What Happened at Friedensau?
The Special Program at Friedensau Adventist University Regarding the Reform Movement

Idel Suárez, Jr., Ph.D., President of the General Conference, Cedartown, GA

The Example of Luke

In the first decades of Christianity, many wrote about what had happened with Jesus. Luke, the beloved physician, evangelist, researcher, and travel companion of the apostle Paul, saw the impending need to record his eyewitness account of the events relating to the life of Christ Jesus.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.” Luke 1:1-4.

A parallel may be drawn with Luke’s witness. Since individuals within Adventism have already published their perspective of what happened at the Symposium in May 2014 at Friedensau, Germany, it is appropriate and necessary that an eyewitness and protagonist in the recent events also presents a summary from the Reform Movement’s perspective about what happened at Friedensau.

The Symposium at Friedensau

The Institute of Adventist Studies sponsored a Symposium at Friedensau Adventist University from May 12 to 15, 2014, under the title The Impact of World War I on Seventh-day Adventism. The program was presented in English with the participation of 20 scholars (18 from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and 2 from the Reform Movement), and attended by 50 Adventists, including 16 Reformers and 25 Friedensau students. In all, there were between 95 and 105 persons present at any given time. The program schedule stated the following under the subheading “Note”:

“The special program on Wednesday evening [May 14, 2014] provides a historic opportunity to bring together two groups of Seventh-day Adventists who started to go separate ways during World War I: representatives of the International

Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (1863-present).

Right here in Friedensau, in 1920, the attempt to reconcile the two sides after the Great War failed. It is therefore of particular significance that, exactly 100 years after the outbreak of World War I, which led to a split among Seventh-day Adventists, representatives of both sides are meeting again in Friedensau on the occasion of the first Symposium of the IAS.3

It was a historic re-encounter. Presidents of the General Conference, European Division, German Union, and three German Fields of the Reform Movement were present, in addition to other officers. The dean and various faculty members of Friedensau Adventist University, the chairperson of Spectrum, a professor from Andrews University, and other prominent German officers were also present from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No such meeting had ever taken place between Adventists in the past 94 years. It was not an ecumenical meeting but a research session.

The “Special Program” took place from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, 2014. It consisted of four parts:

1. Rolf Polher, Ph.D., Director of IAS, and Johannes Hartlapp, Ph.D., Dean of Theology, first read a confessional statement of apology from the two German Unions for reporting Reformers to governmental authorities during the Great War.
2. Idel Suárez, Jr., Ph.D., president of the Reform Movement, gave a PowerPoint presentation on The Reform Movement Perspective on 1914.
4. A discussion was held consisting of questions raised by scholars, students, and other Adventist participants, and responses were given primarily by Antonino Di Franca, from the ministerial department of the Reform Movement and past president of the General Conference of the Reform Movement, and Idel Suárez.

Dr. Johannes Hartlapp presided over the special program. The meeting was cordial, Christian, and orderly. Reformers were allowed to speak without any censorship. The presentations were limited to 30 minutes each, while the discussion period was open-ended. All present were also allowed to ask any questions they desired concerning the Reform Movement.

The S.D.A. Apology

The Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany Regarding the Centennial Anniversary of the Outbreak of the First World War was signed by Johannes Naether, President, and Gunther Mache, Vice President. It was dated April 13, 2014, and issued from Hanover, Ostfildern. It was stated that they were officers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany. The statement was translated into English at Friedensau on this historic occasion. Holger Teubert and Hartlapp assisted in the statement’s elaboration. Hartlapp read the German original version, and Rolf Pohler read the English translation.

The statement was an acknowledgement of wrong doing on the part of the German Union leaders in issuing letters endorsing “military service” with “weapons,” even “on the Sabbath,” from the outset of the Great War in 1914. The statement also attested that the leaders had accused their former Adventist “members who contradicted them of having ‘fallen’ from the truth” and had “people pursued by the authorities.” They asked the “Reform Movement for forgiveness for our failings.” The statement also acknowledged that “the children of God are called to be people of peace, and to reject every form of violence against the innocent.” Neal C. Wilson, a former President

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of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was quoted as saying in 1985 that “Seventh-day Adventists want to be known as peacemakers.”

