

Martin Luther and *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* (“outside of the church there is no salvation”): Did Luther Really Abandon Cyprian?

Darius W. Jankiewicz
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Introduction

The Christian doctrines of soteriology and ecclesiology are both firmly grounded in the teaching of the New Testament. All who accept God’s gift of salvation naturally become a part of God’s family, His church. The apostolic witness contained in Scripture presents a fine-tuned inter-connection between these two aspects of Christian proclamation. Although intricately related, they are never confused in Scripture; however, this equilibrium did not survive beyond the early post-apostolic era. Motivated by an ardent desire to maintain the unity of the church and to protect it from heresy and schism, the fathers of the second century laid the groundwork for the fusion of these two doctrines.

The first signs of this fusion surfaced at the beginning of the second century in the writings of Ignatius, and later in Irenaeus and Tertullian. In the third century Cyprian gave it its mature expression when he boldly proclaimed “*quia salus extra ecclesiam non est*” or “outside the church there is no salvation,”¹ a catchphrase later reiterated by popes and affirmed by church councils.² It was not until the Second Vatican Council, some fifty

¹ Cyprian *Letter* 72.21 (*ANF* 5:384)

² This belief found its most formalized expression in the articles of the Council of Florence in 1442 where the gathered bishops agreed that the “[holy Roman Church] . . . firmly believes, professes and preaches that no one outside the Catholic Church, neither pagans nor Jews nor heretics nor schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before the end of their

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plus years ago, that the exclusive interpretation of the phrase was revised in favor of a more inclusive model of Catholic Christianity, which allowed the possibility of salvation outside of the church.³

While the original intent of the “no salvation outside of the church” doctrine was to defend the church against heresy and schism, as well as to protect its unity, it eventually became a tool of ecclesiastical control and was exercised by the church with considerable success.⁴ As the Middle Ages progressed, it became evident that this belief was also at the root of various ecclesiastical abuses. By the end of the Middle Ages, these abuses resulted in a growing dissatisfaction with the church, eventually culminating in the rebellion known today as the Protestant Reformation. This “rebellion,” motivated by a desire to return to the biblical understanding of salvation, proved to be a powerful reaction to Catholic institutional soterioecclesiology. Beginning with Martin Luther, its champions asserted that there exist only one mediator between God and humanity, Jesus Christ. It is He alone who dispenses salvation, which is appropriated by believers through the means of personal faith, without the mediation of the church. This belief is clearly and uniquely expressed in the five Protestant *solas*: *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus* and *solus Deo Gloria*.

Without diminishing Luther’s achievements, however, one must inquire if the Reformer was entirely successful in challenging the medieval fusion between soteriology and ecclesiology, as would his slogan *sola fide*—by faith alone and not by mediation of the church—suggest.

Although my conclusion will be most counterintuitive I will argue that despite initiating the Reformation of the 16th century and boldly proclaiming

life they are joined to it. For union with the body of the church is of so great importance that the sacraments of the church are of use toward salvation only for those remaining in it, and fasts, almsgiving, other works of piety and the exercises of a militant Christian life bear eternal rewards for them alone. And no one can be saved, no matter how much he has given in alms, even he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.” Quoted in Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 66.

³ Daniel Strange, “Exclusivism: ‘Indeed Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock,’” in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, ed. Paul Hedges and Alan Race (London: SCM Press, 2008), 40; cf., Douglass Richard Letson and Michael W. Higgins, *The Jesuit Mystique* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 1995), 60.

⁴ An oft-cited example of this was pardoning of Henry IV by Gregory VII in 1077 AD. See Guy Bedouelle, *An Illustrated History of the Church: The Great Challenges* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2006), 60.

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sola gratia et fides—the very purpose of which was to theologically disentangle soteriology and ecclesiology—Luther ended up endorsing the traditional Catholic position *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, i.e., that there is no salvation outside the church. This “church” was now, of course, Luther’s own denomination. Luther’s embrace of this traditional Catholic catchphrase should not be surprising, as it was the logical outgrowth of problematic assumptions that influenced his understanding of justification by faith. Before these assumptions can be explored, however, the ecclesiological framework that led to his embrace of the “there is no salvation outside of the church” doctrine must first be laid down.

