400 Silent Years." Since the voice of the living prophets was not heard and since the Jews felt threatened by the hostile Hellenistic (Greek) culture, the spiritual vacuum created by the absence of recognized prophets was filled by a new source of authority.

During that critical time period a new religious class entered the scene—the scribes. The scribes claimed the lineage from Ezra the

Scribe who is referred to in Ezra 7:6, NKJV as "a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses." Initially the scribes' primary role was to read and interpret the Torah (the Law of God). Little by little, however, the interpretation of the scribes became an oral tradition for which was claimed to have originated at the time of Moses.

The scribes taught that the Written Law (Torah) was insufficient, and that it needed to be supplemented by an "Oral Torah" of which they were the most trusted custodians and the chief interpreters. The teachings or the traditions of the prominent scribes and sages, later called rabbis, were orally transmitted from one generation to another and gradually expanded. Many Pharisees belonged to the class of scribes, but not all. After the destruction of the Temple, the fall of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews (following the year A.D. 70), these oral traditions were collected, consolidated and committed to writing (between A.D. 200 and 600). The end result of this long process was the creation of the Talmud, the preeminent text of rabbinic Judaism.<sup>2</sup>

Even a casual reader of the New Testament can easily discover that Jesus of Nazareth was not well received by the Jewish rabbis of His time (or by their successors in the years to come). The more discerning students of the Bible will quickly observe that one of the main reasons for the rabbinical rejection of Jesus and of His teachings is to be found in Jesus' rejection of the rabbinic oral traditions. Jesus taught that the supreme religious authority was deposited in one source of divine revelation only—the then existing Scripture (the Old Testament): "He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). True, the Jewish rabbis acknowledged the Old Testament Scripture as a source of divine revelation and spiritual authority, but the Scripture did not stand alone. For them the Scripture was not sufficient. It needed to be interpreted and supplemented by their oral tradition. The two, however,

could not be harmonized. The human traditions distorted and nullified the Word of God. "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:1–3).

In the sermon on the Mount, Christ declared the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees insufficient to allow entry into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). A larger portion of Jesus' sermon contrasted the interpretation of the Law by the scribes with the true meaning of the Law as intended by the divine Lawgiver (verses 21–48). Toward the end of His ministry, Jesus thoroughly condemned the scribes for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23). The scribes, whose stated goal was to preserve the Word, actually nullified it by the traditions they handed down: "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. . . . Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:13, 7).

## The apostles of Christ and the source of authority

The scope of this article does not allow us to lay out a more detailed history of the development of the New Testament canon. We can briefly say that the divinely inspired testimony of the apostles and their closest associates to the Word that became flesh had initially been preserved and transmitted mainly by word of mouth. Here we can see a clear parallel to the Old Testament, where the oral tradition likewise preceded the writings of Moses and of the prophets. With the passage of time, the apostles were not only aging, they were also facing the prospect of dying a martyr's death. In order to preserve the apostles' testimony, the surviving disciples and their trusted helpers began to create a written record of the words and deeds of Jesus (see Luke





1:1–4). They also engaged in writing a historic account of the formation, doctrinal development, and gospel ministry of the Christian church (Acts 1:1–3). The apostles were enabled in that work by the operation of the Holy Spirit according to Christ’s promise in John 14:26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

At the same time, or most likely even before the gospels began to be written, the apostles were writing letters to several local churches, addressing their various needs. Those apostolic writings had been very early recognized as inspired and were placed next to the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The apostle Paul claims divine inspiration and doctrinal authority for his writings (1 Corinthians 2:10, 13; 14:37; 2 Corinthians 13:3). The apostle Peter encourages his readers to heed the words of Christ’s apostles the same way as the words of the prophets: “That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Peter 3:2). He further recognized the letters of Paul as fully inspired and of the same authority

as the Old Testament Scripture. In 2 Peter 3:15, 16 Peter warned those who twist some more difficult portions of Paul’s letters: “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” The word translated “scriptures” here (Gr. *graphas*) is a word that refers in the New Testament exclusively to the Old Testament Scriptures.

It is true that the writings of some of the so-called “Apostolic Fathers” circulated among the early Christians. But even those early church leaders and authors clearly distinguished between their writings and the writings of Christ’s apostles. Ignatius, for example, about A.D. 110, said, “I do not order you as did Peter and Paul; they were apostles I am a convict; they were free, I am even until now a slave.”<sup>3</sup> The canon of the New Testament containing 27 inspired books developed gradually but on very sure foundations.

### The medieval church and the source of divine authority

Considering that the Christian church had an ample opportunity to learn from the example of the Jews and from their spiritual failure as a nation, we cannot but be amazed at how the church repeated the mistake of the Jews and accorded to the traditions of

humans the same level of authority as to the written Word of God.

What in the history of Christian doctrines has come to be known as “tradition” has a very long and complex history. Here we can only allude to some main points. The word “tradition” (Gr. *paradosis*) occurs about 13 times in the New Testament in quite diverse contexts. Most of the time the word “tradition” refers to the traditions (teachings and practices) of the Jews or of their elders (Matthew 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13). In all these instances Jesus disapproves of those traditions as contradicting the Word of God.

There are only three places where the apostle Paul refers to the “tradition(s)” in a positive way. They are 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; and 3:6. The favorite text of those Christians who uphold the tradition as a source of authority is 2 Thessalonians 2:15: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” Does this text place the tradition taught “by word” (orally) in the same category as those taught by “our epistle?” To answer this question we need to carefully consider the context. First, we readily acknowledge that in this instance the apostle deals with doctrinal matters, specifically with an erroneous

Thessalonian belief, spread by some spurious epistles, that the return of the Lord was imminent. Paul warns the Thessalonians not to be careless but to act responsibly by properly authenticating his letters.

Second, even the most impassioned champion of the principle of *sola scriptura* would not deny that Paul taught the Thessalonians many things by word of mouth, and that those spoken words carried full apostolic authority. Yet, the central question before us is the following: Has that oral tradition (teaching) of the apostle Paul been infallibly preserved by word of mouth? Nothing in the Bible suggests that the tradition delivered to the Thessalonians is infallibly preserved for us anywhere else except in Scripture itself. In fact, Paul was ordering the Thessalonians not to receive any tradition through second-hand or third-hand reports but to receive as infallible truth only what they had heard directly from his own lips. There is no place here for the church tradition transmitted by fallible human beings over thousands of years.

October 31, 2017, marks the 500th anniversary of the nailing of the 95 Theses on the church of Wittenburg. Martin Luther was determined to see Scripture upheld rather than human traditions. But he was not the first to have such a zeal for this matter.

The apostle Paul was much concerned to correct the Thessalonians' tendency to be led astray by false epistles and spurious tradition. From the very beginning the Thessalonians had not responded to the gospel message as nobly as the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Bereans verified the truthfulness even of the apostolic teaching by comparing it with the Old Testament Scripture. They had the priority right: Scripture is the supreme rule of faith by which everything else is to be tested. What a difference we see within those religious bodies that oppose the *sola scriptura* principle:

They prohibit their ordinary members from taking the Berean approach! They are told that the church through her teaching office (Magisterium) and through her bishops dispenses the only true and infallible understanding of Scripture.

### The traditional Catholic position on doctrinal authority

The classic definition of tradition in the Catholic Church was expressed in the fifth century by Vincent of Lérins. According to this definition, the tradition of the church is the faith that is universal (professed by the entire church throughout the world), of antiquity (faith professed and practiced by the godly predecessors and fathers), and the faith acknowledged by all or at least a majority of bishops and teachers.

At the Council of Trent, which met in twenty-five sessions from 1545 to 1563, the Counter-Reformation formulated and expressed its denials of the tenets of the Protestant Reformation. The fourth session (April 8, 1546) made a Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures. The decree states: "Seeing clearly that this truth and discipline [of the Gospel] are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand."<sup>4</sup> How the church should view this combined source of authority—the Scripture and the tradition—is expressed in the following sentence: "(The Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament—seeing that one God is the author of both—as also the said traditions . . . as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession."<sup>5</sup>

In regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures, the Council decreed: "Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures—hath held and doth hold."<sup>6</sup>

The Council further ordered that the Latin Vulgate be considered as the only authentic version of the Holy Scriptures: "Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod . . . ordains and declares, that the said old and vulgate edition, which, by the lengthened usage of so many years, has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions, held as authentic; and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever."<sup>7</sup> To make sure that this decree would be taken seriously, the Council threatened a penalty for the transgressors: "Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established."<sup>8</sup>

We do not have to speculate about the penalties which the Council had in mind. This same Council in 1415 (at the Council of Constance) condemned John Hus for heresy and delivered him into the hands of the civil authorities to be burned at the stake.