After the statement was read aloud, Suárez shook hands with Pohler, Hartlapp, and Teubert. Photographs were taken of them shaking hands and holding hands in a Christian spirit, according to scripture. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Romans 12:18. The German Adventist leaders had taken a bold step, and it required a corresponding action of appreciation, showing all present that the leaders of the Reform Movement harbor no animosity or hatred toward the Adventists. Suárez stated, “In the name of the Reform Movement, we thank you for the statement just read, and you will receive a formal response from the General Conference of the Reform Movement.”

Solomon stated that there are two steps in being reconciled with God. The first is confession. The second is to depart from evil. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13.

The leaders in the S.D.A. German Union made a courageous and noble step in acknowledging several pertinent wrongdoings regarding their engagement in war. Although the statement did not explicitly state that the Reformers had been disfellowshipped from their Adventist churches, it did make some important concessions.

Ronald Lawson has reported that many German Adventist youth “when conscripted … opt for civil alternative” service in Germany. Stefan Hoschele, a professor at Friendensau Adventist University, argued in Dialogue in favor of alternative service and refraining from bearing weapons, violence, and being associated with war. Meanwhile, American Adventist youth are choosing to enlist voluntarily as combatants in the military in the United States. George Knight and others have estimated that between “6,000 to 8,000” youth have presently enlisted in the American military as weapons-bearing “combatants.” They did not choose to be conscientious objectors or non-combatants. This suggests a clear philosophical and doctrinal divide between Germany and America on engaging in the military and bearing weapons.

The war was the major cause of schism between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the pioneers of the Reform Movement, but today other doctrinal differences, which are just as important, remain. Before any of these can be addressed, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to reconsider its own divide between “Modern Adventism” and “Post-Modern Adventism,” and its “fundamentalist” and non-fundamentalist tendency and practices. The Reform Movement is an anti-militarist church and encourages Adventists and Christians everywhere to espouse the teachings of the early Christians concerning non-participation in violence. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was conscientiously opposed to engaging in war and bearing arms during and after the Civil War. They resolved, “we cannot believe it to be right for the

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3 Miscellaneous, “Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany regarding the centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, Hanover/Ostfildern, April 13, 2014.
4 Johannes Naether and Gunter Machel, Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany regarding the centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, Hanover/Ostfildern, April 13, 2014.
7 George Knight, “Faith in Tension, the Great War and Internationalism, and a Lost Part of Adventist Heritage” (Manuscript read by author, Friedensau Adventist University, Friedensau, Germany, May 12, 2014), 12.
servants of Christ to take up arms to destroy the lives of their fellow men.”

Adventist members who support the military should consider the Peace Fellowship movement within the Adventist Church. This new movement in Adventism is espousing a “peace church” mindset. The Reform Movement believes that Jesus established His church as a peace church. He even reproved His disciples when they took up arms or weapons, thus condemning a “just war” scenario. “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Matthew 26:52.

The Reform Movement Perspective on 1914

Suárez presented a PowerPoint presentation titled The Reform Movement Perspective on 1914. There were about 80 persons present. A handout containing all the slides shown was distributed to most of the scholars present. The research paper containing more information was included in the package each registered participant received. As with all other presentations during the symposium, the presentation was limited to 30 minutes.

Suárez addressed the birth of the Reform Movement and compared it to the days of Jesus Christ, the Protestant Reformation, and the beginning of the Advent Movement. The Reform Movement was a living testament that the law of God could be kept and the peaceful teachings of Christ could be followed in the context of the Great War without compromising truth. The Reformers followed the early American Adventist pioneers, who were more than noncombatants; they were, like the Quakers, conscientious objectors. The Reform Movement, contrary to A.G. Daniell’s prediction, has continued ten times beyond his ten-year forecast and today is represented in more than 120 countries. Biblical references from the gospel of Jesus, historical proofs with pictures of the American and German leaders, and testimonies from Sister Ellen G. White were cited throughout the presentation.

