

# The High Calling

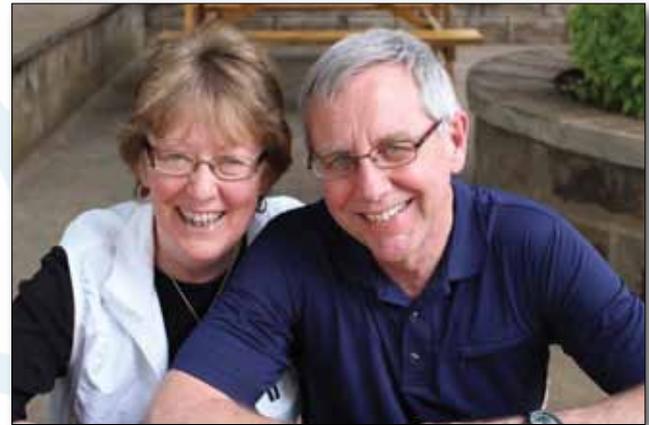
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## A Wild Boar in God's Vineyard

By Stan Key

Historians pinpoint October 31, 1517, as the date when the Protestant Reformation officially began. This was the moment when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. To everyone's surprise, this simple act of protest started a chain reaction that ultimately re-formed the church and changed history! It was as if a spark had ignited a keg of gun powder. Boom!

At first, Pope Leo X tried to pretend that the storm of controversy created by Luther's words was just "monkish squabble" led by a "German drunkard." But as the protest against an apostate Roman church spread, he issued a papal encyclical in 1520 that condemned the "errors" of Martin Luther. The document begins with a plea for the Lord to arise and judge his own cause, because a "wild



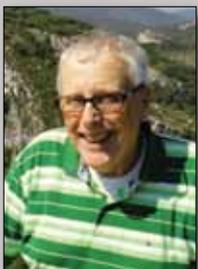
boar from the forest" is seeking to destroy the vineyard of the Lord!

Luther's protest had obviously hit a raw nerve. Though many of his theses touched on academic fine points

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## God's Trumpet

By Bruce McDonald



Bruce McDonald served 17 years as a United Methodist pastor and since 1995 has served as professor of Religion, Philosophy, and Humanities at Texas Wesleyan University.

On October 31, 1517, an obscure monk named Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses (propositions for debate) to the door of the Castle

Church in Wittenberg, Germany. No one had any idea at the time that this would be the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, which not only affected religion by dividing the church but also created a political earthquake that redrew the map of Europe. Today, in our politically correct society, Luther is often regarded as a scandalous disturber of the peace who should have been hushed up!

This year we celebrate the 500th anniversary of that beginning, and we need to look at the Reformation afresh. In traditional Protestant churches, the Sunday nearest October 31 is called Reformation Sunday, and the altar paraments are changed to red, symbolizing the fire that began with Luther. In many mainline churches (including mine), Reformation Sunday is now

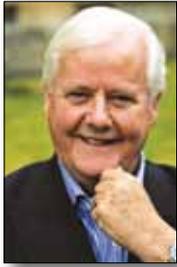
an embarrassment and is regarded as a topic that could endanger ecumenism and unity among churches. While the record can't be rectified in one article, we can be grateful for the anniversary celebration of Protestantism that gives us the opportunity to once again look at the beginnings of the Reformation and see how it still applies to us today.

It is impossible to talk about the Reformation without talking about Luther himself. Growing up in a home where there was little tender loving care, Luther acknowledged later in life that he tended to project his fear and dread of his earthly father onto God. When Martin, at age 22, was nearly struck by lightning, he joined the monastery of the Augustinian Friars to become not only a monk but a priest. His father, who had been pressuring him to become a (rich) lawyer, was furious and publicly bawled him out at the banquet following his first mass, a scene that crushed the young priest. In the monastery, he tried everything he knew to "get right with God" to no avail. But when he began to study the Scriptures, he learned that salvation is a gift

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# Semper Reformanda

By Os Guinness



Os Guinness (D.Phil., Oxford) is a prominent social critic and the author of more than thirty books. The following article is a slightly edited abridgment from chapter 6 of his book, *Renaissance* (InterVarsity Press, 2014), 114–139. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515–1426. www.ivpress.com

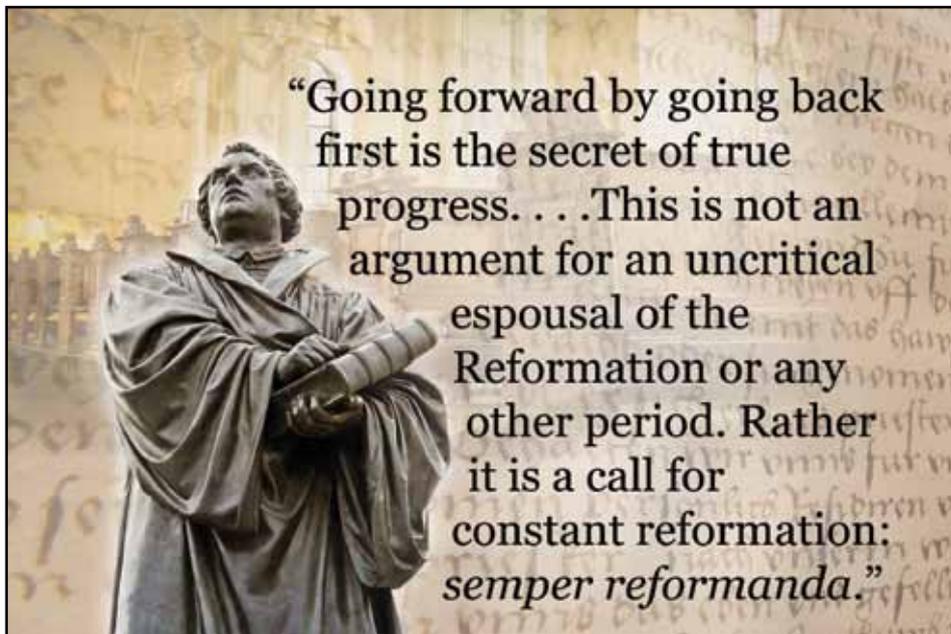
**T**homas Linacre (1460–1524) was a scholar, court physician to King Henry VIII, and personal friend of both Erasmus and Sir Thomas More. He lived before the Reformation, when the Bible was restricted to the clergy. But one day a priest gave him a copy of the four Gospels in the original Greek. After carefully studying the sacred text, Linacre remarked, “Either these are not the Gospels, or we are not Christians!” It wasn’t long after this when, in 1517, an Augustinian monk name Martin Luther hammered ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg to protest the same gap between Christ and his church. The Reformation had begun.