The Roman Catholic Church reconfirmed its position on Scripture and tradition as equal sources of authority and on the interpretation of the Scripture more than three centuries later at the Vatican Council of 1870, where the question of ecclesiastical tradition was further reinforced by the dogma of papal infallibility and absolutism.

The Roman Catholic position on the source of doctrinal authority in the church could be summarized as tripartite or threefold: The Scripture



is the substrate or object of the Church's interpretation; the tradition is the Church's lived interpretation of the Scripture over centuries; and the Magisterium (the teaching office of the Church) is the organ of the Church that does the interpreting.

### The Protestants rediscover the principle of *sola scriptura*

Protestants and Catholics basically agree that the Scripture is materially sufficient, or that the Bible, in a material sense, contains all the saving truths of divine revelation. But when it comes to the formal sufficiency of the Scripture or to the question whether the Scripture by itself is sufficient to attain to the knowledge of the saving faith, the agreement ends. The Catholic Church holds that in order for the meaning of Sacred Scripture to be properly understood, the Church must have recourse to its living Tradition—i.e., the infallible interpretation of the apostolic *depositum fidei* (deposit of faith). And this interpretation is guaranteed by what is also considered to be an infallible Magisterium.

In contrast, the Protestant belief that the Holy Scripture is sufficient in both material and formal sense to make one wise unto salvation was masterfully crafted and carefully enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Articles IV–X:

Article VI: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.”<sup>9</sup>

With respect to the interpretation of the Scripture, this Protestant Creed affirms the formal sufficiency of the Scripture by clearly stating the rule that the Scripture, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit,

interprets the Scripture:

Article VII: “All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.”<sup>10</sup>

Article IX: “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”<sup>11</sup>

The great rule of the Protestant Reformation that the Bible and the Bible only is the supreme rule of our faith and the test of all doctrines and practices, shines in the Article X:

“The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.”<sup>12</sup>

How highly the early Reformers valued the Scripture, placing it above any church creed, can be seen in the readiness to review and to correct their own confession of faith if God, through the Holy Spirit and their subsequent study of the Bible would shed more light on their path. The First Basel Confession of Faith (1534) concludes with this sentence: “We submit this Confession to the judgment of the divine Scriptures, and hold ourselves ready, always thankfully to obey God and his Word if we should be corrected out of said holy Scriptures.”<sup>13</sup>

### A sound heritage

For the Reformers the Bible was an unregulated regulator. The principle, *sola scriptura*—that the Scripture and Scripture alone is the

supreme rule of faith—became one of the three, four or five great “solas” of the Reformation. While *sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola gratia* (grace alone) are considered the material principles of Reformation, *sola scriptura* became the formal pillar of the Reformation faith and practice and was built in the very foundations of the Protestant Reformation.

Early Seventh-day Adventists, as true successors of the great Protestant Reformers, affirm and uphold the great principle of *sola scriptura*. The following early Adventist statements are in full accord with the early Reformation thought:


“Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle, that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man.”<sup>14</sup>

“The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union.”<sup>15</sup>

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Brecht. *Martin Luther*. Trans. James L. Schaaf, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985–93, 1:460.
- <sup>2</sup> Jacob Birger Neusner. “Talmud” and Gerhards-son, “Tradition.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans. 1988. Print; William Bacher. “Talmud.” In Isidore Singer; et al., eds. (1901-1906). *Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company. Web. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14213-talmud>. 16 June 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> Ignatius, To the Romans 4.3; compare the attitude toward the apostles in 1 Clement 42:1, 2; 44:1, 2 [A.D. 95]; Ignatius, To the Magnesians 7:1; 13:1, 2; et al.
- <sup>4</sup> J. Waterworth (ed. and trans.), *The Council of Trent, London: Dolman, 1848*, pp. 17–21.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Philip Schaff. *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, pp. 603, 604.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 604–606.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p. 387.
- <sup>14</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 421, 422.
- <sup>15</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 416.





By L. Tudoroiu

# CHRIST ALONE

**J**esus Christ is the One who made people tremble on Mt. Sinai when He was delivering the Ten Commandments. He was the Man of Sorrows that made hearts full of discouragement to grasp hope by looking up into His peaceful countenance. “Jesus Christ” were the last words uttered by most of the martyrs in their last moments of agony. Christ alone (*Solo Christo*—also referred to as *Solus Christus*) was the “very something” that changed the direction of the “train of life” of so many people. *Solo Christo* is the only Doctor that brought fire from heaven, *Solo Christo* brought the two-edged sword of truth that separates the sin from the sinner, and finally *Solo Christo* offers real peace of conscience and peace of heart, removing the fear and anxiety of life.

*Solo Christo* can gift humanity with a different dimension, a different quality of life that is incomprehensible to those who do not know Him.

## Where is our modern culture today?

That ***Solo Christo*** or **Christ alone** or **Christ only**—words pronounced often by the Protestant pioneers—can be perceived today from the political and religious perspective as a **very “radical”** statement. In a world that forces by any means “religious and cultural blending,” the leveling of social order in which the general will replace the peculiar—where Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius, Moses, and the pope are essentially all the same—to set *Solo Christo* as unique and outstanding above all, to make Christ alone the

solution for our everyday needs, sorrows and troubles, the solution for the world’s problems: This is viewed as an unacceptable, unpopular, *non grata*, unwelcome, fundamentalist concept that is considered dangerous for the peace of the world.

In a world where Ramadan, Easter, and Passover are the same, where the Virgin Mary and the Maryam version of Islam are the same, where Cybele and Isis, the Egyptian and Greek deities, are the same—and even the very words spoken of Christ by the heavenly Father such as that “God also hath highly exalted him, and **given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;** and that every tongue should confess **that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**” (Philippians 2:9, 10, emphasis added)—are outrageously considered very discriminatory to the rest of the world.

I was in Canada in 2002 when a Toronto radio station “CFRB 10.10” was negotiating the peace in the Middle East, addressing for hours the question: “Who can bring peace in the Middle East?” Politicians, social leaders, philosophers, and others offered various answers as the eventual solution for the peace in that part of the world. Listening to this question, my conscience was so impressed by this dilemma until the only answer clicked into my brain: “*Solo Christo!* Only the Prince of Peace can bring peace, true peace to the Middle East.”

Unfortunately, that was too-religious a response for a nonreligious radio station which is too secularized to accept such a primitive, out-of-fashion type of an answer.

## The Desire of ages

From a personal perspective, Jesus is the only One that can heal the soul and the sin-sick heart. The inner cry for help of a solitary heart is heard everywhere, on the streets, in the cities, in the taverns and caves, in the civilized jungle of this world, in the councils of great business people’s, and wherever the soul cries for sympathy: “Because they have taken away **my Lord**, and **I know not** where they have laid him” (John 20:13, emphasis added).

This is personal, intimate, and confidential. Politics, dogmas, social gatherings, amusements, and temporary pleasures cannot satisfy the thirst of the soul—nothing can but *Solo Christo*.

A personal Saviour is the only thing in the world that makes sense to our life. A son that spends time in the presence of his father and does not appreciate the very presence of that father will be ever unhappy, angry, judgmental, irrational, and even violent.

That is why the father answers: “**Son, thou art ever with me . . .**” (Luke 15:31, emphasis added). What the world is missing is a **personal *Solo Christo***.

As a former atheist surrounded by a sophisticated society, compelled at every step to recognize human genius, fed with all kinds of explanations, I soon reached the climax of thirst for a



### personal talk with *Solo Christo*.

When I read the Bible for the first time, I felt the power and the force of the Word of God. I recognized immediately that **“very something”** that I was missing. I was missing Him—*Solo Christo*, my Creator, my Saviour, my King, my Friend, my Counselor, my “everything.”

