

“Watchman, what of the night ?”

“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!”

Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

**THE SIGNIFICANT NATURE
OF THE TRUTH**

**THE 500 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE
REFORMATION – COMMEMORATION
OR ABOLISHMENT?** pg. 6

Editor's Preface

With this issue of WWN, the main article chronicles an incident regarding a topic of growing spiritual concern that is permeating our ranks at an almost undetectable yet rapid pace. While the world (fallen, sinful humanity collectively) treats the question of what constitutes "the truth" as largely a matter of opinion, Scripture reveals a very pointed and *absolute* definition of it. In both source and nature, the truth involves much more than what our flawed and finite concepts of facts, honesty, reality, verity, etc., perceive it to be. Moreover, when we consider that satanic forces are more frequently and intensely using deception to distort, malign, and re-define truth as the return of Christ grows ever nearer, it is incumbent upon all who profess to be believers in the truth *to know from the Bible what that truth actually is*. Far too many of us are being influenced by the standards, norms, and attitudes of the worldly society surrounding us and inspired by "the prince of the power of the air" (see Ephesians 2: 1-3).

The second article begins a series of updates which we intend to present concerning the ongoing ecumenical negotiations planned between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. Considering that October 31, 2017, marks the 500 year anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 theses protest against the excesses practiced within the Papal system, we thought it imperative to keep the subscribers to WWN informed as de-



velopments in this ongoing dialogue progress steadily toward the anniversary date.

Longtime readers of the thought paper will be interested to know that 2017 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission which was formed in the aftermath of Vatican Council II in 1967, the year which began the closing period of the prophetic "times of the Gentiles"! It is under this Commission that these ecumenical proceedings began and are moving toward full, visible unity.

BIBLICAL REVELATIONS ABOUT THE TRUTH **Introductory Observations**

For over a year, this editor has been attending a devotional Bible study / discussion hosted in the home of the local area Adventist pastor. Like any devotional style of presentation, this one is also less structural and more informal than an expositional, exegetical approach to the biblical text would be. Personally, I have been involved in enough of these type of studies to know that they usually degenerate into a subjective "chitchat" about whatever immediate topics may be commanding the attention of the general populace at the time. In fact, this appears to be the main reason why devotional studies are the most prevalent within practically all the faith communities of Christendom. This study however, conducted once a month with the pastor's wife leading out, has not followed that trend. Overall, there has been thoughtful, contemplative, soul-searching talk and reflection on the various scriptural themes under consideration. That said, an issue surfaced during one of the discussions that should be recognized as a concern of the utmost importance. In the context of being the most effective wit-

ness for Jesus, the notion was put forward that we (primarily Adventists), in our zeal to promote truth, are not loving enough and therefore can be cold and legalistic. While initially acknowledging this *can* be a problem, further elaboration on this point produced a sentiment that emerged among the group which concluded that "love" was more important to our Christian witness than "truth." In fact it was even expressed that given the choice between truth or love, we should always choose love. Of course, the obvious implication with this line of reasoning suggests that to stress the importance of truth is an indication, at least to some degree, of deficiency - or even absence - of love. The dichotomy that is thus being drawn by this juxtaposition of love with truth is one of incompatibility and conflict.

It is this view and the manner in which it is being advanced that is especially alarming. Contrary to the Bible, both the church and the world are increasingly defining spirituality within the confines of subjectivity alone (emotions, feelings, impulses). Accordingly, objectivity (rationality, logic, intellection) is more and more being relegated to the realm of the non-spiritual. This post-modern relativistic view of the matter uses sophistry of various forms to promote its (supposed) antagonism between truth and love. Through repetition, erroneous association, insinuation, innuendo, etc., this concept is stealthily encroaching upon our understanding and thinking concerning the actual relationship that love has with truth. The subtlety of this deception is of such a nature that those who appear to accept and embrace it do so without even realizing the temperamental effect that this instinctive fallacy is having on their ability to exercise sound judgment. Simply