Lingering Questions

In the years leading up to the posting of his 95 theses on Wittenberg’s door, Luther clearly perceived the dangers of the Catholic soterio-ecclesiological fusion. This is precisely why he initiated the debate on October 31, 1517. His bold proclamation, *sola gratia et fides* or salvation by grace through faith alone, struck directly at the central tenet of Catholicism, which claimed that believers must accept the church’s mediation to receive God’s grace.⁵ Luther’s singular action of nailing the theses opened the floodgates of dissatisfaction with the church and the way it functioned. The monumental shift that had been brewing for centuries—from a corporate to an individual understanding of salvation—was finally actualized.

At the same time, however, Luther’s embrace of individual responsibility before God, encompassed in his *sola fide* slogan, left some lingering questions: if justification was really by grace and faith alone, then what was the role of the church in the process of salvation? Did believers need to attend church and participate in its rites? Could not that time be spent on individual worship of God? As it will become evident, Luther offered a unique answer to such questions, although not in a systematic manner.⁶

⁵ Joseph H. Lynch and Philip C. Adamo, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 286.

⁶ It must be recognized that Luther was not a systematician and his views, unlike that of John Calvin, tended to arise in the heat of controversy and changed over time. Certain aspects of his soteriology and ecclesiology, however, persisted throughout his lifetime. Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 1999), 379; cf., Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: an Introduction to His Life and Work* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 174-175.

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This exploration of Luther's ecclesiology begins with the most familiar to his readers difference between Luther's and Catholic approach to ecclesiology, namely, the distinction between the visible and invisible church. By making this distinction, Luther attempted—and as we shall see ultimately failed—to draw a sharp contrast between Catholic and Lutheran approaches to the visibility of the church.⁷

The Visibility versus Invisibility of the Church

By the time of the Reformation, the fusion of soteriology and ecclesiology found its most obvious expression in the medieval overemphasis on the visibility of the church. The medieval Catholic church was more often than not conceived primarily in terms of a visible, hierarchically-structured organization with the episcopal office at its apex.⁸ The chief end of the church, of course, was to serve as the means of grace to individual members.⁹ The most important aspect of this mediation was the presence of the episcopally-ordained priesthood, which, through apostolic succession, was historically linked with the New Testament church.¹⁰ Apostolic succession was considered to be of central importance to the continuity of Christian faith and the safeguarding of the church's existence. Through the ministry of ruling and teaching, the bishops assured the continuity of the Christian faith and the protection of the church.¹¹ Through the administration of the sacraments, they functioned as the means of grace for believers.¹² In this way, the episcopal office became

⁷ Some of the material contained in the following section was adapted and revised from Darius W. Jankiewicz, "Vestiges of Roman Catholicism in Sixteenth Century Reformational Ecclesiology: A Study of Early Lutheran, Reformed and Radical Ecclesiology." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45/1 (2016): 109-114.

⁸ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002), 26-38; cf., Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 113 and Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1967), 34-38; cf., Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 9-10.

⁹ Congar, 113.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 2004), 394. In recent years some Catholic scholars joined their Protestant colleagues in critiquing such "simplistic" understanding of the apostolic succession. See, for example, Francis Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York, NY: The Newman Press, 2001), 12-15. For a thorough Protestant critique of the apostolic succession doctrine see Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 149-177.

¹¹ Cooke, 258-260.

¹² Lynch and Adamo, 286.

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indispensable, not only for the continuity and protection of the Christian faith but also for the salvation of all baptized Christians.¹³

Luther challenged the Catholic preoccupation with the visibility of the church already in 1520 in one of his earliest works *On the Papacy in Rome* (1520). It is in this work that he brings forth the well-known distinction between the “two Christendoms.”¹⁴ “The first, which is natural, basic, essential, real and true, we shall call ‘spiritual, internal Christendom.’ The second, which is man-made and external, we shall call ‘physical, external Christendom.’” The true or “essential Christendom” was not visible to the human eye because only God knew who belonged to Him.¹⁵ The institutional church of his day could not possibly have been identified with the Kingdom of God¹⁶ or “give a correct view of the reality of Christ’s Church”¹⁷ because it was too corrupt. “There is not a single letter in Holy

¹³ Already in Cyprian (d.c.258) we find statements such as, “Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if anyone be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church...” Cyprian *Epistle* 68 (*ANF* 5:374-375); cf., Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 967. In fact, medieval Catholic theology would go as far as identifying the church with its hierarchy. “The universal Church,” one Catholic theologian asserted, “is virtually the Roman church which consists representatively in the cardinals, but virtually in the pope.” Quoted in Ronald Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 41.