A personal connection with One that knows me the best, who knows my infirmities, my strengths, my weaknesses, and the emptiness of my heart, is the One I needed. Because He signed His creation, because He is my Maker, and only He, *Solo Christo*, knows where and when to touch the cords of my heart, I play music to Him in my heart, and my songs of joy are but a mirror of what He did inside of my soul. When I met Him in the Bible speaking to my heart, I recognized immediately that He is *Solo Christo* my Lord, my Saviour, and the reason for life, and only then did LIFE make sense and only then did I truly begin to live.

When the world made me turn my face from Him and I lost sight of the most precious Gift that God had shared with me, after years of suffering and pain I was looking to the tomb of my heart, asking the same question: “Because they have taken away **my Lord**, and I know not where they have laid him.” I was missing the *Christo*, *Solo Christo*, the One that made me so happy and so in peace with my conscience and my Father. Where is He now? Why do I not hear His voice again? I could never imagine that His absence would hurt my heart so much, and to such a degree that I poured out my heart before God, saying: “Father! Give me Christ or let me die.”

Jack Dempsey said that a true “champion is someone who gets up when he can’t.” In reality, this is only possible through our Model, our Champion, our Redeemer, our Saviour, Our God, our Elderly Brother, our Friend. *Solo Christo!*

### The sole solution: His tender wooing right now

Christ is still with us today, calling us back to our “first love”—first experience, the first time we really began to live.

It will take an infinite amount of time and still it will not be enough to express fully the depth of appreciation and acknowledgement we owe to our dear Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we are going to need a life as long as eternity to be capable of comprehending and admiring the character of our God.

“We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. We must not trust at all to ourselves or to our good works; but when as erring, sinful beings we come to Christ, we may find rest in His love.”<sup>1</sup>

“By every sin Jesus is wounded afresh; and **as we look upon Him** whom we have pierced, **we mourn for the sins that have brought anguish upon Him. Such mourning will lead to the renunciation of sin.**”<sup>2</sup>

If you do not know **where to go**, He can guide you: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life”** (John 14:6, emphasis supplied).

If you do not know upon **whom to put your trust**, He counsels you: **“for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12, NKJV). **The name of Jesus Christ alone.**

**No popes and no kings and no religious or political** organizations can interpose between you and Jesus. That is so personal, so deep, so profound that no other human has permission to interfere. Communication and connection with Christ is so soft, so gentle that you cannot live a quality, reasonable life without Jesus Christ.

If you **feel guilty** and you don’t know where to find relief for your burden, you must accept that *Solo Christo* “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

*Solo Christo* can change our bad traits of character into good ones; solely Christ can forgive sin; Christ alone can heal the physical and spiritual infirmities; Christ alone can give us back that happiness, that joy, and those things that are dear to our heart in the persons of those we have lost.

Soon, very soon, we are going to see Him in the clouds of heaven, and so soon we are going to embrace His holy feet which were pierced on the cross of Calvary. Soon we are going to lay our head on His chest and hear a Godly heart beating for us; soon we are going to sing the song of the Lamb, soon we are going to see Him face to face. What music, what joy! The entire host of heaven, thousands and thousands of angels mighty in power will come with Him in His glory to sing and be part of our forever togetherness, our eternal indescribable happiness—what a bliss! What a scene! I want to see the lost that are saved; I want to see the glassy sea; I want to hear the voice of the Father; I want to see the unfallen worlds; I want to see the universe, the stars, the moons, the planets, the galaxies, the Orion, the throne of God. I want to see Eden; I want to see our forefather Adam dressed again in his lost light of innocence; I want to see the Bible heroes . . . and when my thirst has been satisfied, I shall turn to my Saviour for I want to be with Him forever. Because at the end of the universe is Christ alone, at the other side of the universe is Him again, at the end of redemption is Jesus—*Solo Christo*—and with Him we begin and with Him we continue unto eternity. That is why we cannot end here, because there is no ending of our beautiful Christ!

From all the names, events, places, and memories, what stays with us is this powerful force deep in our heart, the great drama of a cross that took away from the bosom of God the only begotten Son, putting that “love” on the cross, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal “love.” *Solo Christo!*

**“I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross.”**<sup>3</sup>

Amen!

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Faith and Works*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 300. [Emphasis added.]

<sup>3</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 315.





# BY GRACE ALONE

by D. P. Silva

This Latin expression means “solely grace” and is one of the five “solae” that was an integral principle of the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. *Sola gratia* essentially means that sinners can be saved solely by grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

The reformers posited that “salvation is entirely comprehended in God’s gifts, dispensed by the Holy Spirit according to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ alone.”

What is grace? Grace is unmerited favor and power to do God’s will.

“The more we feel the truth that all men are guilty before God, the more also shall we cling to Christ as the only source of Grace.”<sup>1</sup>

According to John 1:14, 16, 17, “the Word was made flesh . . . full of grace and truth. . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Even though grace comes from the whole Godhead, Jesus was the one who introduced grace to this world.

“Paul begins his exposition of justification by referring to God’s ‘grace as a gift’ (Romans 3:24, RSV). To be declared righteous before God by virtue of our acceptance in Christ is altogether of God’s spontaneous compassion. The ground of our justification are variously stated (*cf.*

Romans 5:9, 18, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:11). While justification is based upon the objective mediatorial work of Christ for mankind, the channel by which this saving act is made effective in human experience is ‘faith.’ Faith is the instrumental, not the formal cause: and has the meaning of a living personal trust in a perfect redemption and a present Savior. The summary scheme of salvation is then, ‘by grace . . . through faith’ (Ephesians 2:8). Grace points back to the ultimate source of God’s act of justifying the sinner by His sheer goodwill and mercy. Faith, as man’s response to God’s act in Christ, is a divine work in us—itsself a gracious and gratuitous gift of God. From first to last the justification of the sinner is a matter of grace: ‘But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would be no longer grace’ (Romans 11:6).

“Paul sees ‘the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness’ (Romans 5:17), as greater and more powerful than the original taint of nature even when the added stains of actual sinful acts are taken into reckoning, for ‘where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.’ And grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Christ our Lord (5:21; *cf.* Titus 3:5). This does not allow any idea of ‘cheap grace’ (Bonhoeffer). Paul will not admit the

perversion of God’s free generosity in an antinomian direction. (*Cf.* Rom 6:1; Jude v. 4). He insists rather that the grace of God which hath appeared for the salvation of all men trains them to renounce sinful passions and to await ‘our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ’ (Titus 2:11–14). Instead of sinning ‘that grace may abound,’ the believer is called upon to ‘grow in grace.’”<sup>2</sup>

“To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who doesn’t deserve it and can never earn it. Receiving God’s acceptance by grace always stands in sharp contrast to earning it on the basis of works. Every time the thought of grace appears, there is the idea of its being undeserved. In no way is the recipient getting what he or she deserves. Favor is being extended simply out of the goodness of the heart of the giver.”<sup>3</sup>

“‘Grace is what God may be free to do, and indeed what He does, accordingly, for the lost after Christ has died on behalf of them.’”<sup>4</sup>

“It is thus apparent that God’s grace is to be distinguished from His mercy and love (Ephesians 2:4, 5). “*But God Who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved.*”





Mercy is therefore the compassion of God which moved Him to provide a Savior for the unsaved. Had God been able to save even one soul on the ground of His sovereign mercy alone, He could have saved every person on that basis, as Lewis Sperry Chafer points out, and the death of Christ would not have been a necessity. Divine love on the other hand is the motivating plan behind all that God does in saving a soul. But since God is holy and righteous and sin is a complete offense unto Him, His love or His mercy cannot operate in grace until there was provided a sufficient satisfaction for sin. This satisfaction makes possible the exercise of God's grace. Grace thus rules out all human merit. It requires only faith in the Savior. Any intermixture of human merit violates grace. God's grace thus provides not only salvation but safety and preservation for the saved one, despite his imperfections. Grace perfects forever the saved one in the sight of God because of the saved one's position 'in Christ.' Grace bestows Christ's merit and Christ's standing forever (Romans 5:1; 8:1; Colossians 2:9, 10). *'For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in Him.'*<sup>5</sup>

### Scriptures on grace

"By [Jesus Christ] we have received grace" (Romans 1:5).