put, this sophism encourages us to primarily think with our emotions and feelings, thereby blurring the demarcation between sentimental impulse and discriminating reason. In *WWN (Iowa)*, Issue # 2 (Dec. 2013 /Jan. 2014), we discussed the major principles and methods involved in the promulgation of post-modern relativism in the article *The Importance and Necessity of Maintaining Biblically Sound Doctrine*. As we noted, "Relativism's core principle of denying absolute reality and truth" ¹ lies at the root of this widely accepted worldview of humanity's individual and collective existence, pervading both our conscious and subconscious sensitivity. By restricting and defining "love" as subjective sentiment and downplaying or ignoring its highest (biblical) aspect as objective moral principle (*carefully* read 1 Corinthians, chapter 13), all of us will be, if we are not vigilant, susceptible to this narrow, worldly notion of love as a result of being conditioned into accepting the near universal idea that if it feels good it *must* be right. And because biblical truth does *not* always fall within the perimeters of this narrow, biased concept (i.e., because of sin, what makes us "feel good" is not automatically "right"), the truth can be made to appear as if it is in some manner detrimental to love. This unbalanced distortion of love, though, is not the only factor causing confusion. There is also a continuing misapprehension of what "truth" ultimately is. In this final hour of time, it has never been more important for God's people to know, live and witness the truth.

Lessons On Truth Revealed In The Trial Of Jesus Before The Roman Authority.

"What is truth?" (John 18: 38a). This query,

voiced by the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate to Jesus toward the end of His trial's first hearing before the governor, is indeed a question of monumental importance. Christ had just testified under examination:

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (Ibid. verse 37b).

Before a representative of the highest civil authority in the then known world, our Lord plainly declared the real nature of His intent and mission. It was not to reign as a temporal king, over a temporal kingdom, founded upon the selfish principles that govern this world during this present evil age (see Ibid. verses 33-36). He was "born" (into humanity) first, foremost and supremely to "bear witness unto the truth." *Everything* about Jesus - who He is, all He said, and all He did - is a "witness unto the truth." When Pilate asked the Saviour "What is truth," he was already convicted of Christ's innocence concerning the charges "the chief priests and elders of the (Jewish) people" had brought against Him, for shortly afterward Pilate "saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him." (compare Ibid. verse 38 with Matthew 27: 18). The context indicates that the governor did not pose this question to Jesus sarcastically, as some believe, but seriously, with a genuine desire to hear the answer. The servant of the Lord explains in further detail:

"Pilate took Jesus aside with him, and again questioned, 'Art Thou the King of the Jews?' ...

"[Jesus] knew that the Holy Spirit was striving with Pilate, and He gave him opportunity to acknowledge his conviction.

'Sayest thou this thing of thyself,' He asked, 'or did others tell it thee of Me?' That is, was it the accusations of the priests, or a desire to receive light from Christ, that prompted Pilate's question? Pilate understood Christ's meaning; but pride arose in his heart. He would not acknowledge the conviction that pressed upon him ...

"Pilate's golden opportunity had passed. Yet Jesus did not leave him without further light. While He did not directly answer Pilate's question, He plainly stated His own mission. He gave Pilate to understand that He was not seeking an earthly throne ...

"Christ affirmed that His word was in itself a key which would unlock the mystery to those who were prepared to receive it. It had a self-commending power, *and this was the secret of the spread of His kingdom of truth. He desired Pilate to understand that only by receiving and appropriating truth could his ruined nature be reconstructed.*

"*Pilate had a desire to know the truth.* His mind was confused. He eagerly grasped the words of the Saviour, and his heart was stirred with a great longing *to know what it really was, and how he could obtain it. 'What is truth?' he inquired. But he did not wait for an answer.* The tumult outside recalled him to the interests of the hour; for the priests were clamorous for immediate action." (DA, pages 726-727, emphasis added).²

Pride, the demands of the priests and mob, position, power, and the interests of the hour, were all bearing down upon Pilate. However, at the same time, his conscience was convinced that Jesus was innocent and possible more. If he had been willing to surrender his worldly ambitions (with all the attendant finite ideas, concepts, traditions,

and opinions of sinful humanity), yielded to the Spirit's conviction, and received Christ's word, Pilate would have obtained the answer to his question. He would have gained an enlightened knowledge of the essence of the Saviour's "kingdom of truth ... *that only by receiving and appropriating truth could his ruined nature be reconstructed.*" Ibid. Just hours earlier, Jesus had prayed for His disciples that the Father would "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17: 17). This sanctifying power of truth is the only means that *all* sinners can be purified and set apart from the guilt and power of sin. Jesus *is* "the Word ... made flesh ... full of grace and *truth.*" (Ibid. 1: 1; 14, emph. added). "Jesus saith ... I am the way, *the truth,* and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Ibid. 14: 6, emph. added). The power of truth is the power of Christ, and He is the very embodiment of the Father's word which is truth!