The Reformation was simultaneously the Western church’s greatest necessity and its greatest tragedy, for in its brilliant but terrible light we can see with unmistakable clarity the three major besetting sins of the church’s long engagement with culture—secularization, corruption, and division. These were the sins that provoked Luther and others to work to reform the church.

*Secularization* happens whenever the church is so “in” the world that she is “of the world” and thus becomes worldly. Such secularization from the inside is far more deadly than attacks from the outside. *Corruption* happens whenever the church, which has become worldly, so relies on the powers of the world that she grows powerful and is corrupted by that power. Then *division* happens when those who protest against such unfaithfulness either leave the corrupt church or are simply forced out. So, we see that the Reformation was desperately necessary, but it was also tragic, for it exposed to the gaze and scrutiny of the world a church that was secularized, corrupt, and divided. It was a tragic necessity that was caused by a dire evil.

But sadly, the story of this tragedy is not over. In the years since the Reformation, there have been many times when the same protest has been necessary. Confronting the smug orthodoxy of the Protestant church in nineteenth-century Denmark, Kierkegaard leveled the same charge as Linacre in his passionate *Attack upon Christendom*: “The Christianity of the new Testament simply does not exist,” he said. “Christendom is the betrayal of Christianity.”

Does not the same protest need to be made again today? For the gap between the gospel and the church has grown again and much of the Protestant church is as decisively in need of reformation today as was the Catholic Church in Luther’s day. The greatest enemy of the Western church is not the state or any ideology such as atheism



but the world and the spirit of the age. When the church becomes worldly, she betrays her Lord.

But that is not the end of it. The worldly church is not only corrupt but cowardly, for much contemporary worldliness is a *voluntary capitulation* to the spirit of the age. The contemporary worldliness of parts

of the Western church, as exemplified differently by either the Episcopal Church in America or the emergent Evangelicals, is a tragic example. As Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit.” Just wait long enough for their ideas to ripen, and in case after case it turns out that the much-trumpeted “new kind of Christianity for a new world” is the old kind of compromise and heresy. Such worldliness is inexcusable because it is naively self-chosen and, in many cases, foolish beyond all comprehension.

Carl F. H. Henry, the great Evangelical theologian and leader, used to say of his fellow believers in the United States, “Earlier, it was next to impossible to get Evangelicals out into the culture. Now it is equally impossible to get the culture out of Evangelicals.” In its shallow and noisy worldliness, much Evangelicalism

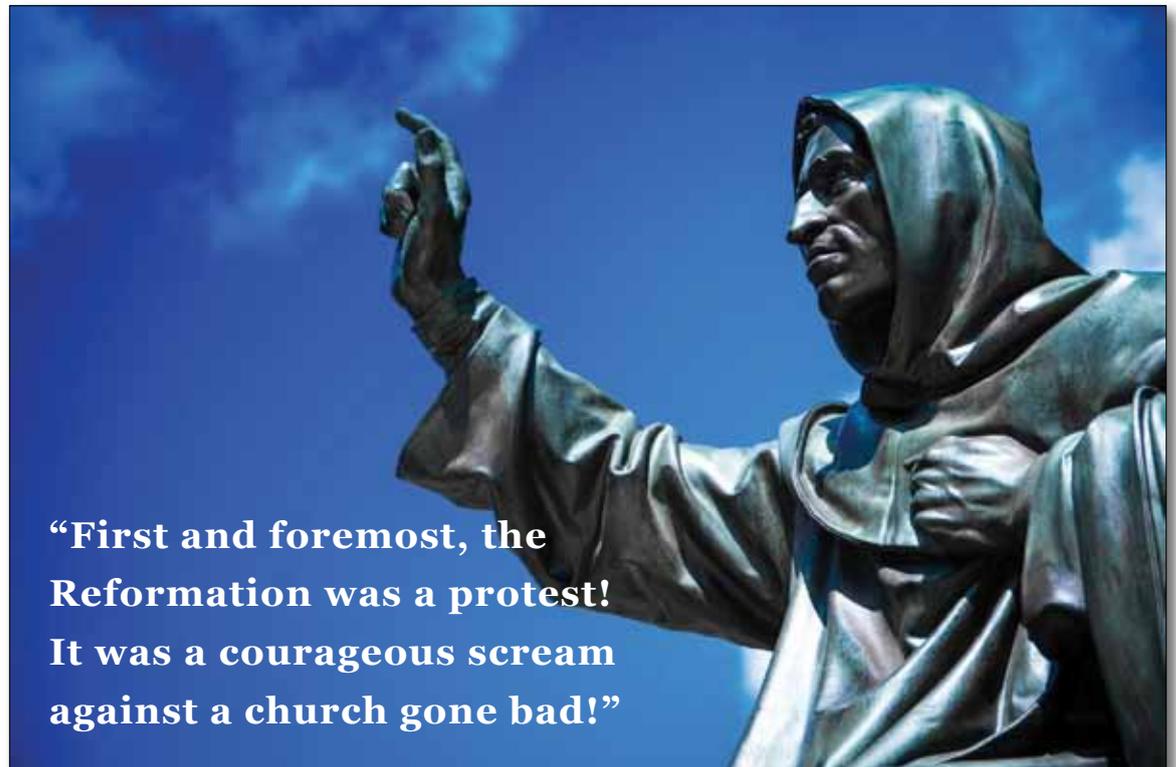
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of scholastic theology, much of what he wrote dealt with issues that any lay person would immediately understand. He was simply giving public expression to what many in the church were already feeling. The church had become toxic. Priests were abusing the flock. The sheep were not being fed; no one was instructing them in the Word of God. The sale of indulgences to raise funds for the pope's building project in Rome (St. Peter's Cathedral) was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. "Where's my pen? Where's my hammer?" Luther must have said. Nailing his protest to the church door was the best way he knew to make the cancerous condition of the church a matter of public debate. Even a cursory reading of the 95 Theses reveals the explosive nature of this incendiary document:

- #6—The pope himself cannot remit guilt but only declare and confirm that it has been remitted by God.
- #32—All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgence will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
- #67—The indulgences, which the merchants extol as the greatest of favors, are seen to be, in fact, a favorite means for money-getting.
- #82—Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very minor purpose.
- #86—Since the pope's income today is larger than that of the wealthiest of wealthy men, why does he not build this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of indigent believers?

