

1921 — and of the Scandinavian Union Conference one year later, with Stockholm as headquarters.

Nord was capable as organizer and financier in addition to being gifted as evangelist. Young Swedish-American evangelists were invited to return to Sweden and soon proved successful in preaching to Swedish audiences. Property was purchased in Stockholm for headquarters and made ready for use in 1923. Best of all, the Stockholm congregation of Seventh-day Adventists (which had existed since 1884, but without a representative center) dedicated the new *Advent Church* early in 1925. Two years later the Hultafors Sanatorium was purchased as a health center in Sweden; and before he ended his office as president in 1932, Nord had acquired the spacious property of Ekebyholm near Rimbo, between Stockholm and Uppsala, as a new center for the Swedish Mission School (which had existed since 1898 at Jarnboas, Sweden, under limited conditions).

Since its founding, the Ekebyholm school has grown into the Swedish Junior College and Seminary, a significant center for Swedish Adventist thought and culture. Its faculty, of which the author of this important study is a ranking member, is respected and competent.

A few small errors in the book should be noted. On page 98, line 4, should be read 1844 for "1884;" page 117, line 17, must read Portland for "Poland;" page 194, line 5 should be Bodén for "Bodin;" page 359, line 9 ff., gives the impression that the president of the Scandinavian Union Conference in 1925 was C. J. Raft, but he lived in Switzerland at that time and Nord was president.

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The Search for the Historical Luther

ERWIN SICHER

MARTIN LUTHER'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

By William M. Landeen

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Probably more has been written about Martin Luther than about any man in history, with the possible exception of Jesus Christ. Despite the great mass of material already written, scholars continue their interest in Luther — more than a thousand studies appearing each year, according to the *Luther-Jahrbuch*.

Unfortunately, many of these studies have been polemical. Such friends and disciples as Cordatus, Melancton, Mathesius, and Spangenberg eulogized the reformer as the prophet of God, the noble and heroic champion of truth, the spiritual liberator of the world, even the very angel of Revelation 14:6 ff.

On the other hand, Luther's opponents, largely Catholics, denigrated him. Such contemporaries as Johannes Cochläus and Johann Pistorius characterized the re-

former as a priest of Venus, drunkard, megalomaniac, or even as the "Seven-headed Monster," the Evil One in human form.

After these contemporary writers, many people involved in the movements and ideologies that followed the Enlightenment were interested in the reformer and his thought. Romanticists viewed him as unique, a genius; nationalists claimed him as their forerunner; liberals saw him as an early advocate of liberty; and socialists regarded him as typically bourgeois. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Leopold von Ranke attempted to shift studies of Luther to a more scientific foundation. Since then, even auxiliary sciences such as sociology, economics, and psychology have made their contributions.

In the early twentieth century, two developments greatly aided in the search for the historical Luther. First, Karl Holl indicated the absolute necessity of considering Luther's theology as a key element in understanding the reformer. Second, the turmoil of two world wars broke down some of the hostility between confessions. The new ecumenism has greatly facilitated an honest reappraisal of Luther and his work. No longer obsessed by the phobia of the Seven-headed Monster, Catholics have freely searched for Luther. Many Protestants, on the other hand, also moved by the spirit of Christian brotherhood, have begun to look more honestly at Luther.¹ Protestant theologians have begun to note Luther's limitations. Lutheran Marc Lienhard has stated:

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In matters relating to the doctrine of the ministry, has Luther taken into account the diversity in the New Testament? In his fight against monasticism, has he overlooked to some extent the eschatological dimension of the *Consilia Evangelii* and prepared unwittingly for Protestantism's surrender to the bourgeois spirit? Did not his indifference towards the church as an institution help the emergence of the State Churches? Was not his doctrine of the Holy Spirit bound too exclusively to the actualities of the Word and the Sacraments, to the neglect of the charismatic fullness which movements apart from official Protestantism, like Pentecostalism, rediscovered, perhaps with good reason?²

These are good beginnings. But many Christians, unfortunately, still accept and propagate the invalid and dishonest clichés of the past.³ This is particularly true of a great number of orthodox Catholics and Protestants. It is refreshing, therefore, to see an Adventist work on Luther which claims to allow the reformer to "speak his convictions regardless of inconsistencies, paradoxes, or exaggerations" (preface).

William M. Landeen, Emeritus Professor of History at Loma Linda University, believes that Luther's central concern in his early career was the problem of "sin and its cure," but that the cure escaped him for some time. Only slowly and "late in his pre-Reformation career" (p. 49) did Luther discover the answer to his restless search in the doctrine of "salvation by faith." The author argues that this doctrine was the great breakthrough that completed the reformer's "basic theological framework" (p. 39). After that, Luther made only minor changes in his theology.

Undoubtedly the concept of salvation by faith is Luther's historic contribution, and for it he deserves the respect and honor of all Christians. Still, Luther was no superman. He faced many human limitations. For instance, he was unable to escape his innate conservatism and "retained a great deal" (p. 81) from the Roman church, particularly in the case of liturgy and church forms, but also in doctrines (pp. 55, 63,

69). Thus, "the church that emerged under his leadership by 1530 was new, but it was also very much the old church; we might even call it the Roman Church renewed, reformed, and modernized" (p. 81).