Suárez closed his presentation by citing a testimony from Sister White concerning God’s remnant people and “the foundation of all enduring reform.”

“God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places.”

Pacificism, Nonviolence, and Conscientious Objection—the Reform Movement Position

Woonsan Kang also gave a PowerPoint presentation, with a handout titled Pacifism, Nonviolence, and Conscientious Objection—the Reform Movement Position. He introduced the co-author of the paper to the audience—Pastor Antonino Di Franca.

Christian “conscientious objection” in reference to military service is the position that refuses military service, based on specific Biblical principles. Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15, 22. The position is strictly connected to “nonviolence,” which includes abstaining from all violent methods [and] means that injure others and is based on the teaching of the Lord Jesus, as reported in the gospels, from which the term “non-resistance” comes. Matthew 5:39. “Nonviolence” and “conscientious objection” are related to “pacifism,” the principle of non-participation in war. 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4... Pacifism is the natural outgrowth of the principle that God is the Giver of Life, and hence He alone can take it.

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12 Idel Suárez, Jr., “The Reform Movement Perspective on 1914” (lecture, Friedensau Adventist University, Friedensau, Germany, May 14, 2014). This presentation may be accessed in its entirety at http://www.sda1844.org.
When World War I occurred, the Seventh-day Adventist leadership in Germany instructed its members to comply with the government’s demand that all able men become combatant soldiers. The pioneers of the Reform Movement refused these instructions as being incompatible with the teachings of the Bible and chose the position of conscientious objection to military service, in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. These believers were disfellowshipped by the church they loved.... Many suffered imprisonment and torture, and some of them died.

After the war ended, the Reformers requested a hearing before the General Conference [officers] of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which was granted and convened in 1920 at Friedensau.... [They asked] for an official ... return to the church’s previous standard. But their request was not granted. What happened 100 years ago brought about the origin of the Reform Movement, which still upholds conscientious objection as the standard of God’s church everywhere in the world.  

As with prior presentations, the audience gave their applause of appreciation. A lengthy discussion period in the form of questions and answers then followed.

Question-and-answer Period
Following are some examples of the questions and answers that were given. The main points of the questions and summaries of the responses are provided according to the author’s desire for congruity and his recollection of the facts. The questioners’ initials are given in bold face below. All Reform Movement responders are cited by last name.

The apostle Peter admonishes us to be ready to answer anyone who desires an answer regarding our belief and doctrine. He wrote, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” I Peter 3:15.

D.F.: Would you please tell us a bit about your organizational structure and current membership so we have a better understanding of your organization?

Suárez: This Reform Movement is organized like the Seventh-day Adventist Church but on a smaller scale. It is in over 120 countries. It has a General Conference consisting of 13 members from around the world, 5 divisions, unions, fields, and local churches. The Reform Movement has a total of missionary schools in all continents. We are no longer a “German Reform,” and the majority of our membership today does not come from the Adventist Church.

B.H.: What is your position on the ordination of women?

Suárez: I was recently in Guatemala at a field delegates’ meeting conducting their reorganization. About half of all the delegates were females. Many of them were directors of local churches. In the Reform Movement, women may hold just about any office and at any level of the organization. However, women are not ordained as pastors in the Reform Movement.

**B.H.** As I listen to your presentations, you speak of Sister White, the Spirit of Prophecy, and quote her writings like we did 50 years ago. I want to know what type of methodology do you follow to do your research?

**Di Franca:** We base all our doctrines and teachings on the Bible. We have first quoted the Bible and the words of Jesus as the basis for our beliefs. We are Biblically based.