We err when we think of the Reformation only in terms of the great doctrinal truths it emphasized: justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, the authority of the Bible, etc. First and foremost, the Reformation was a protest! It was a courageous scream against a church gone bad! It was a passionate plea to go back to the Bible as the only sure standard of faith and practice.

This issue of *The High Calling* is dedicated to Martin Luther and the Reformation of the church that was sparked by his ministry. Though many today, influenced by political correctness, seem embarrassed by a man who brought such division and conflict, we humbly desire to celebrate the life of one who took his hammer and said, "Enough is enough! I protest!" Our desire is to model our lives after Jesus. He too was a protest-ant! Chasing money-changers from the Temple and incurring the wrath of established religion, he knew what it cost to re-form the church. "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth?" he once asked. "No, I tell you, but division!" (Lk 12:51).



The 500th anniversary of the Reformation reminds us that unity often comes only after a separation has occurred; health becomes possible only when the cancer is removed. May God fill you with wisdom, courage, and love as you prayerfully consider the role he wants *you* to play in the ongoing call to reform the church! ✠

**"Let the man who would hear  
God speak read Holy Scripture."**

**—Martin Luther—**

**"My conscience is captive  
to the Word of God."**

**—Martin Luther—**

# Justification by Faith Alone

By Martin Luther (1483–1546)

No single doctrine was more central to the Reformation than that of justification by faith alone. Luther called this the doctrine by which “the church either stands or falls.” Calvin called it “the hinge of the Reformation.” It was Luther’s own personal experience of this reality that caused the spark in his soul that ignited the flame that spread across Europe and changed the world by re-forming the church! In the article below Luther bears witness to the transformation in both his heart and mind that occurred when he first grasped the doctrinal truth and then experienced the life-changing reality of justification by faith alone (quoted from *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* by Roland H. Bainton. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950. 49–50).

I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “the justice of God,” because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against



him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by his faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven...

If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God’s heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon his fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger or ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across his face. ✨

## In Devil’s Dungeon

By Martin Luther

*In devil’s dungeon chained I lay  
The pangs of death swept o’er me.  
My sin devoured me night and day  
In which my mother bore me.  
My anguish ever grew more rife,  
I took no pleasure in my life  
And sin had made me crazy.*

*Then was the Father troubled sore  
To see me ever languish.  
The Everlasting Pity swore  
To save me from my anguish.  
He turned to me his father heart  
And chose himself a bitter part,  
His Dearest did it cost him.*

*Thus spoke the Son, “Hold thou to me,  
From now on thou wilt make it.  
I gave my very life for thee  
And for thee I will stake it.  
For I am thine and thou art mine,  
And where I am our lives entwine,  
The Old Fiend cannot shake it.”*

## John Wesley’s Warm Heart

Martin Luther’s influence spreads much wider than the Lutheran Church he fathered! On the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Wesleyan branch of the universal church needs to remember how John Wesley’s evangelical conversion has a direct link to Luther. Wesley describes the moment in his journal entry for Wednesday, May 24, 1738:

*In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. ✨*

# Do It Again, Lord, Do It Again!

By Stan Key

Though no one knew it at the time, Josiah's ascendency to the throne marked God's final offer of hope for the nation of Judah. For decades, the nation had been in moral and spiritual decline. If the trend continued, Judah would soon face destruction and doom. The moral decay on the inside made her an easy target for the voracious barbarians on the outside. But would the people of Judah wake up to the imminent danger they faced? Would they repent and return to God before it was too late?

II Chronicles 34–35 tells the story of the reformation and revival that occurred during the reign of King Josiah. The account of what happened in Judah in the fifth century BC gives us a Biblical reference to better evaluate what happened in Europe in the sixteenth century AD. Comparing Luther's reformation to Josiah's enables us to see more clearly what is essential and what is secondary.

The reformation in Judah began when a 16-year-old king named Josiah "began to seek the God of David" (II Chr 34:3). Never underestimate what God is doing in the heart of a worshipping teenager! Josiah was disturbed by the status quo. He wanted nothing to do with the "god" of the current religious establishment. He wanted the God of *David*! He hungered for the God who could make giants fall, establish a united kingdom, mend broken lives, and set hearts to singing.

Josiah's hungry heart caused him to realize that the spiritual condition of Jerusalem was a disaster. So, at age 20, filled with fiery passion for the glory of God, he "began to purge Judah and Jerusalem" of religious apostasy. Idols filled the land: high places, Asherim, carved images, metal images, altars to Baal, etc. The verbs used to describe his actions reveal the intensity of his reforming zeal. He *chopped down* the altars, *broke in pieces* the carved images, *made dust* of the idols and *scattered* it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them, and he *burned* the bones of the pagan priests (see II Chr 34:3–8). Josiah knew that he had to destroy things before he could build! Before health could come, the cancer must be cut out. Not even Luther's zealous protest against Rome can equal the fury of Josiah's reforming fervor!

No one could have predicted what happened next. It was while Josiah and his friends were purging the land and repairing the Temple that a "book" was discovered. Hilkiyah the high priest recognized its importance at once

and gave it his undivided attention. It was "the Book of the Law of the Lord given through Moses" (II Chr 34:14). Most scholars believe it was either the book of Deuteronomy or perhaps the entire Pentateuch.