"If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:15, 17).

Here the apostle Paul associates grace with being a gift, and he declares that by Jesus Christ grace has abounded unto many, and he assures that those who receive abundance of grace of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by Jesus Christ. We have here the promise of free righteousness and the eternal kingdom of God. These precious gifts are received by faith, which is also a gift.

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Romans 11:5, 6).

The apostle makes clear that the existence of a remnant is a result of God's grace, and not by any works done by anyone.

What is the Bible basis for "salvation by grace"?

The apostle Paul declares that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11–14).

"After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done,

but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4–7).

Both grace and faith are gifts of God, and do not proceed from human sources.

### The Waldenses and the doctrine of grace

"They contend for the lively hope which they have in God through Christ—for the regeneration and interior revival by faith, hope, and charity—for the merits of Jesus Christ, and the all-sufficiency of His grace and righteousness."<sup>6</sup>

### How did the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century understand grace?

#### Jacques Lefevre — French Reformer (1455–1536)

"In 1512, before either Luther or Zwingli had begun the work of reform, Lefevre wrote: 'It is God who gives us, by faith, that righteousness which by grace alone justifies to eternal life.'—J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, b. 13, ch. 1. . . . 'Oh, the unspeakable greatness of that exchange—the Sinless One is condemned, and he who is guilty goes free; the Blessing bears the curse, and the cursed is brought into blessing; the Life dies, and the dead live; the Glory is whelmed in darkness, and he who knew nothing but confusion of face is clothed with glory.'—D'Aubigne, London ed., b. 12, ch. 2."<sup>7</sup>

"'Salvation is of grace.' 'The Innocent One is condemned, and the criminal is acquitted.' 'It is the cross of Christ alone that openeth the gates of heaven, and shutteth the gates of hell.'"—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 2."<sup>8</sup>

#### Pierre Robert Olivetan (1506–1538)

"'There are but two religions in the world,' said Olivetan, the Protestant. 'The one class of religions are those which men have invented,

in all of which man saves himself by ceremonies and good works; the other is that one religion which is revealed in the Bible, and which teaches man to look for salvation solely from the free grace of God.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Martin Luther — German Reformer (1483–1546)**

“[Luther] set before the people the offensive character of sin and taught them that it is impossible for man, by his own works, to lessen its guilt or evade its punishment. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased; it is a free gift. He counseled the people not to buy indulgences, but to look in faith to a crucified Redeemer. He related his own painful experience in vainly seeking by humiliation and penance to secure salvation, and assured his hearers that it was by looking away from himself and believing in Christ that he found peace and joy.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Ulric Zwingli — Swiss Reformer (1484–1531)**

“‘In Adam,’ [Zwingli] said, ‘we are all dead, sunk in corruption and condemnation.’—Wylie, b. 8, ch. 9. ‘Christ . . . has purchased for us a never-ending redemption. . . . His passion is . . . an eternal sacrifice, and everlastingly effectual to heal; it satisfies the divine justice forever in behalf of all those who rely upon it with firm and unshaken faith.’ Yet he clearly taught that men are not, because of the grace of Christ, free to continue in sin. ‘Wherever there is faith in God, there God is; and wherever God abideth, there a zeal exists urging and impelling men to good works.’—D’Aubigne, b. 8, ch. 9.”<sup>11</sup>

### **John Wesley — English Reformer (1703–1791)**

“Through long years of wearisome and comfortless striving—years of rigorous self-denial, of reproach and humiliation—Wesley had steadfastly adhered to his one purpose of seeking God. Now he had found Him; and he

found that the grace which he had toiled to win by prayers and fasts, by almsdeeds and self-abnegation, was a gift, ‘without money and without price.’

“Once established in the faith of Christ, his whole soul burned with the desire to spread everywhere a knowledge of the glorious gospel of God’s free grace. ‘I look upon all the world as my parish,’ he said; ‘in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. . . .’

“He continued his strict and self-denying life, not now as the *ground*, but the *result* of faith; not the *root*, but the *fruit* of holiness. The grace of God in Christ is the foundation of the Christian’s hope, and that grace will be manifested in obedience. Wesley’s life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths which he had received—justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Salvation by grace and Adventism**

#### **The message presented by Jones and Waggoner in Minneapolis, 1888**

“The Lord in His great mercy sent **a most precious message** to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. 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. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. **This is the message that God commanded**



**to be given to the world. 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.**

“The uplifted Saviour is to appear in His efficacious work as the Lamb slain, sitting upon the throne, to dispense the priceless covenant blessings, the benefits He died to purchase for every soul who should believe on Him. . . .

“The efficacy of the blood of Christ was to be presented to the people with freshness and power, that their faith might lay hold upon its merits. As the high priest sprinkled the warm blood upon the mercy seat, while the fragrant cloud of incense ascended before God, so while we confess our sins and plead the efficacy of Christ’s atoning blood, our prayers are to ascend to heaven, fragrant with the merits of our Saviour’s character. Notwithstanding our unworthiness, we are ever to bear in mind that there is One that can take away sin and save the sinner. Every sin acknowledged before God with a contrite heart, He will remove. This faith is the life of the church. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness by Moses, and all that had been bitten by the fiery serpents were bidden to look and live, so also the Son of man must be lifted up, that ‘whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16).





“Unless he makes it his life business to behold the uplifted Saviour, and by faith to accept the merits which it is his privilege to claim, the sinner can no more be saved than Peter could walk upon the water unless he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon Jesus. Now, it has been Satan’s determined purpose to eclipse the view of Jesus and lead men to look to man, and trust to man, and be educated to expect help from man. For years the church has been looking to man and expecting much from man, but not looking to Jesus, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. Therefore God gave to His servants a testimony that presented the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the third angel’s message, in clear, distinct lines. . . .

“This is the testimony that must go throughout the length and breadth of the world. It presents the law and the gospel, binding up the two in a perfect whole. (See Romans 5 and 1 John 3:9 to the close of the chapter.) These precious scriptures will be impressed upon every heart that is opened to receive them. ‘The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple’—those who are contrite in heart. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.’ These have not a mere nominal faith, a theory of truth, a legal religion, but they believe to a

purpose, appropriating to themselves the richest gifts of God. They plead for the gift, that they may give to others. They can say, ‘Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.’”<sup>13</sup>

“There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, ‘How can these things be?’”<sup>14</sup>

“Through the grace of Christ we may be strengthened and matured, so that though now imperfect we may become complete in Him. We have mortgaged ourselves to Satan, but Christ came to ransom and redeem us. We cannot purchase anything from God. It is only by grace, the free gift of God in Christ, that we are saved.”<sup>15</sup>

### The angel of Revelation 18

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Revelation 18:1).

In 1892, the Lord’s messenger wrote: “The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the

beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of everyone to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men. Search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify of Him.

“If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.”<sup>16</sup>

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Jean-Henri Merle d’Aubigne: *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*.
- <sup>2</sup> *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 602.
- <sup>3</sup> Charles Swindoll: *The Grace Awakening*.
- <sup>4</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer: *Systematic Theology*, VII, p. 178.
- <sup>5</sup> *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*.
- <sup>6</sup> *D’Aubigne*, p. 30.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 212, 213.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 214.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.
- <sup>13</sup> *Testimonies for Ministers*, pp. 91–94. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>14</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.
- <sup>15</sup> *Our Father Cares*, p. 121.
- <sup>16</sup> *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 363.

# Soli Deo Gloria

## —GLORY TO GOD ALONE

*A compilation from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, with comments by B. Montrose*

### The legacy of Lucifer—a problem of pride

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12–14).

“I-I-I-I” in the heart, even before a single word is actually spoken!

Lucifer “gloried in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host, angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all. Yet the Son of God was exalted above him, as one in power and authority with the Father. Christ shared the Father’s counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God. ‘Why,’ questioned this mighty angel, ‘should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?’”<sup>1</sup>

Why? The answer is simple: Lucifer—who was not the Creator—“desired to enter into the divine counsels and purposes, from which he was excluded by his own inability, as a created being, to comprehend the wisdom of the Infinite One. It was this ambitious pride that led to his rebellion, and by the same means he seeks to cause the ruin of man.”<sup>2</sup>

### The pandemic of pride

The attack is on! We just read about it: There is a fallen angel intent on ruining the human race. How? What is his tactic? Instilling us with the same ambitious pride that he introduced in heaven. The legacy of Lucifer permeates our globe. Do we see how it has affected us? Do we actually realize how deep-rooted our pride really is? It’s in our blood. It’s both hereditary and cultivated.

