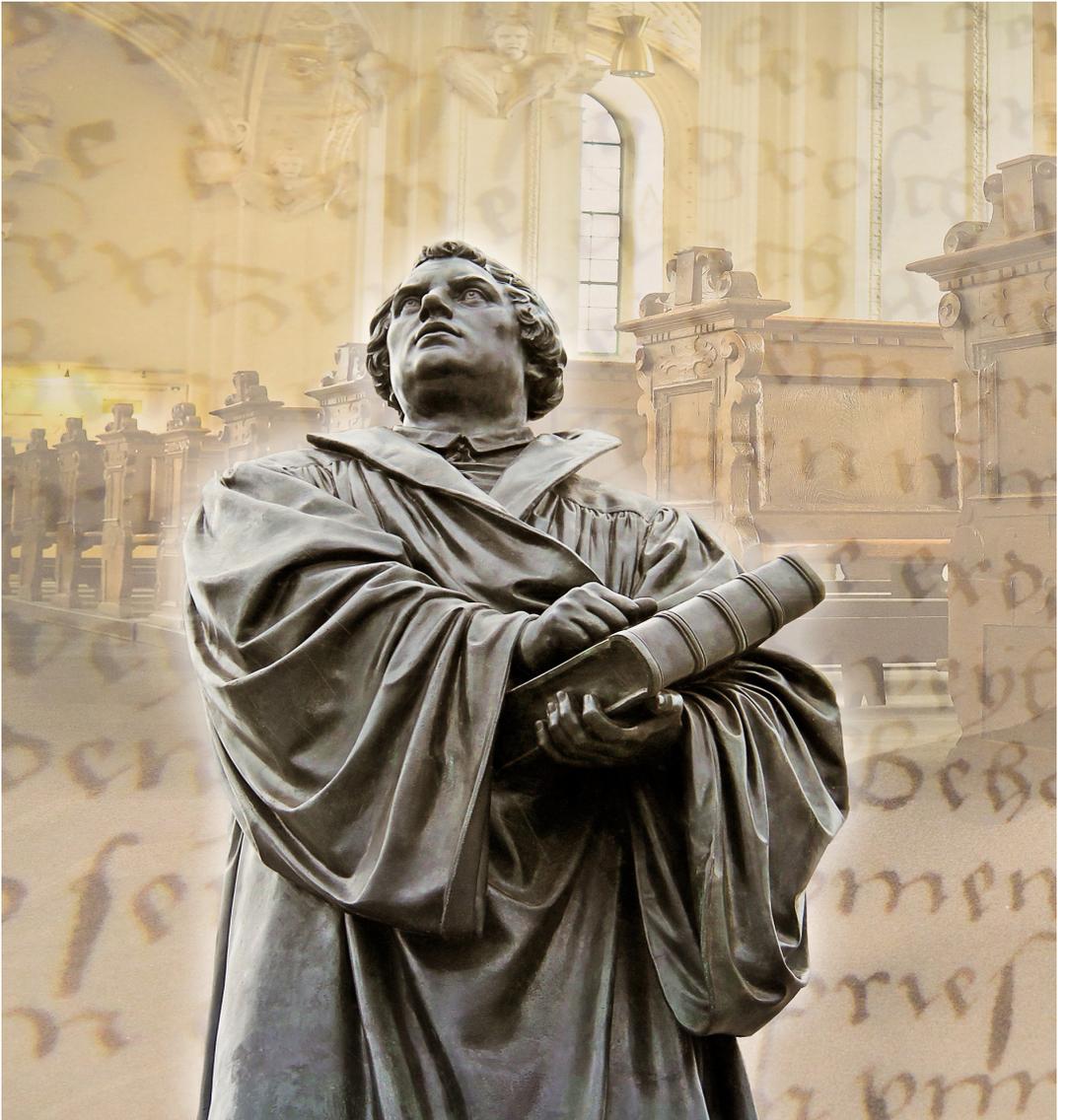


A call to personal and church reformation in our own generation

95 THESES FOR TODAY



PREFACE

*Reformation must “pervade the whole life
of the Church and the individual believer
– and then the whole of society...”*

It was 500 years ago on 31 October 1517 that Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. This protest against the sale of indulgences was a spark that would come to ignite the flame of Reformation in Europe.

The Reformation didn't stop there - it continued to grow as understanding of God's Word increased. It was something that had to pervade the whole life of the Church and the individual believer - and then the whole of society.

Repentance and Reformation

Repentance was one of the key themes of Luther's 95 Theses. Reformation and repentance both involve change. Repentance is not only about sorrow for sin. It means turning from it and being transformed in our lives by the renewing of our minds. We need this constantly both as individuals and churches.

Martin Luther and the Second Reformation

Luther died about 100 years before the Second Reformation in Scotland and the rest of Britain. Further, Luther's convictions on the Lord's Supper, Church order and worship weren't those established by the Second Reformation. Yet in one sense he had a significant role in it. How so?

Looking back from the time of the Second Reformation in Scotland, John Row wrote warmly of Luther. He said that "the Lord, by His Word and Spirit, taught him more and more grounds of true religion, which he set out to the view of the world". Luther sought to recover biblical Christianity by an appeal to the supreme authority of Scripture. In the Second Reformation we see that the Lord taught the Church still more of His truth.

Luther said before the Holy Roman Emperor: "I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God". This was a vital principle. God alone is Lord of the conscience and Scripture is the only rule in matters of faith and practice. The men of the Second Reformation were willing to assert this resolutely in the face of the tyranny of absolute monarchy. It was this principle that the Westminster Assembly were committed to implementing fully. One could say that it was biblical Christianity come into its own - its natural outworking.

95 Theses for Today

Today the Church in general has moved away from the firm foundations laid in the past. We have drawn a selection of principles for reformation from the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly. These represent the high watermark which Reformation reached. The selective nature does not in any way indicate that any statements have been passed over as inconvenient or rejected. On the contrary, we encourage you to read the whole of these documents, teach them and put them into practice.

The reason for the selection is to draw attention to those parts of these biblical truths that are most commonly denied or neglected. They relate to vital personal matters such as obedience to God's Word as well as to the life of the Church. The full version of the Standards will provide Scripture references for the statements made.

95 THESES FOR TODAY

*“Out of love for the truth and
the desire to bring it to light...”*

The introduction to
Luther’s 95 Theses

What God Requires from Us

01. That we may escape the wrath and curse of God due to us by reason of the transgression of the law, He requireth of us repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the diligent use of the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of His mediation (LC, Q153).

How We Should Value and Treat God's Word

02. The Holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that He only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer (LC, Q157).

Faith's Response to God's Word

03. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts...By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come (WCF 14:1-2).

Holiness is Essential

04. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love (WCF 11:2).
05. They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (WCF 13:1).
06. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part: whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (WCF 13:2).

Repentance

07. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified: and, although they can never fall from the state of justification; yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto

500 years ago Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The flame of Reformation ignited continued to grow as understanding of God's Word increased. This was something that had to pervade the whole life of the Church and the individual believer – and then the whole of society.

Today the Church in general has moved away from the firm foundations laid in the past. These 95 principles for Reformation today are drawn from the Westminster Assembly's high watermark of biblical understanding. The Westminster Standards are a biblical manifesto that today's Church needs to take up and put into effect.



Foundations from our Past for our Future

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ISBN 978-1-910013-11-3



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