It is shocking to realize that the Bible had been lost in church! In Josiah's day people were so intent on practicing their religious routines and promoting their



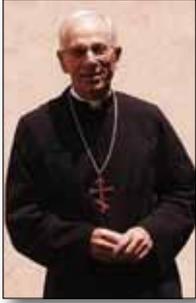
**“When Josiah, Hilkiyah, and the other reformers read from the Book, they realized how far they had strayed from the truth.”**

theological agendas that they had completely neglected “the Book.” Yes, it happens. This was precisely the problem Luther faced in the sixteenth century. God's Word was no longer heard, not even in church! Even more to the point, this is the reality in many of *our* churches today. Hilkiyah's words to Josiah reveal the problem and point to the solution at the same time. “I

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# Here We Still Stand

By William H. Smith



William H. Smith is a recently retired Anglican priest. This article, originally published in October 28, 1995, is slightly edited and abridged. Used by permission from *WORLD Magazine*, Asheville, NC ([www.wng.org](http://www.wng.org)).

On October 31, 1517, the world was about to change. Although no one could have predicted it, Martin Luther's nailing his 95 Theses to the church door

in Wittenberg would alter the character of the church and the course of civilization. The question now is: What was all the fuss? Is it time to let go and move on? Anyone concerned about the scandal of disunity and the growing doctrinal indifference that characterize so much of evangelicalism, is tempted to say yes. But we can't. We can't because the Reformers were right, and uncompromisingly, timelessly so.

The Reformers were right about *salvation*. It is a caricature of Roman Catholics to say that they do not believe in salvation by faith on the basis of the work of Christ. Every orthodox Catholic believes that he cannot be saved apart from faith in Christ. But the Reformers insisted that salvation is based on the work of Christ *alone*, not Christ plus human merit, and that salvation is received by faith *alone*, not faith and works.

That word *alone* makes all the difference and creates an irreconcilable disagreement, on which hangs our eternal welfare. The Reformers rediscovered the New Testament way of salvation that the Roman Catholic Church lost and has not recovered, and which not a few evangelicals are in danger of forgetting.

The Reformers were right about *the church*. Unlike those for whom the church is an irrelevant institution,

the Reformers believed passionately that ordinarily there is no possibility of salvation outside the visible church. Unlike those for whom the church is anything you want it to be, the Reformers believed that the New Testament gave the church a concrete form that sets it apart from every other institution. Unlike schismatics, the Reformers believed that the church could be seriously defective, yet be the church. But they broke with Rome because they believed the church had become

so deformed in doctrine, worship, government, and life as to require that it be reformed according to the apostolic pattern, or else the church could not survive.

The Reformers were right about *authority*. Luther set out to challenge but not to rebel against the church. But, when pressed to explain why he would not recant when commanded, he said, "Unless I am proved wrong by Scripture or evident reason, then I am a prisoner in conscience to the Word of God."

Luther had come at last to see clearly that the church speaks with authority only when the church stands under, not beside, the Bible. While respecting the teaching ministry of the church, the Reformers rejected tradition as a second source of authority. While believing in heart religion, the Reformers would not give experience a place

alongside Scripture, as some later Protestants have done. While confident that the Bible could be understood by the ordinary Christian, the Reformers would reject the subjectivism and relativism that plagues evangelical Christianity. The Reformers were right to insist that the Bible alone has authority in matters of faith and life.

The Reformers were right. Here we, too, must stand. God help us. We can do no other. ✠



**"The cross alone is our theology."**

**—Martin Luther—**

# The Legacy of the Reformation

By Timothy Tennent



Timothy Tennent, president of Asbury Theological Seminary, originally posted this article in his blog on July 21, 2017. Used with permission.

In October of 2017 we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The legacy of the Reformation is profound and has resulted in over a billion new Christians around the world. The Reformation was, among many things, a major new church planting movement which created thousands of new faith communities which encircle the globe. Throughout history a repeated theme is that when the church goes through a crisis, it often spawns fresh re-discovery of the gospel message which, in turn, unleashes bold new evangelism and church planting.

The question I want to address is this: Is the story of the Reformation the story of a cataclysmic division in the life of the church demonstrating that Christians just can't get along and see themselves as "better together?" Or, is the Reformation about preserving the unity of the church and the re-discovery of that ancient apostolic faith? I want to say that the Reformation was, in the final analysis, about catholicity, or church unity, not about division. Of course, from a structural, ecclesiastical perspective we had a Roman Catholic Church and after the Reformation we had several new branches, including Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist. This, in turn, has led to a narrative that the Reformation was about schism, unbridled individuality, secularization, and so forth.