Unbelievers are often blatantly defiant against their Maker and narcissistic in their approach to others. Conceit seems to be everywhere; we’re all familiar with that fact.

But then there are believers, those who have come to Christ—such are not usually defiant against their Maker—even secretly, right? We hope not. After all, believers understand the first of those two tables of stone—duty to our Creator. But what about the second table of stone? Even just the commandment against coveting encompasses quite a bit. . . . And then there are the other commandments also. . . .

Let’s pause to realize: Whenever we look down on someone else, that’s pride. Remember the typical case Jesus mentioned: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that **I am not as other men are**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luke 18:11, 12, emphasis added).

Remember that infamous boast of religious commitment promised to Christ, when “Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Matthew 26:35).

But what happened? When the pressure came as Jesus was betrayed and unjustly arrested, “then all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (verse 56). The deep commitment of which they had been so proud was suddenly a vapor, swept away into oblivion.

Even on a small scale, we sometimes presume that we know more than God and try to “help Him out” in our self-confidence, for example:

“**Thinking to do Christ a favor**, His disciples sent the mothers away. But when Jesus saw them going away disappointed, He rebuked His disciples, saying, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:14).”<sup>3</sup>

How often we think to do Christ favors such as this, presuming that we know best in various aspects of God’s work. But what happens if what you believe really is biblically right and another person’s idea is just plain wrong? What then?

“You must not bring a railing accusation against any, whether individuals or churches. Learn to deal with minds as Christ did. Sharp things must sometimes be spoken; but be sure that the Holy Spirit of God is abiding in your heart before you speak the clear-cut truth; then let it cut its way. **You** are not to do the cutting.”<sup>4</sup>



Such cutting would be a manifestation of pride—pride of what we know, pride, pride, pride.

What does God want us, as believers in the three angels' messages, to understand? "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:7–9).

In reality, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

### Helplessly inadequate for self-help

No matter what our previous experience may have been, no matter how we may have thought to have done great things to be wherever we are today, even the "self-made human" entrusted with great light has absolutely nothing for which to boast.

There's an old expression, "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps," referring to the concept of lifting yourself higher by means of your shoelaces—which is, of course, impossible. But that's exactly what we try to do whenever we think we can improve our situation merely by our own efforts.

Because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory, and we are to glorify Him always. We must live our entire life in the fear of God, under His authority and for His glory alone. We cannot properly glorify God if we neglect either the law or the gospel in our preaching—or if some kind of self-improvement, self-esteem, or self-fulfillment methodologies are allowed to creep in as supposed alternatives to the gospel.

Self-improvement is a counterfeit. God has given us the genuine in the

act of repentance, which "is more than sorrow for sin. It is a resolute turning away from evil."<sup>5</sup> "We may profess to feel deep sorrow for our sins, we may weep over our wrong course; but if we make no change in that course, our sorrow will avail nothing."<sup>6</sup>

Preoccupation with one's self-esteem is nothing but pride in disguise. Yes, we are to value our souls as the blood-bought heritage of Christ and subjects of His redeeming love, but not based on any supposed merits of our own.

What about self-fulfillment? "If Satan can so befog and deceive the human mind as to lead mortals to think that there is an inherent power in themselves to accomplish great and good works, they cease to rely upon God to do for them that which they think there is power in themselves to do. They acknowledge not a superior power. They give not God the glory which He claims, and which is due to His great and excellent Majesty. Satan's object is thus accomplished, and he exults that fallen men presumptuously exalt themselves."<sup>7</sup>

### Laid in the dust

The heart of reformation was based on justification by faith.

"What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

With such a sublime and noble concept as this, how could anyone dare cheapen it by resorting to amusing entertainment in worship settings? We cannot properly glorify God if our worship is mingled and confused with entertainment. Why are so many popular churches caught up in seeking to be entertained during the worship hour? The answer is simple:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching

ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

"A profession of religion has become popular with the world. Rulers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, merchants, join the church as a means of securing the respect and confidence of society, and advancing their own worldly interests. Thus they seek to cover all their unrighteous transactions under a profession of Christianity. The various religious bodies, reenforced by the wealth and influence of these baptized worldlings, make a still higher bid for popularity and patronage. Splendid churches, embellished in the most extravagant manner, are erected on popular avenues. The worshipers array themselves in costly and fashionable attire. A high salary is paid for a talented minister to entertain and attract the people. His sermons must not touch popular sins but be made smooth and pleasing for fashionable ears. Thus fashionable sinners are enrolled on the church records, and fashionable sins are concealed under a pretense of godliness."<sup>9</sup>

"The natural mind leans toward pleasure and self-gratification. It is Satan's policy to manufacture an abundance of this. He seeks to fill the minds of men with a desire for worldly amusement, that they may have no time to ask themselves the question, How is it with my soul? The love of pleasure is infectious. Given up to this, the mind hurries from one point to another, ever seeking for some amusement."<sup>10</sup>

### Upholding principles from the pulpit

Besides making it a point to shun worldly-style music, dramatization, puppet shows, and so forth, "ministers should not make a practice of relating anecdotes in the desk; it detracts from the force and solemnity of the truth presented. The relation of anecdotes or incidents which create a laugh or a light thought in the minds of the hearers is severely censurable. The truths should be clothed in chaste and dignified language; and the illustrations should be of a like character.



“Were the gospel ministry what it should and might be, the teachers of Christ’s truth would be working in harmony with the angels; they would be colaborers with their great Teacher. There is too little prayer among the ministers of Christ, and too much self-exaltation. There is too little weeping between the porch and the altar, and crying, ‘Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach’ (Joel 2:17).”<sup>11</sup>

“[The servant of God] is under the most solemn obligation to present the Word of God without fear or favor. He must call sin by its right name. Those who by their carelessness or indifference permit God’s name to be dishonored by His professed people, are numbered with the transgressor—registered in the record of heaven as partakers in their evil deeds.”<sup>12</sup>

### Upholding principles in the body of Christ

“Some in this age of the world seem to think it a virtue to call sin righteousness. But Moses called sin by its right name, a transgression of God’s holy law.”<sup>13</sup>

“‘Whose soever sins ye remit,’ said Christ, ‘they are remitted; . . . and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained’ (John 20:23). Christ here gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the Sermon on the Mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. ‘Reprove, rebuke, exhort,’ the Lord says, ‘with all long-suffering and doctrine’ (2 Timothy 4:2). Deal faithfully with wrongdoing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbathbreaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. ‘They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5:21). If they persist in sin, the judgment you

have declared from God’s word is pronounced upon them in heaven. In choosing to sin, they disown Christ; the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds, or she herself dishonors her Lord. She must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus has bidden all who take up His name to teach and observe everything He has commanded His people to do (Matthew 28:19). We are not starting from zero. A foundation has already been laid for us—a sure foundation built of principles that Christ has taught His people, step by step. And “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18). Any new light will not contradict the old.

But the enemy of our souls would love to make a mockery of the doctrines the Lord has given us and to subtly—and sometimes even not so subtly—undermine the authority of the present truth entrusted to us. As we near the borders of the heavenly Canaan, now is not the time to turn backwards toward Egypt!

If we are serious about glorifying God instead of catering to our fallen carnal nature, we need to stand firm for the fundamental truths He has given us, without wavering.

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

“God’s people are to keep His commandments, discarding all worldly policy. Having adopted right principles of action, they are to reverence these principles; for they are heaven-born. Obedience to God is of more value to you than gold or silver. Yoking up with Christ, learning His meekness and lowliness, cuts short many a conflict; for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.”<sup>15</sup>

We need not be ashamed of any standard He has given us in His word and the inspired writings He has so graciously bestowed in our midst!