Sadly Pilate, by refusing to submit to the voice of Christ, became conflicted under conviction. "His mind was confused." (DA, page 727).² Eventually, weakened willpower and vacillation gave way to fear and cowardice. Accordingly, at the Saviour's final hearing, the record states:

"And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, *I,* having examined him before you, *have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod ...* But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him ... And they were instant with loud voices, *requiring* that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests *prevailed.* And

Pilate gave sentence *that it should be as they required*. And he released unto them [Barabbas] ... but he delivered Jesus *to their will* ... And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him." (Luke 23: 13-15a, 21, 23-25, 33, *emph. added*).

Instead of executing justice and doing what his conscience knew was right and true, the governor surrendered his will over to the dictates of a satanically crazed mob. It was the mob that "required" the death of Christ, it was the mob that "prevailed," and it was to the "will" of the mob that Pilate "delivered Jesus" up to be crucified. He succumbed to the pressure put upon him by the force of hatred that the mob manifested toward Jesus. The Lord's servant comments:

"If at the first Pilate had stood firm, refusing to condemn a man whom he found guiltless, he would have broken the fatal chain that was to bind him in remorse and guilt as long as he lived ... But Pilate had taken step after step in the violation of his conscience ... His wavering and indecision proved his ruin." (DA, page 732).²

Thus it was that "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," bore testimony before "both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel" (i.e., a representation of the entire fallen world) to our Heavenly Father's true character and being which is, "God is love." (compare 1 Timothy 6: 13 with Acts 4: 27; 1 John 4: 8, 16). The death of Christ proves that this is the truth! The trial of Christ demonstrated before the entire creation the principles and the power that lay at the foundation of the government of God. Again from the Writings:

"Not until the death of Christ was the

character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles ... Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon *goodness, mercy, and love*; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and *truth and love* are to be the prevailing power." (DA, pages 758-759, *emph. added*).²

Consider: what principles were blatantly on display during Christ's trial? *Evildoing, cruelty, and hatred* is what we witness; just the opposite of "the Lord's principles." This is because "Satan's government" is immoral, and *falsehood and hatred* are its "compelling / prevailing power." The contrast was not between truth and love. It was not truth versus love in any form or degree! It was the distinction between falsehood and hatred in contradiction to truth and love. As hatred is at the root of falsehood, so is love at the root of truth. It was because the enemies of Jesus "*hated* [Him] without a cause" that they "sought *false* witness against Jesus, to put him to death." (compare John 15: 25 with Psalms 35: 19 and 69: 4; Matthew 26: 59, all *emph. added*). Likewise, and in contradiction, Christ "*loved* us, and hath given himself for us" ... "For the *truth's* sake (as) ... the Son of the Father, *in truth and love*." (Ephesians 5: 2; 2 John, verses 2-3, all *emph. added*).

In retrospect, any attempt to create a disparity of some kind between genuine truth and genuine love is to fabricate an anomaly that simply does not rationally exist! The very crux of the Great Controversy between

Christ and Satan is that of truth vs. falsehood (error), love vs. hate; and everything that branches out from these two preeminent principles. The problem that humanity continues having in differentiating between these two is the result of deception - the Enemy making falsehood *appear* as truth.