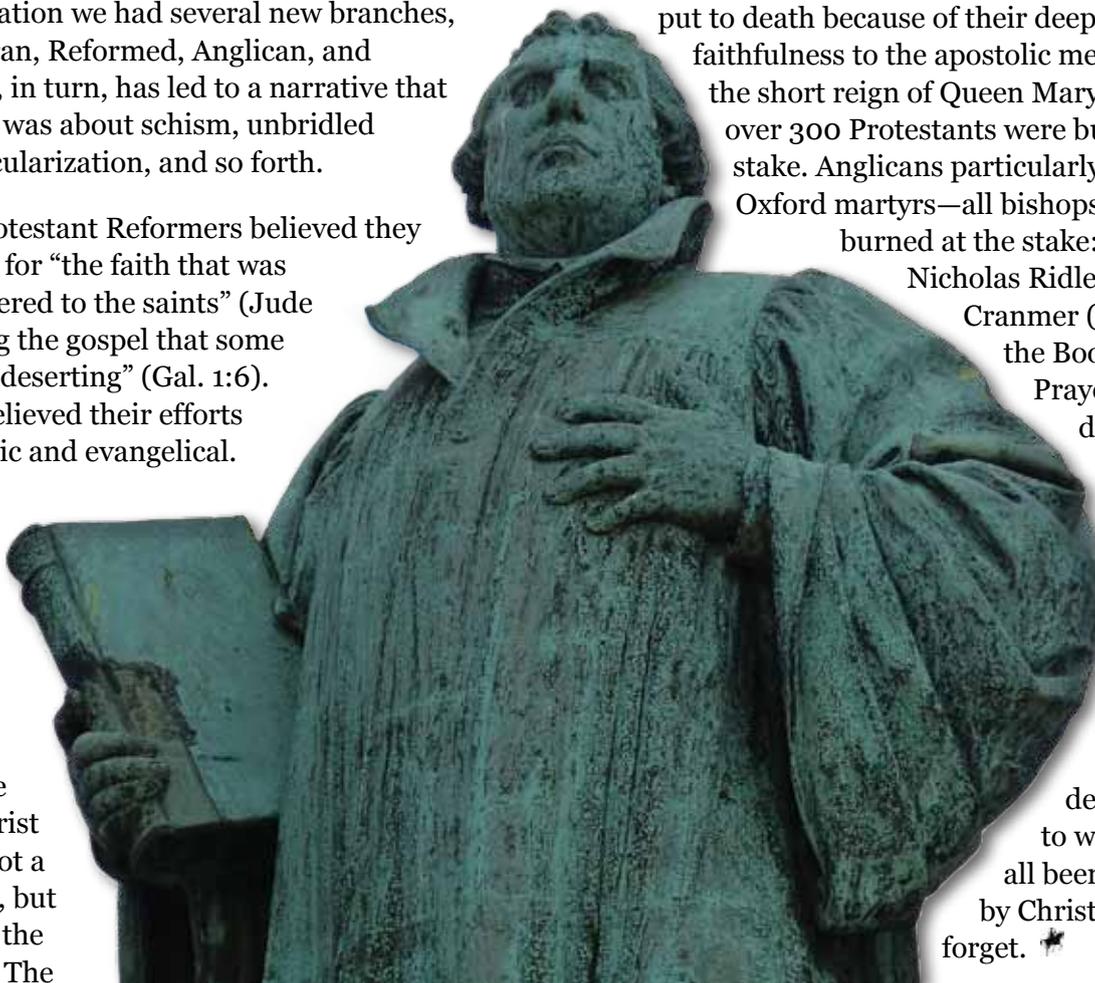
However, the Protestant Reformers believed they were contending for "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) and recovering the gospel that some were "so quickly deserting" (Gal. 1:6). The reformers believed their efforts to be both catholic and evangelical. They believed that they were acting on behalf of the whole church and for the sake of the integrity of the gospel. To argue for the sole sufficiency of Christ for salvation is not a sectarian schism, but a contending for the apostolic gospel. The

Reformers' protest against the Roman Catholic Church was not against the concept of catholicity per se, but only against those unwarranted dogmas based on an appeal to authoritative Roman tradition rather than Scripture. What protests the Reformers made were ultimately lodged on behalf of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. It is also important to remember that the Reformation sparked the Counter-Reformation within the Roman Catholic church which addressed many of the abuses which gave rise to the Reformation in the first place. There remain important differences, but we should thank God for the renewal which did take place which has enabled, for example, over 1 billion Catholic Christians to read the Bible in their own language.

What does this have to do with today? On the one hand, it is schismatic to contend for new doctrinal innovations which have never been believed or affirmed by the church of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it is a sign of catholicity to contend for the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints." A return to apostolicity is always an affirmation of catholicity. It also results in fresh evangelism and church planting. We should never forget that hundreds of our forefathers and foremothers in the faith were burned at the stake for the Apostolic faith. It was said at the time that they were burned for being schismatic. But, looking back, they were actually put to death because of their deeper catholicity and

faithfulness to the apostolic message. During the short reign of Queen Mary I of England, over 300 Protestants were burned at the stake. Anglicans particularly remember the Oxford martyrs—all bishops—who were burned at the stake: Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer (the compiler of the Book of Common Prayer). These three died for *sola fide* (faith alone), *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), and *sola gratia* (grace alone).

They died for the deeper catholicity to which we have all been summoned by Christ. May we never forget. ✠



## But Did Luther Go Far Enough?

By Paul Tillich (1886–1965)



Paul Tillich was a German philosopher and theologian who taught at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard, and the University of Chicago. Far from being an evangelical, Tillich writes perceptively about the distinction between the Reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) and the Radical Reformers (Zwingli, Anabaptists, Mennonites, etc.). Discerning the difference between these two branches of the Reformation is

important for us today because American Evangelicalism has so many ties to the radicals. Among such groups, the question is often asked: “Did Luther go far enough?” Though most have forgotten their origin, these conflicts can still be found among Protestants today. The following article is a slightly edited excerpt from Tillich’s book *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 239–242.

**L**uther’s conflict with the evangelical radicals is especially important for American Protestants because the prevailing type of Christianity in America was not produced by the Reformation directly but by the indirect effect of the Reformation through the movement of evangelical radicalism. Almost all of Luther’s emphases were accepted by the evangelical radicals, but they went beyond him. They had the feeling that Luther stood half-way. These radicals felt that they were the real fulfillment of the Reformation and that Luther remained half-Catholic.

First, they attacked Luther’s principle of Scripture. God has not spoken only in the past and has now become silent. He always speaks; he speaks in the hearts or depths of any man who is prepared to hear. The immediacy of the procession of the Spirit makes even the office of the minister unnecessary in the sectarian groups. These radicals are sometimes called “enthusiasts.” Their emphasis is on the presence of the divine Spirit, who is present every moment giving counsel for the activities of daily life. Luther had a different feeling. His was basically the feeling of the wrath of God, of God who is the judge. Therefore, when he speaks of the presence of the Spirit he does so in terms of repentance, or personal wrestling. Luther felt that it was pride for the sectarians to believe that it is possible to have immediate revelation in the actual human situation apart from the historical revelation embodied in the Bible. This seems to me the difference between the Reformers and all perfectionist and pietistic attitudes.

The second point in which the theology of the Reformation differs from the theology of the radical evangelical movements has to do with the meaning of the cross. For the Reformers, the cross is more of an objective event than a personal experience. We have

these same nuances among us today, wherein some of us, who follow the theology of the Reformation, emphasize more the objectivity of salvation through the cross of Christ, and others more the taking of the cross upon oneself. These two aspects are not contradictions but more a matter of emphasis than of exclusiveness.