**W.L.** Do you still consider the Adventist Church as Babylon?

**Di Franca:** The testimonies say that the Adventist Church runs the risk of becoming a daughter to Babylon. We maintain that the participation in war and engaging in human bloodshed is apostasy.

**Suárez:** May I just add that recently Helmut Kramer, a retired Adventist pastor, sent an open letter to our General Conference in which he declares that he considers the Reform Movement to be Babylon.16

**G.S.** You have not told us about the Nicolici Movement. I was baptized by a Pastor of that Reform [but later left it].

**Di Franca:** I was in your library and noticed a book on the numerous schisms that have occurred in Christianity. There have been so many. If there has been only one schism in the Reform Movement that remains after 100 years, it sounds to me to be pretty good.

**Audience:** Laugh

**Suárez:** Please recall that the Adventist Church had many schisms even before 1914 and the Great War. D.M. Canright, who was a friend of the Whites, left the Adventist Church and wrote against it. E.J. Waggoner and A.T. Jones, the two preachers of righteousness by faith, also left Adventism. A.F. Ballenger also left the denomination. John Kellogg, M.D., with other prominent persons left the Adventist Church. L.R. Conradi, who was here at Friendensau in 1920, also left Adventism and joined the Seventh-day Baptists.17

**R.L.:** What other social issues has your movement espoused? Or have you been so absorbed in pacifism that no other issue has been promoted?

**Suárez:** The Reform Movement is pro-life across the continuum. It does not support abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, or engaging in war and human bloodshed. It also espouses the ethical treatment of animals. Hence, its members are vegetarian. It has a humanitarian branch known as the Good Samaritan, which functions on a smaller scale similar to ADRA. ADRA has done some very good humanitarian work around the world. The Good Samaritan is based in Italy, and it provides financial assistance to the sick, poor, aged, and widowed. It is also active in sponsoring primary school students in the developing world. Our education department is active in opening primary schools promoting Christian education around the world.

**J.C.** In what countries do you seem to have the most problems with military service?

**Di Franca:** The young people in our denomination do not have many problems with military service. They serve in civil service or flee the country.

**Suárez:** The geographical area where we encounter the most problems is the Arab world. There some have even gone to jail because of their faith in Christ.

**Suárez:** We do not claim to be holier than you. Regardless of the reason you may maintain for our pioneers taking a conscientious objection stand, this Reform Movement has been a pacifist church for 100 years. It has proved that it is possible to follow the peaceful teachings of Christ and survive a crisis of war. There were believers like Johannes Rauser, who was part of an underground Reform Church and faced a prison sentence after being accused by an Adventist pastor. Rauser’s grandson is here with us.

**Helmut Welker:** I have conducted research on my grandfather Johannes Rauser, and I am willing

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15 “We are in danger of becoming a sister to fallen Babylon, of allowing our churches to become corrupted, and filled with every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird; and will we be clear unless we make decided movements to cure the existing evil?” Ellen G. White, Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce (Silver Springs, MD: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 188.

16 Helmut “Herb” Kramer to Leadership of General Conference, November 8, 2013, Coquille, OR, 1.


to share my findings in official government reports with those who are interested.

The meeting was closed with prayer. Dennis Fortin from the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University thanked the Almighty in prayer for an enlightening meeting and discussion.

**Conclusion**

An informal session followed the question-and-answer period with the exchange of business cards and private comments. One participant confided that “you have a message that needs to be heard in Adventist circles.” The representatives of the pioneer Reform Movement pledged before A.G. Daniells in their parting words that they had a message to share with the world and were committed to presenting the Reformation abroad. Nearly 100 years later, their spiritual offspring returned to Friedensau to continue that legacy. This time, however, they were called the “Reform brethren,” not “the opposition movement.”