“We are under a debt of gratitude to God for the revelation of His love in Christ Jesus; and as intelligent human agents, we are to reveal to the world the manner of character that will result from obedience to every specification of the law of God’s government. **In perfect obedience to His holy will, we are to manifest adoration, love, cheerfulness, and praise, and thus honor and glorify God.** It is in this way alone that man may reveal the character of God in Christ to the world, and make manifest to men that happiness, peace, assurance, and grace come from obedience to the law of God.”<sup>16</sup>

“We build on Christ by obeying His word. It is not he who merely enjoys righteousness, that is righteous, but he who does righteousness. Holiness is not rapture; it is the result of surrendering all to God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father.

“Religion consists in doing the words of Christ; not doing to earn God’s favor, but because, all undeserving, we have received the gift of His love.”<sup>17</sup>

This is what it means to glorify God, not ourselves. May the Lord strengthen us indeed to glorify Him in spirit and in truth, since “we love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 68.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1909. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>4</sup> *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891.
- <sup>5</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 557.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, June 2, 1881.
- <sup>7</sup> *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 722.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 111.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 386.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Review and Herald*, May 28, 1901.
- <sup>11</sup> *Evangelism*, pp. 640, 641.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1881.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1880.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 805, 806.
- <sup>15</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 95.
- <sup>16</sup> *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 58. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>17</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 130.





# THE PRINCIPLES OF *Protestantism* FOR TODAY

By P. D. Lausevic

to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Our God would have sacrificed everything for just one lost soul. This love for perishing humanity is shown in the parable of the lost sheep. (See Luke 15:4–7.)

The friends of the Reformation were required at once to submit to the restrictions and prohibitions against the teaching of the word of God to all peoples upon the face of this earth. The hopes of the world seemed about to be extinguished. How easily could the professed believers at this crisis have argued themselves into a wrong course! How many seemingly reasonable pretexts might they have found for submission and compromise since they themselves were guaranteed the free exercise of their religion. How many perils would compliance avoid!

**O**ne of the noblest testimonies ever made in behalf of Christianity during the Dark Ages was the Protest of the Germany Christian princes at their legislative body, called the Diet of Spire, in 1529. “The courage, faith, and firmness of those men of God gained for succeeding ages liberty of thought and of conscience. Their Protest gave these believers the name of Protestant principles are ‘the very essence of Protestantism.’”<sup>1</sup>

he had been forced to turn aside the blow. . . . Amid the strife and tumult of nations, the Reformation had been left to strengthen and extend.”<sup>2</sup>

So, a compromise was proposed offering some degree of tolerance for the existing Reformers, yet insisting also that “‘the Reformation could neither be extended . . . where as yet it was unknown, nor be established on solid foundations . . . where it already existed.’ . . . Liberty of speech would be prohibited. No conversions would be allowed.”<sup>3</sup>

How would this affect the great commission given the disciples by Jesus Himself before His departure? Our Saviour said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). No one is excluded from having the opportunity to hear this message of salvation. Jesus gave His life and suffered extreme anguish in order to save the world from the destruction it deserves. “For the Son of man is come

## Freedom of conscience

To the surprise of the hierarchy, when the princes evaluated the premise upon which the compromise was based, they immediately acted in faith. And what was the premise? That it was the right of a church or the leaders in whatever capacity to coerce the conscience and to forbid free inquiry. Although the reformers themselves were being granted religious liberty,

## Suppression of religious liberty

Although the Edict of Worms had earlier declared Martin Luther to be an outlaw and forbade the teaching or belief of his doctrines, religious toleration had for the moment prevailed in the German empire. “God’s providence had held in check the forces that opposed the truth. Charles V was bent on crushing the Reformation but often as he raised his hand to strike

this act was granted not as a right but rather as a special favor. For all others outside of this arrangement, the principle was to rule that conscience had no place and that the church leaders were the infallible judge and must be obeyed at all cost. All disobedience was considered a crime to be punished with the dungeon and the stake.

To accept these proposals would have been to betray, at that supreme hour, the cause of the gospel and the liberties of Christendom. Rather than consent, the princes would prefer to “sacrifice everything, even their states, their crowns, and their lives.’ . . . ‘Let us reject this decree,’ said the princes. ‘In matters of conscience the majority has no power.’ . . . To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its

*The conscience in religious matters is supreme to any ecclesiastical or legislative body. This is not a privilege granted to a select few, but is rather the God-given right of every single person born into this world.*

authority in matters of religion. Every secular government that attempts to regulate or enforce religious observances by civil authority is sacrificing the very principle for which the evangelical Christians so nobly struggled.”<sup>4</sup>

The essence of Protestantism is the right of one to be governed by one’s own conscience. The apostle Paul was an earnest contender for the matters belonging to the conscience. “Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). The conscience in religious matters is supreme to any ecclesiastical or legislative body. This is not a privilege granted to a select few, but is rather the God-given right of every single person born into this world. It is not for the state to legislate

on this matter, as it is a fundamental right.

### **Educating the conscience**

Having said this, we must also recognize that not everyone has a good conscience. Some have defiled their conscience. “Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

Although we are born in this world of sin and our natural tendency is to be rebellious right from the start, God introduces something out of the ordinary in every being born on this planet. At the very gate of the Garden of Eden when our first parents were about to be expelled, God said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and

her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). This enmity or hatred is not normal. It is not something that is natural. We are biologically and morally confederated with Satan in the overthrow of the government of God. But God gives us a chance. He introduces this element of hatred between us and that old serpent, the devil, so that we can be placed in a position to make a decision on our own without the interference of the great adversary.

Not only does God initiate in the mind this type of hatred against sin, but He also introduces an element of faith in every human being. Paul tells us to “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3). God gives everyone a measure of faith to begin with. Without

this measure of faith we will never have the opportunity to believe in the invisible world. It is because this faith is instilled in the human heart that we can preach to the unbelieving world. We can speak to an atheist, to a worshiper of idols, and, somehow unbeknown to us, the principles of truth are revived in the heart and a person believes. It is because God placed that faith in the heart.

Because of this faith and the element of hatred between us and Satan, we have a thing we call the conscience that acts like some kind of an early warning system in the soul. We can either nurture our faith and watch it grow or we can destroy it. That is our choice. If we begin to destroy our God-given faith and compromise that element of hatred that was introduced, we begin to defile our conscience. This is why the apostle declares, “Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

If we continue to defile our conscience, the warning system, it eventually becomes an evil conscience outright. That is why we are urged to have “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:22). We are naturally born with a conscience to warn us as to what is right and wrong. If we cherish evil, our conscience becomes defiled or even outright evil, and we cannot trust it to guide us along the way.

If we continue nurturing the evil conscience, it eventually becomes seared. Paul speaks of a group of people in the last days who are “having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). The verb “sear” means “to mark by branding” or “whose souls are branded with the marks of sin” or “who carry about with them the perpetual consciousness of sin.”

As God’s people become sealed or settled in the truth so that they cannot be moved away from it, so also those who first defile their conscience by acts of sin and then by persisting in wrong doing they obtain an evil



conscience. When finally they become determined in their evil they end up with a seared conscience. Once their conscience is seared, they have no hope of salvation. They are a part of that class where nothing can help them. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4–6).

Before a person reaches the point of no return, their evil conscience can be changed. That is why Jesus came into this world. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14). There is a way to have the conscience purged. The blood of Jesus Christ was shed so that those who have wandered away from God’s original purpose for the creation of humans can be redeemed. That redemption has to do with changing the conscience.

How is one’s conscience to be changed using God’s divine method of conversion without infringing on the rights of the conscience? “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). The first point is to call upon the name of God for salvation. But, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Verse 14). God’s method of changing the evil conscience is to educate it by the method of preaching. And what kind of preaching? “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” (Verses



15, 16). It is not just any kind of preaching. It must be that preaching and the preachers that are sent from God to bear His message to this sin-sick world.

Are these preachers to force the conscience? Are they to make changes in a person’s life by coercion? NO! Rather, what are they to be preaching? What has the power to stop a person with an evil conscience and give him or her the opportunity to conscientiously choose salvation? We continue: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Verse 17). The power to change an evil conscience to a good conscience is found in the preaching of God’s word as it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. This is why those who have the true Protestant spirit will quote many Bible passages in their preaching of the gospel message. The Scriptures have the power to change the life by enlisting the will of an individual.