"Satan has wrought with deceiving power, bringing in a multiplicity of errors that obscure the truth. Error cannot stand alone, and would soon become extinct if it did not fasten itself like a parasite upon the tree of truth. Error draws its life from the truth of God." (EV, page 589).³

"Here is revealed how the enemy works today through a tree of truth and error, which he has substituted for the tree of the garden by which he was so successful. He mingles his sophistry with the truth of God. He cares not how much truth one may have, just so it gets mingled with some of his error. The results will be the same as with Eve - her children will think that the parasitical growth is something to be desired to make one wise, and will partake of its fruit."⁴ ❖ GLP

MARTIN LUTHER'S STANCE IS UNDER ATTACK

A trendsetting anniversary is coming up on October 31, 2017. The date will commemorate Martin Luther's disputation, *Ninety-five Theses*, being nailed on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, 500 years ago. It is largely viewed as the starting point of the Protestant Reformation. In our day, the milestone event is being used by Pope Francis as a bridge to forge unity between Catholics and Lutherans. Beginning in 1967 with official negotiations conducted by the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, the two sides have had a series

of meetings already, and what has transpired through the years with them, is nothing short of amazing. Christians worldwide should be on high alert. Signs pointing to the soon return of Jesus are happening at a faster pace. This includes the religious movements that are recently being fostered. What Pope Francis is spearheading here needs to be clearly watched.

History cannot be forgotten. Within the ranks of the Catholic Church, a priest and theologian by the name of Martin Luther became mighty in the Scriptures. The subject matter that meant a lot to him was justification by faith. For years, he practiced works of self-denial and hardship to earn salvation. In 1511, Luther made his memorable journey to Rome. One day he found himself ascending the steps of "Pilate's staircase" upon his knees. A recent decretal by the pope promised an indulgence to all who did. It was at this time that his eyes were opened to the delusions of the papacy. A separation from the papal church was beginning.

A few years later, Pope Leo X revived the jubilee indulgence, as funds were needed in building the new basilica of St. Peter in Rome. The Vatican went to a new high with a shameful abuse of money raising. A sale of an indulgence provided power in two ways: 1) Gave the purchaser complete remission of his future sins; and 2) Allowed a deceased person named by the purchaser release from purgatory to heaven. In Germany, Johann Tetzel was officially appointed to sell indulgences. The tactic worked out well, as thousands were eager to buy salvation. When Luther heard of this iniquitous traffic through his parishioners, he was filled with horror toward the indulgence hawkers. An occasion arrived for Luther to make an effectual pro-

test against this practice. Hence comes his ninety-five propositions.

The writing questioned the efficacy of the indulgences and the pope's authority, and stated that man is saved not by works but by faith. Luther invited people to a debate over these theses the next day – no one accepted the challenge. Luther intended that his writing would have a small circulation. God had a different plan. In a short amount of time, the ninety-five theses were translated, spreading in every direction. When it reached Rome, the pope's triple crown miter was shaken. Luther stood firm and was excommunicated from the Roman Church by Pope Leo X in 1521. The act made Luther state, "I know that the pope is Antichrist, and that his throne is that of Satan himself." ⁵

Some five centuries later since then, Luther's view of the Roman Church is still applicable. The papacy that much of the Protestant world is reaching out to for unity is the same that ruled during the days of the Reformation. It is presenting a Christlike front to cover her record of horrible cruelties. Protestant sects who are seeking better ties with Catholicism are deceiving themselves. Protestantism is on the verge of degenerating itself since the days of the Reformers. The Bible declares that the papacy will be the leader in apostasy of the latter times. Seeking God and scriptural truths are vital to stay on top of satanic activity upon the world's religions. ❖ DJT

[We here at the Iowa Foundation want to keep our readers informed of the events leading up to this historic anniversary in religious history. The Lord willing, future issues of WWN will carry postscripts of what is taking place. Plans are also in the working for printing a new manuscript about Martin Lu-

ther and his impact today. Look for further details to be released next year.]

1. Gary L. Patrick, *"Watchman, what of the night?" (Iowa)* (Nora Springs, IA: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., Issue # 2 - Dec. 2013 / Jan. 2014), 1.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 726-727, 732, 758-759, 727.
3. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), 589.
4. William H. Grotheer, *"Watchman, what of the night?"* (Lamar, AR: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., XVIII - June 1985), 3.
5. J.H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century, vol. 2* (Book VI: Ch. IX), 204.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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Founder	Elder William H. Grotheer
Editor, Publications & Research	Gary L. Patrick
Associate Editor	Dennis J. Tevis
Proofreader	Linda R. Patrick

WEBSITES

www.alfiowa.com
 www.adventistlaymen.com
 www.adventistalert.com

E-MAIL

Editor - alfia@myomnitel.com
 Webmaster - webmaster@adventistlaymen.com

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Office phone # (641) 749-2684.