¹⁴ No serious work dealing with Luther’s ecclesiology ever leaves out discussion on the “two churches.” This distinction was first enunciated by Augustine and developed or “rediscovered” by Luther. See Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 3:31-34 (*NPNF* 2:568-571); cf., Wallace M. Alston, *The Church of the Living God: A Reformed Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 53.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *On the Papacy in Rome*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 39, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 70; cf., Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 23, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 288.

¹⁶ This identification can be traced directly to Augustine, who presumably was the first to identify the Catholic church and its institutional structures with the Kingdom of God. He also linked the millennium with the period of history between the first and the second coming of Christ. Augustine *The City of God Against the Pagans* 20.6-8 (*NPNF* 2:425-430); cf., John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1983), 49; cf., Carl E. Braaten, “The Kingdom of God and Life Everlasting,” in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, ed. Peter Crafts Hodgson and Robert Harlen King (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 336.

¹⁷ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) 37; cf., Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 202.

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Scripture,” Luther charged, “saying that such a church . . . is instituted by God.”¹⁸

By clearly distinguishing the visible church from the invisible, and in concert with his *sola fide* principle, Luther intended to highlight his belief that Christians needed to find a more secure foundation for their salvation than mere trust in and submission to an earthly institution that was obviously fallible and imperfect.¹⁹ It was precisely this overemphasis on the incorrect “reality of Christ’s Church,”²⁰ the fusion of soteriology and ecclesiology, that was the root cause of much medieval ecclesiastical abuse. This same incorrect “reality of Christ’s Church”²¹ ultimately led to Luther’s excommunication.

Despite his criticism of the sixteenth-century institutional church and his emphasis on the invisible church, Luther nevertheless insisted that God’s church must also have a visible form.²² Yet having argued that the true visible church of God was not found in the ecclesiastical structures of his day, Luther was ultimately forced to define it for himself and affirm its existence somewhere outside medieval Catholicism. Therefore, what is “church” according to Luther, and how can the true church be identified?

Definition of the Church

An appropriate definition of the church on earth needed to fit with the rest of Luther’s theology, especially his doctrine of *sola fide*, i.e., justification by faith alone, which challenged the idea of institutional mediation of grace. Thus, rather than defining the church in institutional terms,²³ Luther tended to refer to the true church of God as the “congregation,” “spiritual assembly,” “assembly,” “communion of saints,” “holy community,” or simply as “the people of God.”²⁴ By using these

¹⁸ Luther, *On the Papacy in Rome*, 70.

¹⁹ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 283-285; cf., Berkouwer, 38.

²⁰ Berkouwer, 202.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, 285-289; cf., Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 288.

²³ Althaus notes that “an institutional concern is . . . missing from Luther’s description of the ‘church.’” Althaus, 288.

²⁴ Eric W. Gritsch, “Introduction to Volume 39,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 39, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970), xiii; Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1983), 120-122; cf., Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Catechism in Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York, NY: Anchor, 1961), 212. Gritsch points out that Luther disliked

terms Luther attempted to emphasize that the church is a fellowship of people who had *already* been blessed and justified by God apart from the mediation of the church. In sixteenth century such thinking was revolutionary and persisted as one of the major differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism until the middle of the twentieth century.²⁵ But how was such an assembly to be found and recognized?

How Can the True Visible Church Be Found?