Third, Luther and the whole Reformation, including Zwingli, emphasized infant baptism as the symbol of the prevenient grace of God, which means that it is not



**“I am more afraid of my own heart  
than of the pope and all his cardinals.  
I have within me the great pope, Self.”**

**—Martin Luther—**

dependent on the subjective reaction. Luther and Calvin believed that baptism is a divine miracle. The decisive thing is that God initiates the action. The time difference between the event of baptism and the indefinite moment of maturity does not mean anything in the sight of God. Adult baptism, on the other hand, lays stress on the

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to be received by faith. It was while examining the book of Romans that Luther felt he "was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."

The issue that provoked Luther to write his 95 Theses was the sale of indulgences (the purchase of pardon for deceased loved ones to shorten their stay in Purgatory). Raising money for the Pope's new cathedral in Rome, St. Peter's, the sale had become crassly mercenary. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from Purgatory springs." Luther was horrified. As a pastor, he knew the members of his congregation were being led astray, and so he took action. Luther's words were fairly moderate. He still showed respect for the Pope and mostly limited his attack to the abuse related to the sale of indulgences, showing it to be unscriptural. But his writing was seen as an assault on the established church and he found himself in hot water. After a series of confrontations (at Augsburg, Leipzig, and Worms), Luther was finally kicked out of the church (excommunicated). But Luther's protest was like a spark in a powder keg. People rose up by the thousands to lend him their support. The Reformation had begun.

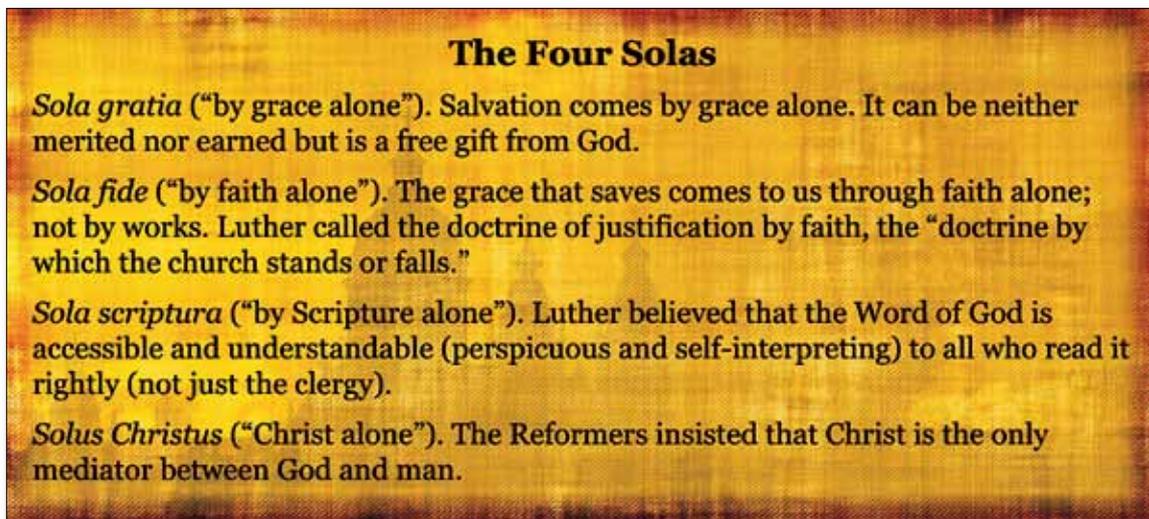
What were Luther's most important contributions? First, his translation of the Bible from the original languages into idiomatic German. Luther believed that Scripture alone was determinative of doctrine (*sola scriptura*), and he wanted to ensure that all people could read God's Word in a language they could understand. Second, his emphasis on faith (*sola fide*). We are made right with God not by our own achievements but by grace through faith. Third, his discovery that Christ alone is all we need (*solus Christus*). The saints and their supposed merits don't avail us anything.

Some may ask, "Is reformation the same as revival?" Not quite. But reformation provides the *foundation* for revival with its emphasis on Scripture, faith, and a *personal* appropriation of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Others may ask, "Was there any bad behavior among the Reformers?" Unfortunately, yes. There were a number of ugly events that Protestants sometimes committed against Catholics, Jews, and even against other Protestants. Luther himself could be vitriolic in writing against those with whom he disagreed—sometimes using language for which my mother would have washed my mouth out with soap!

Still others might ask, "If Luther were alive today, what would he include in his 95 Theses?" At the risk of projecting my own theological beliefs onto the great Reformer, I would humbly suggest that he might wage a ferocious protest against the following notions commonly found in the contemporary church:

1. Those who preach there are many ways to God are false prophets. There are *not* many ways to heaven but only one. Jesus said, "I am *the* way... no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:6).
2. The so-called "prosperity gospel" is heresy. Salvation is not a spiritual equivalent of the American Dream. Jesus died so that we can be holy not so that we can be healthy, wealthy, and happy.
3. The notion that the Bible is a historically-conditioned document that can be disregarded when it doesn't agree with our current political agenda, particularly in the area of sexual mores, is a diabolical lie.
4. When the goal of the church is to be inclusive and tolerant so that anyone and everyone can



become a member of God's family, we have a major malfunction in our understanding of church.

5. While worship services should connect with the worshippers, the goal is not to feel good or to like the music. Worship must call us to love God with our *minds* and to bow down in *reverential fear* before the Holy One.

I've offered only five theses, not 95, but you get the idea. Let me invite *you* to continue the list. Let's rediscover our spiritual DNA as protest-ants and once again learn how to protest when things in the church aren't what they ought to be!