### The birth of Protestantism

Going back to those faithful individuals who attended the Diet of Speyer in 1529: Instead of accepting the decision of the governing body, the Christian princes issued a Protest that became the foundation principle of those later known as Protestants (given the name because of their

protest). That protest reads in part: “We protest by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in anything that is contrary to God, to His holy word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls.”<sup>5</sup>

What courageous men were these in such dangerous times! They were willing to defy the king and all governments to remain faithful to the written word of God which had educated and changed their own conscience, stating: “We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His only word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.”

“For this reason we reject the yoke that is imposed on us.’ At the same time we are in expectation that





his imperial majesty will behave toward us like a Christian prince who loves God above all things; and we declare ourselves ready to pay unto him, as well as unto you, gracious lords, all the affection and obedience that are our just and legitimate duty.’<sup>6</sup> Under great pressure to compromise, they were still ready to act like the Christian gentlemen that they were. This is why after setting forth their principle beliefs, they also assured the leaders in government that in all other areas that does not touch their relationship to God, they pledge themselves faithful servants.

“The principles contained in this celebrated Protest . . . constitute the very essence of Protestantism. Now this Protest opposes two abuses of man in matters of faith: the first is the intrusion of the civil magistrate, and the second the arbitrary authority of the church. Instead of these abuses, Protestantism sets the power of conscience above the magistrate, and the authority of the word of God above the visible church.”<sup>7</sup>

### Respect for authority

The experience of the apostles after the day of Pentecost clearly shows the relationship between one’s conscience and any earthly authority, be that authority civil or religious. After being forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus, these early Christians were brought before the council for speaking about Jesus. During the meeting with the council the high priest asked them, “Did not we straitly

command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us” (Acts 5:28). Without hesitation, “Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Verse 29).

It is true that we are to obey all authority that God has placed in this earth. It is God that controls who the rulers of the nations are. (See Daniel 2:20, 21.) God is always in control of who is to rule the nations.

Since it is God that controls these matters, how are we to treat those who have this God-given authority? “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13:1–4).

However, the power and authority of those in rulership do not extend to having control over the conscience. Our relationship with God always comes first. Rulers are subject to the same

supreme authority as any other created being. When there is a difference between what God says and what the person in authority has to say, then we can say with the apostles, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” When those in authority commanded that which is contrary to God’s law, it became sinful to obey such a command.

### Ready to die for the faith

The principles of liberty of conscience were so deeply ingrained in these defenders of freedom in the 16th century, that one of them said after they formulated the Augsburg Confession: “If the honor of my Lord Jesus Christ requires it, I am ready . . . to leave my goods and life behind.’ ‘I would rather renounce my subjects and my states, rather quit the country of my fathers staff in hand, . . . than receive any other doctrine than that which is contained in this Confession.’ . . . Such was the faith and daring of those men of God.”<sup>8</sup>

The protesters in 1529 had affirmed their right not only to believe and practice these truths themselves, but also to utter freely their convictions of truth to every human being. And furthermore, they denied the right of priest or magistrate to interfere with such dissemination of these principles to others. The Protest of Spires was a solemn witness against religious intolerance, and an assertion of the right of all persons to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Each individual had the right to make his or her own decision according to the evidences available.

### The basis of the faith

In our time, there is a wide departure from the doctrines and precepts of these Protestant Reformers. Today we have a great need to return to the Protestant principles—liberty of conscience and the Bible—and the Bible only—as the rule of faith and duty. It does not matter what people may say or even what one truly believes. The basis of our faith is not the vote of the



majority or the decision of one ruler, but rather the sacred Scriptures. If I want to know what to believe, all I need to do is turn to the pages of the word of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). I need no other.

As we approach the culmination of this world's history, "God will" still "have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support.

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, Satan can influence the multitudes according to his will."<sup>9</sup>

### The secret of strength

What gave these weak, mortal human beings the power to stand against the world's great men, to stand against all the forces of evil?

"From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation. . . . 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.'"<sup>10</sup>

How important is prayer? How important is communion with the Captain of our salvation, the One who is leading the war against the evil one? Jesus said, "Watch and pray,

that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). We must recognize that we are weak and unable to contend with this fierce foe. Temptations are so easy to fall into. However, although we are weak, there is a source of strength that we can obtain that makes the mortal supernatural, the weak invincible. For this reason, we really need to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This does not mean kneeling down for hours at a time. It means to maintain the channel of communication between us and God open constantly. Talking with God when we are driving, talking with Him while walking, listening to His voice in the daily activities of life.

"Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons."<sup>11</sup> Prayer coupled with proper Bible study and the will to obey God makes the weak superhuman. We become partakers of the divine nature. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). Our only hope for victory is found in total distrust of self and complete surrender to Jesus as our personal Saviour as revealed in the Scriptures of truth.

"The Reformers whose protest has given us the name of Protestant, felt that God had called them to give the light of the gospel to the world; and in the effort to do this they were ready to sacrifice their possessions, their liberty, even life itself. In the face of persecution and death the gospel was proclaimed far and near. The word of God was carried to the people; and all classes, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, eagerly studied it for themselves. Are we, in this last conflict of the great controversy, as faithful to our trust as the early Reformers were to theirs?"<sup>12</sup>

### Are you a Protestant?

My dear friend, the question for you is, Are you a Protestant? I don't mean in name only—as Protestantism has become only another one of those isms covering the face of this earth. In some places Protestants and Catholics have taken up arms against each other in the name of what they are doing. Some leader calls to fight and off they go to give up their lives for the will of a man without thinking what they are doing. They develop hatred for the other side and call themselves a Protestant when they have no idea what genuine Protestantism is all about. We are not speaking about that type of Protestant. Such may have no idea of the depth of how "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Yes, God loves every person that has ever lived on this earth and His desire is for the salvation of each one. That means that we cannot take up arms against anyone in the name of religion.

Are you a Protestant as those faithful men who stood for the truth in 1529? Are you so guided by scripture that the points of faith that you hold are so clear to you by the Word of God that you are willing to die for that faith? Is your conscience so educated by the word of truth that it is pure to its purpose? I urge you today to make this choice. Right now, choose the Word of God above all else, even above life itself.

### References

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 595.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

<sup>12</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, p. 627.

# *Freedom of Conscience* AND THE THIRD ANGLE

By A. Nataren

## Picture the scene . . .

The martyrdom of countless souls had been a testimony of faithful adherence to the word of God for the period of anguish. While the suppression of freedom of conscience during the Dark Ages had just suffered a severe blow

with the advances of the Reformation, there were still many restrictions in place. Europe during the Renaissance and the Reformation was still a different world.

Europe was completely different from what we see now. Freedom was a luxury, especially religious freedom; countries across Europe had an official state religion that was the only lawful way of worshiping God. There was no room for a change in theology, or for men and women to follow the voice of their conscience

without persecution. The ideas of the Reformers had taken root in Europe and thousands were liberated from the spiritual oppression that had been exerted for over a millennium. In France, the Protestants faced constant persecution from the government. In England, there were still those oppressed under the church—even in the “Holy Roman Empire” (as it was known), where Luther had made the ecclesiastical hierarchy tremble with the idea of freedom of conscience, and religious tolerance was not the norm. Religious freedom was at the heart of several European conflicts.

## Where?

Where, then, would God prepare a place where absolute freedom of conscience was the law of the land—a place where the three fold message could be uncovered, understood, and preached with a great voice? There was no room for this in the Old World—and while nothing is impossible for God, it would have been difficult to preach such a message without facing any violent opposition whether from the Papacy or some different Protestant group. The Lord would not allow that His people would have to go through further tribulation. It was by divine intervention that the American



# EL'S MESSAGE



continents were discovered. We who live during the end of time should pay closer attention to history so that we can understand our duty to use the freedoms that we may be taking for granted—and appreciate instead the sacrifices made by previous generations that lived during harsh periods of religious persecution. The more we learn about the history of the world, the more we will see the divine intervention in the rise and fall of nations—for the love God bears for His people He has created and how He has even uprooted nations and powerful empires all to preserve those that love Him.

Much of the New World would be claimed by Spain, a Catholic nation that brought at sword point their faith to those shores. The colonies they established became places suffering the same persecution, under the direct control of the Inquisition. Yet the Lord prepared in North America a place for His children, a refuge from religious oppression.