Finding himself increasingly alienated from the Catholic Church, Luther needed to determine where the true church of God could be found. In one of his earliest works as a Reformer, *On the Papacy in Rome* (1520) he stated that the true church of God could be recognized by the following marks: the preaching of the gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.²⁶ These, he argued, "are the signs by which the existence of the church in the world can be noticed externally."²⁷ In two of his late treatises, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539) and *Against Hanswurst* (1541),²⁸ Luther expanded on the notion of marks of the church found throughout his earlier writings. Once again, Luther asserted the primacy of the Word of God: "First, the holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy word [sic] of God. . . . Now, wherever you hear or see this word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, 'a Christian holy people,' must be there, even though their

the word "church" (Kirche) because of its institutional connotations. Gritsch, xiii; cf. Althaus, 287-289, 294-95; cf., Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 41, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 144.

²⁵ It was only during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that the deficiencies of defining the church in purely institutional terms were recognized and addressed. See "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," *Lumen gentium*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 24-72; cf., Avery Dulles, "The Church," in Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 10.

²⁶ Luther, *On the Papacy in Rome*, 75; cf., Vitor Westhelle, *Transfiguring Luther: The Planetary Promise of Luther's Theology* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2017), 151. Very early on in his ministry as a Reformer, Luther challenged much of Roman Catholic sacramental theology and concluded that, on the basis of the Scripture, there were only two sacraments: baptism and Eucharist. The church, he believed, had no authority to institute sacraments for which there was no explicit command in the Scriptures. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 36, ed. Abdel Ross Wentz (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 92-94.

²⁷ Luther, *On the Papacy in Rome*, 75.

²⁸ Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 143-167, and, idem, *Against Hanswurst*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 4, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 194-198.

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number is very small.”²⁹ The true church, thus, is recognized by giving special primacy to the Scripture “for since the church owes its birth to the Word, [and] is nourished, aided and strengthened by it, it is obvious that it cannot be without the Word.”³⁰ For Luther, this emphasis on the primacy of the Scripture was clearly identified with the proclamation of the gospel in its purity,³¹ which he understood as *sola gratia et fides*.³² This was no longer true of Catholicism, where the primacy of Scripture was supplanted by human traditions, thus compromising the purity of the gospel.³³ This first mark of the church, together with his emphasis upon the priesthood of all believers,³⁴ forms the backbone of Luther’s Protestant theology. It is Luther’s exposition of the other marks of the church, however, that take his ecclesiology in a more problematic direction.

The second and third marks of God’s church are the presence of baptism “wherever it is taught, believed, and administered *correctly* according to Christ’s ordinance,”³⁵ and the presence of “the holy sacrament of the altar [the Lord’s Supper], wherever it is *rightly* administered, believed, and received, according to Christ’s institution.”³⁶ To these three marks Luther adds two more: “God’s people or holy Christians are

²⁹ Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 148, 150 (emphasis in text).

³⁰ Martin Luther, *Concerning the Ministry*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 37.

³¹ Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 148-150.

³² Irene Dingel, “Luther’s Authority in the Late Reformation and Protestant Orthodoxy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, L’ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 528.

³³ Thus Luther wrote: “Some possess the word in its complete purity, others do not.” Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 148.

³⁴ For an exhaustive treatment of Luther’s views on priesthood of all believers see Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of all Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1962).

³⁵ Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 151 (emphasis added).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 152 (emphasis added). Another definition formulated by Luther and reiterated by later Lutheran confessions stated: “The Church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.” *Augsburg Confession* 7 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 89; cf. W. Walther, “The Obligatory Confessional Subscription of Ministers,” in *The Lutheran Church Review*, vol. 33, ed. Theodore E. Schmauk (Philadelphia, PA: The General Council Publication House, 1914), 190.

During his early years as a Reformer, Luther also viewed Confession as a sacrament. Later, however, he adopted the view that only baptism and the Lord’s Supper could properly be traced to Christ. Ronald K. Rittgers, “Luther on Private Confession,” in *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther’s Practical Theology*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 214.