The true meaning of the Sabbath,⁴ the Ten Commandments, adult baptism, communion, and the freedom of the human will all escaped him (pp. 167 ff., 98 ff., 115 ff., 129 ff.). Personally he was frequently harsh and stubborn. His relationship with Rome and many "radical reformers" was not always one of Christian charity.⁵ He called many honest Christians (and we Adventists often repeat him) "counterfeits," "fanatics," and "false prophets," even though they made many useful contributions to Christianity. For example, Andreas Karlstadt upheld the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath.⁶ Marpeck, Schwenckfeld, and Bundy defended the doctrine of free will and personal accountability. Others stressed pacifism and "sanctification, and aspired, within their limits, to imitate Christ and the martyr-minded members of the primitive church." Significant also were their contributions to adult baptism, soul sleep, and the separation of church and state. They are even responsible for emphasizing abstinence, temperance, and world missions. These brave men and women of the Radical Reformation, George H. Williams feels, "deserve to have their testimony taken down anew before the less partisan tribunals of another age."⁷

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Although Landeen refers to some of Luther's "inconsistencies and paradoxes," he admires Luther too much to draw from them conclusions that might help revise the way Adventists view Luther and the Reformation. Furthermore, while the writer's stated goal is to describe "Luther's central doctrines" (preface), his Adventist point of view causes him to overemphasize minor aspects. Such topics as "Sanctification" and the "Sabbath," to which Landeen devotes whole chapters, could easily have been included in sections entitled "Faith Alone" and the "Ten Commandments" — thereby retaining Luther's perspective.

Further, Luther's thought appears to be treated too statically. Probably this treatment could not have been different, in view of the author's assumption that Luther's theological framework was basically complete after his discovery of salvation by faith. Landeen proceeds to that event in a more or less chronological manner, taking into account the evolution of Luther's thought. But at that point he abandons this approach in favor of a topical method — which ignores any further development in Luther's thought.

The topical method, which has been employed elsewhere to great advantage, in this case accentuates a basic lack of unity in the book. Landeen is fully aware of the trends in recent Luther research. He even states that contemporary scholarship "seeks to set [Luther's] thought within a framework of theology where all his doctrines are related to one another to form a systematic whole" (p. 156). Further, he continues that Luther's writings "reveal a remarkable doctrinal and systematic unity" (p. 156). But this very unity escapes the author, and one is left with the feeling of an unnecessarily fragmented work. Luther's thought could have been organized around a central theme, such as his Christology, which some modern theologians consider the key to the reformer's theology.⁸ Such a holistic approach might have greatly enhanced Landeen's achievement. Although the author intended that Luther state his own case, the book would have been more readable (and burdensome repetitions might have been avoided) had Landeen paraphrased and analyzed Luther's words more often.

As a whole, the strengths of Landeen's work far outweigh the shortcomings. The research is impeccable. The statements are solid. The writing is very interesting and, on the whole, readable. The general Adventist reader will gain a good view of Luther and his thought. From the material Landeen presents, the perceptive reader can go beyond the author's own analysis and draw conclusions that will be helpful in bringing Adventist Reformation views closer in line with the present state of research.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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- 1 For the interested student, the following may be consulted for bibliographical works in English and German:
Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation in Recent Historical Thought*, publication number 54 (Washington, D. C.: AHA Service Center for Teachers of History 1967), p. 6.
A collection of essays by Catholic authors (Lortz, Iserloh, Pesch, Hacker, McSorley, and Manns) can be found in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*. Edited by Jared Wicks. (Chicago: Loyola University Press 1970).
 - 2 La place de Luther dans le dialogue protestant-catholique actuel, *Positions Luthériennes* (Paris 1965), pp. 86-87.
 - 3 Richard Stauffer, *Luther As Seen by Catholics* (Richmond: John Knox Press 1967), pp. 71-72.
 - 4 Luther said, "In our time there arose in Moravia a foolish kind of people, the Sabbatarians, who maintain that the Sabbath must be observed." (Landeen, *Luther's Thought*, p. 198).
 - 5 Luther heaped abuse after abuse on the pope. Much is not reproducible, but some quotes with ellipses are given: "The pope is a . . . foe of God." "The pope . . . has emitted a great and horrible ordure here. . . . A wonder it did not tear his anus or burst his belly." "There lies the pope in his own dung." See Hartmann Grisar, *Luther* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, Ltd.), volume four, p. 322.
Luther's attitude toward the radical reformers can be deduced from these statements: "Münzer, Carlstadt, Campanus and such fellows, together with the factitious spirits and sects, are merely devils incarnate." Caspar Schwenckfeld, like Agricola was a "mad fool possessed by the devil;" "it is the devil who spews and excretes his work." See Grisar, volume two, p. 376.
 - 6 Luther remarked about Carlstadt, "Yes, if Carlstadt were to write more about the Sabbath, even Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath, that is Saturday, would be celebrated" (Landeen, p. 198).
 - 7 George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1962), p. 863.
 - 8 Maurer believes that "the central theme from which Luther's theology can be understood, in its principal parts, is the Christology." *Kirche und Geschichte*, volume one, p. 19.
Erich Seeberg in his *Luther's Theologie in ihren Grundzügen* (Stuttgart 1940), p. 24, states, "The principal point in Luther's theology is the view of Christ." Heino O. Kadai, on the other hand, says that "Luther's theology centers uniquely around the crucified Jesus." See the chapter entitled "Luther's theology of the cross" in *Accents in Luther's Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1967). He simply repeated the original thesis of Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theologia crucis* (München 1933).