**Pending Follow-Up**

Three important publications that will add more light to the developments at the Symposium held in Friedensau are pending:

1. The Institute of Adventist Studies official symposium papers will be published by Friedensau Adventist University.
2. A transcript of the Special Program at Friedensau Adventist University, held on the evening of May 14, 2014, will be made available during the Centennial Commemoration of Faithfulness of the Reformers, to be held July 30 to August 3, 2014, at the World Headquarters of the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, in Cedartown, Georgia, U.S.A.
3. An official Reform Movement response to the *Apologetic Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany Regarding the Centennial Anniversary of the Outbreak of the First World War* is in the process of being drafted.

May the grace and peace of God be with all peacemakers who treasure and seek to live by the principles of the Prince of Peace.

**Editor's Note:** To view Pastor Suarez’s complete PowerPoint presentation, visit the General Conference website at www.sda1844.org.

**2014 Calendar**

- **June 30:** Western Field Conference Registration Deadline
- **July 2 – 6:** Family Camp, O’Leno State Park, FL
- **July 21:** Centennial Commemoration Registration Deadline – see registration form on page 8
- **July 24 – 27:** Family Camp, Yosemite National Park, CA
- **July 30 – August 3:** Centennial Commemoration, Cedartown, GA
- **August 4 – 14:** International Youth Conference, Holland
- **August 11 – 13:** Western Field Delegates’ Meetings, Mountain Center, CA
- **August 11 – 17:** Reformation Tour, Germany
- **August 13 – 17:** Western Field Conference, Mountain Center, CA

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RESERVATION FORM

CENTENNIAL
COMMENORATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, TO MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2014
GENERAL CONFERENCE HEADQUARTERS, 625 WEST AVENUE, CEDARTOWN, GEORGIA 30125, U.S.A.

(Please complete one reservation form for each family)

NAME ___________________________ TELEPHONE ___________________________

STREET ___________________________ EMAIL ___________________________

CITY, STATE, POSTAL CODE ___________________________ COUNTRY ___________________________

NUMBER AGES 6-ADULT _____ NUMBER AGES 5 AND UNDER _____

(Mobile phone ___________________________.

(Children ages 5 and under receive free lodging and free meals)

LODGING (Check nights for which lodging is needed, and select hotel)

☐ WED., JULY 30

☐ THURS., JULY 31

☐ FRI., AUGUST 1

☐ SABBATH, AUGUST 2

☐ SUN., AUGUST 3

☐ MON., AUGUST 4

☐ HOLIDAY INN ($70 per room per night, 2 beds, 2-4 people; includes breakfast)

NO. ROOMS _____ X $70 = $ ________

☐ COUNTRY HEARTH INN ($52 per room per night, 1 bed, 1-2 people; includes breakfast)

NO. ROOMS _____ X $52 = $ ________

☐ COUNTRY HEARTH INN ($63 per room per night, 2 beds, 2-4 people; includes breakfast)

NO. ROOMS _____ X $63 = $ ________

MEALS ($5.00 per meal—insert number of people ages 6 to adult for each meal below)

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TRANSPORTATION (Round trip—Atlanta airport to Cedartown and return to Atlanta)

☐ 1 1/2 hours—airport to Cedartown and 1 1/2 hours back ($20 per person)

NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____ X $20 = $ ________

ARRIVAL: FROM __________ DATE __________ TIME ________ AIRLINE __________ FLIGHT NUMBER ________

DEPARTURE: TO __________ DATE __________ TIME ________ AIRLINE __________ FLIGHT NUMBER ________

TOUR TO ATLANTA

TRANSPORTATION (Round trip—Cedartown-Atlanta-Cedartown)

NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____ X $20 = $ ________

FREE

TOUR OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., MUSEUM AND HOUSE

NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____ X $38.50 = $ ________

GEORGIA AQUARIUM

TOTAL ENCLOSED $ ________

Submit reservation form and payment by July 21, 2014, to:

EMAIL: INFO@SDA1844.ORG

MAIL: INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY / P.O. BOX S / CEDARTOWN, GA 30125


CONTACTS: DOUGLAS FRANCIS / KAROLA KRAENZMER

(No refunds after July 21, 2014)