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recognized by the office of the keys exercised publicly;³⁷ and by the presence of ordained ministry, charged with leading the church, preaching the gospel, exercising the office of the keys and administering the sacraments.³⁸

It should certainly be expected for a Christian church to follow Christ's example in practicing the rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper. As noted above, however, Luther went beyond just practice and insisted on the "right," "proper," or "correct"—all his words—administration of these sacraments.³⁹ These words, as well as Luther's insistence on infant baptism, provide a hint that, in Luther's ecclesiology, the sacraments were more than symbolic, which was the position of Zwingli and the Anabaptists.⁴⁰ A "proper" or "right" observance of these two sacraments also meant that only ordained ministers could administer them.⁴¹ Thus, the church could not properly exist without the ordained ministry and the sacraments.⁴²

A perusal of Luther's vast literary output reveals that, in many of his writings, he dealt directly or indirectly with the sacraments, their meaning, objective validity (or efficaciousness)⁴³ and correct administration. This

³⁷ "The office of the keys" refers to the power of the church—by which he meant the congregation of believers—to exercise church discipline and forgive those who repented while excommunicating those who did not. Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 153. He thus wrote: "The keys belong not to the pope (as he lies) but to the church, that is, to God's people, or to the holy Christian people throughout the entire world." Still, in agreement with his Catholic opponents, Luther believed that only ordained ministers were to fulfill this function. *Idem*, 154.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁹ Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, 285-289; cf., Martin Luther, *On the Sacraments or The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Respecting Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (Newmarket: Solomon D. Henkel and Brs., 1853), 275.

⁴⁰ For an exhaustive discussion on the differences between Luther and Zwingli on sacramental efficacy, see Raget Christoffel, *Zwingli; Or, The Rise of the Reformation in Switzerland: a Life of the Reformer* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), 237-372 and Gordon T. Smith, *The Lord's Supper: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 45-125.

⁴¹ Luther, *On the Councils and the Church*, 154.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 154-155. To this Luther added that "only competent men" could hold the position of an ordained minister. "Children, women, and other persons are not qualified for this office." *Idem*, 154-155.

⁴³ Luther himself used the word "valid" or "efficacious" with reference to baptism and the Lord's Supper. See Luther, *On the Sacraments or The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 17-18, 22; cf., Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2001), 4; James Good argued that Luther combined objective and subjective efficacy of the sacraments into something he names as a "third view." This "third view" asserts: "the efficacy of the sacrament lay not

raises a question: if Luther's primary message was that salvation was *sola gratia et fides*, then why such preoccupation with the sacraments, their efficaciousness and proper observance? A deeper examination of Luther ecclesiology, and specifically his sacramental theology, reveals an answer to this question and provides the reader with a troubling sense of *déjà vu*.

Sacramental Theology and the Necessity of the Church for Salvation

There can be no doubt that Luther championed justification by grace through faith alone. For Luther, this understanding of justification was *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia* ("an article of faith upon which the church stands or falls").⁴⁴ At the same time, however, a careful review of his sacramental theology reveals a disconcerting reticence to accept the logical outcome of *sola gratia et fides*, namely, that no human works—including participation in the sacraments—play a role in the process of salvation. And yet, in his writings, Luther repeatedly stressed the necessity of the sacraments in the life of the believers.⁴⁵ Why was this so?

Luther believed that the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist represented the promises of God, mediated through material objects of everyday use.⁴⁶ Ideally, the Word of God and its promises should come to believers through Jesus Christ, the Scripture, and the preaching of the

in the objective efficacy alone nor in the subjective state of the mind alone. His [Luther's] view was a compromise view—it was an objective-subjective view." Luther's insistence on the objective efficacy of the sacraments was obviously related to his acceptance of Eucharistic realism. James I. Good, *The Reformed Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: Press of Berger Brothers, 1916), 117.

⁴⁴Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 208. While often attributed to Luther, it is debatable if he ever uttered this exact phrase. However, in his commentary on Psalm 130:4 he wrote: *quia isto articulo stante stat Ecclesia, ruente ruit Ecclesia* ("if this article stands, the church stands; if it falls, the church falls"). Similarly, in his Schmalkald Articles he concluded: "one cannot go soft or give way on this article, for then heaven and earth would fall," and "without the article on justification the world is nothing but death and darkness." Martin Luther, quoted in Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 98.

⁴⁵Martin Luther, *Concerning Rebaptism*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 252-253. E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 448. Such a strong emphasis on the necessity of the sacraments in the life of believers was partly in response to the Anabaptist rejection of all sacramentalism.

⁴⁶Luther, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 63-66; cf., Darius Jankiewicz, "Sacramental Theology and Ecclesiastical Authority," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42/2 (Fall 2004): 375-378.