If the Reformation were thought of as a symphony orchestra, Martin Luther could be considered the entire trumpet section! This year especially, let's listen once again to the music that he played and continue the work that he began! "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will get ready for battle?" (I Cor 14:8). ✦

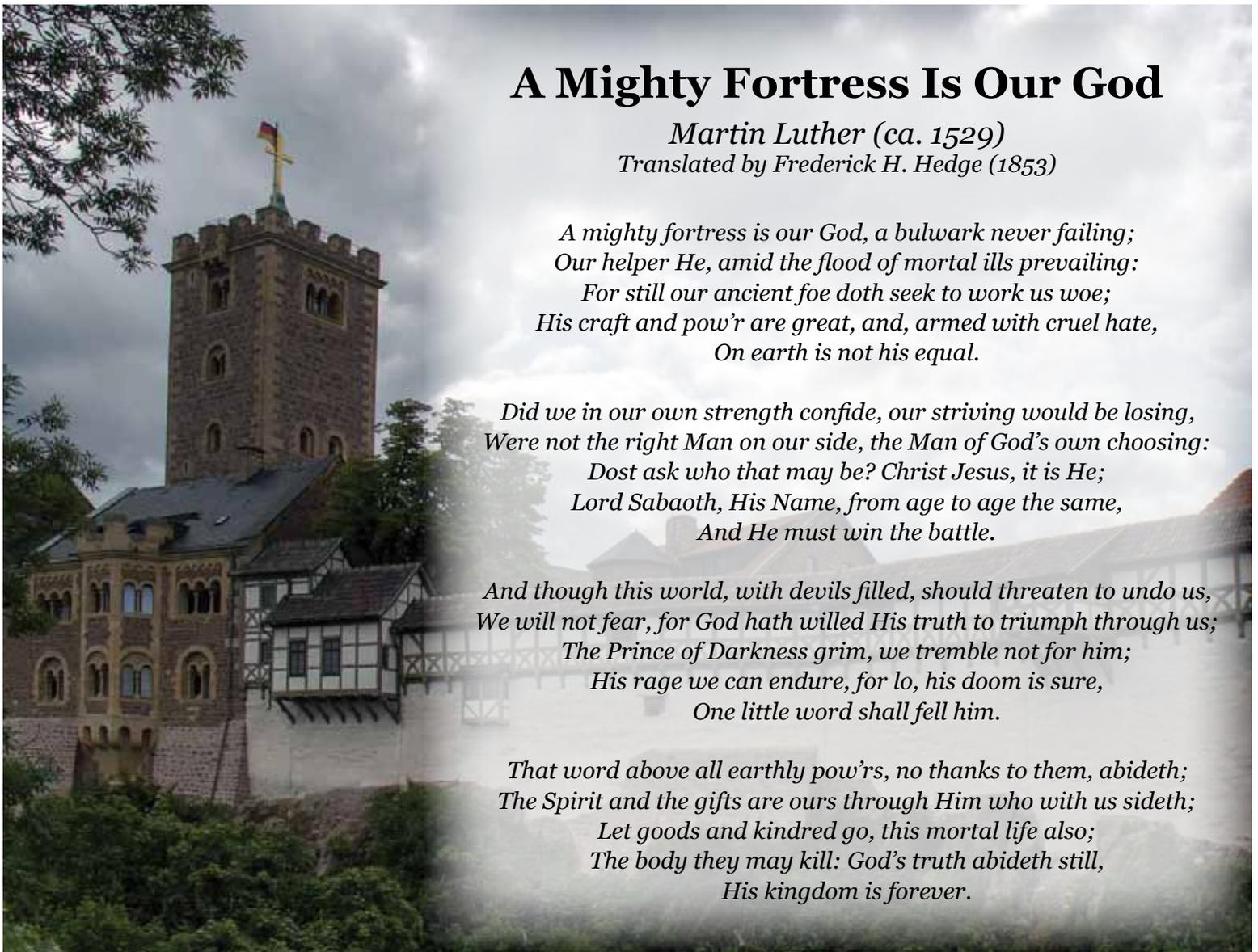
has become little more than the culture-religion of the declining Christian consensus that once dominated America.

*Semper reformanda*, the Reformation principle of the need for constant, ongoing reformation, is as vital as ever. The question we should ask ourselves is not “Am I Reformed?” but “Am I being reformed, and am I reforming?” When we look around at much of the church in the West today, with the vast mismatch between its still-large numbers and its increasing lack of integrity and influence, we can only say with tears, “Either there is something wrong with way of Jesus, or there must be something wrong with us.” To our shame, we surely know the answer all too well.

But rather than despair, the church should wake up to the opportunity of the present moment. The hour is always darkest just before the dawn. The Scriptures and history show that in the long story of restorations and renewals, *the church always goes forward best by going back first*. When we say this, we are not hankering after a return to an earlier period. We are talking about a return to God, not to an era. We are talking of going

back to a person and not to a period. For example, there would be no point in going back to the era of the first-century church. It was no golden age and the New Testament is frank in recording the errors, scandals, corruptions, and divisions of the first followers of Jesus. Peter was prejudiced against Gentiles, Ananias and Sapphira were liars, and Christians in Corinth were as loose in their morals as the pagans in the city around them. Neither that age nor any age since is the decisive model or standard for us. The only perfect model and the sole decisive standard is Jesus himself—his character, his teaching, his commands, and his endorsement of the authority of Scripture.

Thus, we are not “primitivists,” but we are not “progressives” either. We go back to a person and not to a period, so that we can go forward with no earlier period holding us back. The new wine of the kingdom always requires new wineskins. Going forward by going back first is the secret of true progress. All the ages behind us have their flaws, so this is not an argument for an uncritical espousal of the Reformation or any other period. Rather it is a call for constant reformation: *semper reformanda*. Our golden age is in the future! ✠



## A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

*Martin Luther (ca. 1529)*

*Translated by Frederick H. Hedge (1853)*

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and pow'r are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly pow'rs, no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth;  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

Do It Again, Lord, Do It Again! *continued from page 5*  
have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord”  
(II Chr 34:15).

When Josiah, Hilkiah, and the other reformers read from the Book, they realized how far they had strayed from the truth. In response, they humbled themselves in repentance before the God they had sinned against so grievously. The Word of God reoriented them to their true spiritual DNA and enabled them to rethink everything: their identity, their calling, their mission, their God, their worship, their lifestyles, etc. Rediscovering the Bible made possible a re-formation!