## Why North America?

The colonies founded by English settlers had less interference from the crown and the Church of England. Over time, God opened the way for

His children to escape the oppression in Europe. The Pilgrims that arrived in America were fleeing religious persecution and created a colony that would allow them to worship God as their conscience dictated. Other Protestant groups that formed colonies in North America then followed the idea of worshiping God as their conscience dictated. While none of them were perfect, these first colonies were the beginning of a new form of government, creating safe havens for those suffering persecution. Some colonies were exclusively for each religious group—be they Puritans, Church of England, Quakers, or Catholics. Roger Williams came to the New World, and like the early Pilgrims, he came to enjoy religious freedom. But, unlike them, he saw—what so few in his time had yet seen—that this freedom was the inalienable right

of all, whatever might be their creed. He was an earnest seeker of truth. Williams “was the first person in modern Christendom to establish civil government on the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law.”<sup>1</sup>

In the small colony of Rhode Island the cornerstones of religious and civil freedom took their purest form. This model was followed by the founding fathers of the United States. Under the supervision of God, all thirteen colonies would soon fight for their economic and political reasons and have independence from England.

The protecting hand of God was over this new nation from its cradle to its prime. The most important piece of legislation since the Magna Carta was born; the right to worship God with full freedom was in the first lines of the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution. It was God’s merciful hand that intervened during this crucial time. The different representatives that came together





to solve issues of governance for the infant nation were men whom God would be sure to impress and guide in the drafting of the Constitution.

“The Declaration of Independence sets forth the great truth that ‘all men are created equal,’ and endowed with the inalienable right to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws. Freedom of religious faith was also granted; every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity. The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

### A timely message arises

Not long after the birth of the republic, the messages of God’s judgment, His law, and the fall of Babylon were proclaimed with a loud voice. Those who believed with all their heart embraced the seventh-day Sabbath that had been forgotten for generations. In this religious freedom, the church of God prospered and grew. Satan has always been active in his efforts to

destroy this country and the religious freedom that it has heralded. Satan has put in place men that serve him, but God has intervened for the sake of His church.

“While many of our rulers are active agents of Satan, God also has his agents among the leading men of the nation. The enemy moves upon his servants to propose measures that would greatly impede the work of God; but statesmen who fear the Lord are influenced by holy angels to oppose such propositions with unanswerable arguments. Thus a few men will hold in check a powerful current of evil. The opposition of the enemies of truth will be restrained that the third angel’s message may do its work. When the final warning shall be given, it will arrest the attention of these leading men through whom the Lord is now working, and some of them will accept it, and will stand with the people of God through the time of trouble.”<sup>3</sup>

### The message spreads . . .

The message of the present truth was carried from America to the rest of the world. Satan did his best to take away this religious freedom when a national Sunday law was proposed (the Blair Sunday Bill of 1888). God once again intervened in behalf of His people and again directed the legislative branch of the United States in the right way, preserving the principle established for so

long in America; that no individual government would infringe upon the freedom of conscience of any individual. God’s children to this day still enjoy this freedom. The environment of liberty was ideal for men and women chosen by God to carry the last warning to the world. These would be educated like the prophets of old, such as Elijah and John, who in the wilderness strengthened their spirit and lived in harmony with God’s will and in total separation from the world and its practices.

### Where are we now?

In His mercy, God prepared a way for all who came into the fullness of His light to live separate from the world, to be entirely faithful to His law. But alas, this privilege has been poorly utilized by those professing to follow Christ. We can see with our own eyes how freedom of conscience is confused with libertine behavior, a life without restrictions, discipline, and principles. The principles of separation from the world and its customs are being forgotten and ignored. Those who adhere to the word of God and fight to raise the standard are ignored. Instead of an ardent zeal to fulfill God’s requirements, a lukewarm and halfhearted spirit has overtaken the followers of Christ. Is it possible that only under oppression we will be truly faithful?





Satan has changed tactics. Instead of an iron fist, he implements the festivals and customs of the world to bind the hearts of God's chosen people. The love of comfort and self-indulgence enslaved Israel to the enemies of God. Now the same spirit endangers the church of God today. The call to "Come out from among them, and be separate" rings today just as it did when Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians.

"Shall we hear the voice of God and obey, or shall we make halfway work of the matter and try to serve God and mammon? There is earnest work before each one of us. Right thoughts, pure and holy purposes, do not come to us naturally. We shall have to strive for them. In all our institutions, our publishing houses and colleges and sanitariums, pure and holy principles must take root. If our institutions are what God designs they should be, those connected with them will not pattern after worldly institutions. They will stand as peculiar, governed and controlled by the Bible standard. They will not come into harmony with the principles of the world in order to gain patronage. No motives will have sufficient force to move them from the straight line of duty. Those who are under the control of the Spirit of God will not seek their pleasure or amusement. If Christ presides in the hearts of the members of His church, they will answer to the call, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' 'Be not partakers of her

*Those who have been called into the everlasting light to be the watchmen and proclaim the coming tribulation must purify themselves and purify their church so that they may serve God with a clean conscience.*

sins' (2 Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 18:4)."<sup>4</sup>

The time that was foreseen by the apostle Paul, in which ungodly men would come into the church and downplay moral decay, preach error, and protect those that live in an affront to all that is sacred, ignoring the biblically established principles, is not in the distant future. Those who lower the standards that for so long have been held high through sacrifice walk among the chosen. Satan wastes no time in pushing the church back into spiritual darkness. Those who have been called into the everlasting light to be the watchmen and proclaim the coming tribulation must waste no time; they must purify themselves and purify their church so that they may serve God with a clean conscience. The worst violation to the freedom of conscience is to silence one's voice in denouncing the anathema that slithers into the church. There must exist no familiarity between the world and the church. While there still is religious freedom, the task of proclaiming the third angel's message can be carried out with relative ease. The church of God must come in unison under the banner of Christ and

use its time wisely. It is highly visible as the world moves toward worshipping the beast and willingly enslaves their conscience once again to the dictates of the enemy. Will the church of God recognize its poverty, blindness, and nakedness and seek to be covered in the justice of Christ? Or will the members of Christ's body persist in their lukewarm attitude? Will they continue to waste precious time? Will they, along with the rest of Protestantism, forget their calling and join once more the ranks of the enemy?

Jesus waits at the door of the heart of each individual. Those who open the door and live in communion with Him will be faithful even to death and will fulfill the command of their Saviour and preach the everlasting gospel to all—freeing the enslaved consciences of those that serve darkness and bringing them to eternal light.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). May this be our aim!

### References

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 293, 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* (1888), p. 441.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 610, 611.

<sup>4</sup> *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 501, 502.

P.O. Box 7240  
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240

MOVING? Please let us know.

“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Proverbs 20:11). So, even when we’re children, we can live by our conscience.

What is a conscience? It’s like a little voice inside you, telling you to do right. Usually you can’t hear it with your ears, but you can hear it in your mind. It may remind you of things you know from your Bible or that your parents or Sabbath School teacher have taught you.

God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit, and “conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved.”<sup>1</sup>

Often another power tries to make us go by feelings, making us think things like, “I don’t feel like doing this, even though I know I should.” That’s how the enemy of our souls tries to make us want to do bad things. “Satan uses his influence to drown the voice of God and the voice of conscience, and the world acts as if under his control.”<sup>2</sup>

But “the Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course.”<sup>3</sup> We should seek to do right because we love God and we want to please Him—and this is how we live by our conscience.

“There is a hand that will open wide the gates of Paradise to those who have stood the test of temptation and kept a good conscience by giving up the world, its honors, its applause, for the love of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Many do not care to live this way. Some would rather live as if they had a “conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). They have pushed away the little voice telling them to do right until it seemed like it had become hard and burnt.

So, be sure to “keep the conscience tender, that you may hear the faintest whisper of the voice that spake as never man spake.”<sup>5</sup>

“Trust in the Lord at all times. Listen to the voice of conscience. Love God and you will have His approving smile. What a thought, to have the great God, the maker of the heavens and the earth, to smile upon and love you. Dear children, seek for this, pray for it, live for it.”<sup>6</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> *My Life Today*, p. 322.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *An Appeal to the Youth*, p. 41.



# THE CONSCIENCE OF A CHILD