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gospel.⁴⁷ Because of human sinfulness, however, preaching of the Word needed to be supplemented by the external signs of God's favor. The purpose of these external signs of God's favor, i.e., the sacraments, was to create, in the case of infants, and strengthen faith in God.⁴⁸ Thus, while closely related to faith, the sacraments in some way also functioned as a means of salvation.⁴⁹ So, while on the one hand Luther strongly affirmed that salvation was *sola gratia et fides* and in now way did it depend on human works, on the other hand he still viewed participation in the sacramental rites as necessary for salvation.⁵⁰

Like his Catholic opponents, Luther believed that a person becomes a Christian and enters the church through baptism.⁵¹ Baptism was to be administered only once because it initiated the new birth and regeneration.⁵² He wrote: "Truly, good works can only be performed by those who have been born anew, namely, born anew through Baptism, in which the Holy Spirit is active, making new persons of them."⁵³ For Luther, therefore, baptismal water was not just "simple, common water"⁵⁴ such as "the cow

⁴⁷ Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 64.

⁴⁸ In the case of adults, faith was created through hearing of the Word of God. Obviously, this was not a possibility for infants. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 335; cf. Bayer, 249 [check this last reference].

⁴⁹ González, 64. This was the reason, noted González, why "Luther insisted on infant baptism: to deny baptism to infants, on the ground that they have no faith, would imply that the power of baptism—and therefore of the gospel—depends on our ability to receive it." Ibid., 65; H. H. Kramm, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 68-69; cf., Richard A. Shenk, "Is Marriage Among the Sacraments? Were Luther and Calvin Wrong?" in *Reformation Faith: Exegesis and Theology in the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Michael Parsons (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 108-109.

⁵⁰ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 168-175; cf., idem, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979), 221-222, where Luther insisted that "baptism is a thing of great force and efficacy"; cf., Schwiebert, 448.

⁵¹ Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 181.

⁵² Martin Luther, *The Gospel of St. John*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 22, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 283, 286. Eeva Martiiainen, "Baptism," in *Engaging Luther: A (New) Theological Assessment*, ed. Olli-Pekka Vainio (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 102. For Luther, baptism was also the means through which the Holy Trinity "recreated the natural man's soul." Schwiebert, 448. It is clear that this was also one of the ideas inherited by Luther from Augustine. Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 143.

⁵³ Luther, *The Gospel of St. John*, 286.

⁵⁴ Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, 123.

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drinks.”⁵⁵ When the words of institution were spoken it became “godly, blessed, fruitful water full of grace.”⁵⁶ Once “the Holy Spirit is added to it, we have more than mere water. It becomes a veritable bath of rejuvenation, a living bath which washes and purges man of sin and death, which cleanses him of all sin.”⁵⁷ Baptism, thus, was closely related to salvation. He further wrote: “But we must so consider it as to exercise our faith in it and have no doubt whatever that, once we have been baptized, we are saved.”⁵⁸ It was not necessary for active faith to precede baptism. According to Luther, God bestowed the gift of faith, upon those who were baptized.⁵⁹ This is the primary reason why Luther so vigorously opposed the “second” baptism of the Anabaptists.⁶⁰ Their insistence on adult baptism on the grounds that the infant did not have faith implied sacramental inefficacy of the “first” baptism and a return to a new form of justification by works.⁶¹

Regarding the Lord’s Supper, Luther strongly rejected the Catholic teachings that considered it a sacrifice. He also rejected the medieval notion of transubstantiation and the doctrine of priestly mediation (sacerdotalism).⁶² At the same time, however, he strongly affirmed the traditional Catholic idea that Christ’s body and blood are physically present in the elements.⁶³ Consequently, he proposed a theory of the simultaneous presence of both the bread and the wine and the body of Christ.⁶⁴ A believer

⁵⁵ Luther, *On the Sacraments or The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 14.

⁵⁶ Luther, quoted in Schwiebert, 448-49; Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, 92, 119, 123, 229.

⁵⁷ Luther, *The Gospel of St. John*, 283.