There's more. The reform of the Temple led to a revival of the people. When King Josiah read from the book to the congregation gathered in Jerusalem, the response was immediate. The people repented of their sins and joined the king in making a covenant with the Lord: to walk in his ways and to keep his commands with whole-hearted obedience (II Chr 34:29–32). The climax of the revival came when, at Josiah's urging, the Levites led the nation in a Passover celebration (see II Chr 35:1–19). The Book had led the nation to the Lamb! Blood sacrifice followed by a sacred meal anchored the people once again in their true identity as the redeemed of God. “No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel” (II Chr 35:18). In New Testament terms, we could say that the Written Word had led the people to the Incarnate Word.

Yes, the story of the reformation that occurred under Josiah 2,600 years ago helps us to better evaluate the reformation that occurred under Luther. But even more importantly, it inspires and motivates us to pray and work for reform and revival today. If God moves in power once again, he will likely follow the path marked out so long ago when Jerusalem was trapped in what appeared to be a vice-grip of moral decline and spiritual apostasy. The story of Josiah teaches us that reformation and revival come only when:

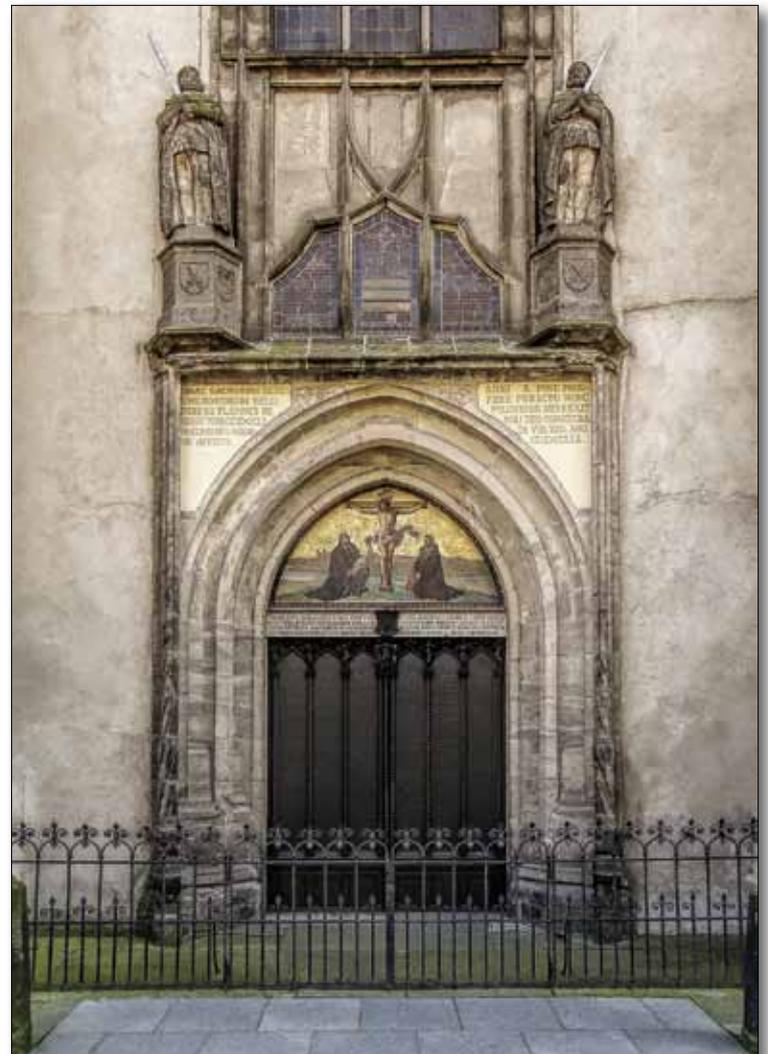
- Someone has a heart hungry for God, not just a vague desire for a generic deity but a passionate pursuit of the God who can work wonders, build a kingdom, and cleanse the heart: the God of David.
- Someone leads a bold and courageous protest against idolatry, calling by name the false gods that have captured the hearts of those both outside and inside the institutional church.
- Many people discover “the Book” that has been lost in church.
- God's people confess their sins in repentance and renew their covenant with God.
- Reading the written Word prompts us to return to the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and live in intimate fellowship with him.

Do it again, Lord, do it again! ✨

But Did Luther Go Far Enough? *continued from page 8*  
subjective participation, the ability of the mature man to decide.

Fourth, Luther and the other Reformers were also concerned about the way in which the sects isolated themselves, claiming that they were the true church and that their members were the elect. Such a thing was unthinkable for the Reformers. It is well known that the sects of the Reformation were psychologically lacking in love towards those who did not belong to their sect. Some of you probably have had similar experiences with sectarian or quasi-sectarian groups today. What is most lacking in them is not theological insight, but love.

A final difference had to do with eschatology. The eschatology of the Reformers caused them to negate the revolutionary criticism of the state that we find in the sectarian movements. The Reformation eschatology of the coming kingdom of God moved along a vertical line and had nothing to do with the horizontal line, which was, so to speak, given to the devil anyway. This difference in mood is visible in a comparison of the state of things in Europe and America. Under the influence of the evangelical radical movements, the tendency in America is to transform reality. In Europe, especially after two World Wars, one tends to find more of an attitude of resignation of Christians in the face of political power plays. ✨





The purpose of the Kinlaw Legacy Fund is to honor and perpetuate the legacy of Dr. Dennis Kinlaw by giving friends of the Francis Asbury Society (FAS) the opportunity to donate to a project that strengthens one of the core ministries of the organization he helped to found: the role of the evangelist. Of the two primary means used by FAS to fulfill its purpose—the spoken and the written word—it is the evangelist-speaker that most directly encounters the individual

person with the Scriptural proclamation.

The financial goal is still in the process of being determined. But, the more funds raised, the more persons that can be supported. Gifts may be either present gifts—cash, investments, or tangible assets—or deferred gifts through one’s estate or will. Persons interested in making non-cash or deferred gifts should contact President Stan Key. ✦



Titus Women desires to give women basic tools to enable them to lead other women into a love relationship with Jesus Christ. For more information, visit: [www.francisasburysociety.com/titus/pc17](http://www.francisasburysociety.com/titus/pc17).

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The High Calling

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