⁵⁸ Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 59. This does not mean that Luther connected baptism with salvation in an absolute way. As D. Patrick Ramsey wrote, “while it [baptism] is not absolutely necessary, it is ordinarily necessary for salvation.” D. Patrick Ramsey, “*Sola Fide* Compromised? Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Baptism,” *Themelios* 34.2 (July 2009):189. Under extreme circumstance Luther would allow for salvation without baptism, but never apart from faith. Martin Luther, “Genesis,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 3, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 274.

⁵⁹ Luther, *Concerning Rebaptism*, 252, 258.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 252-254.

⁶² Linwood Urban, *A Short History of Christian Thought* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 283-286; cf., Olson, 391-394, and Schwiebert, 449.

⁶³ Martin Luther, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics* (1526), in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 319-325.

⁶⁴ This view became known as “consubstantiation,” although Luther himself never used this term. Luther used an analogy of a heated iron to illustrate the mystery of the presence of Christ at the Eucharist. When iron is placed in a fire and heated, it glows, and in the

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who participated in the Eucharist would receive forgiveness of sins and strength to lead a Christian life. He wrote: “For here in the sacrament [the Eucharist] you receive forgiveness of sins from Christ’s own lips. Forgiveness includes and implies God’s favour [sic] and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, and power against death, the devil, and every trouble.”⁶⁵ “For Luther,” noted Charles Hodge, “eating and drinking [were] essential for salvation.”⁶⁶

Thus, it is evident that Luther, the prophet of *sola gratia et fides*, also viewed participation in the sacraments as essential for salvation.⁶⁷ Through baptism, faith was initiated; through the Eucharist, faith was maintained and strengthened. As Jaroslav Pelikan explained, for Luther “the sacraments were an epitome of the very gospel; without them no one could be a Christian.”⁶⁸

Thus, it is not surprising to find echoes of Cyprian’s *quia salus extra ecclesiam non est* in Luther’s writings.⁶⁹ One of the most explicit statements on the matter is found in his *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, where he exclaimed, “Outside this Christian Church there is no salvation or forgiveness of sins, but everlasting death and damnation.”⁷⁰ Accordingly,

glowing iron, both the iron and heat are present (*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 32, 35); Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8*, 123-124. The analogy of sacraments being like glowing iron was apparently first used by Origen and later reiterated by Augustine. Jayson Scott Galler, “Logic and Argumentation in *The Book of Concord*” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2007; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 2007), 178.

⁶⁵ Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 201.

⁶⁶ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol., 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), 645. Hodge stated that, on this point, Lutherans and Reformed theologians, such as John Calvin and his followers, are in agreement.

⁶⁷ This was clearly understood by Luther’s radical critics. Caspar Schwenckfeld, for example, wrote: “I do not know how to agree with Luther [when] he writes that the revered sacrament imparts life, grace, and salvation, yea, that it is a fountain of life and salvation.” “An Answer to Luther’s Malediction,” in George Huntston Williams, ed. *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1957), 170.

⁶⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol 4: Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 178.

⁶⁹ As noted above, this expression can be directly traced to Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), who also tied it with his sacramental theology. This view was eventually incorporated into Catholic theology.

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 37, ed. Robert H. Fisher (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 368. The fact that this statement shows up in Luther’s treatise on the Lord’s Supper further accentuates Luther’s position on sacraments viewed as the means of grace and salvation. Further elaboration on

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being a part of the true church of God on earth was not optional for a child of God.⁷¹ This is probably why Luther did not hesitate to speak of the “Mother Church [who is] a true housemother and the bride of Christ.”⁷² Elsewhere, Luther asserted that “he who wants to find Christ, must first find the church. . . . The church is not wood and stone, but the assembly of people who believe in Christ. With this church, one should be connected and see how the people believe, live, and teach. They certainly have Christ in their midst, *for outside the Christian church there is no truth, no Christ, no salvation.*”⁷³ Such a claim is nothing short of astounding, considering it came from the pen of the same man who nailed the 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg.

Why Did Luther Embrace *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*?

It remains for us to explore *why* the father of the Protestant Reformation embraced a theology that allowed him to utter the words *outside of the church there is no salvation*. I want to propose two reasons: theological and sociological. I will explore the theological reason first.

As outlined above, the answer lies in the problematic assumptions that undergirded Luther’s doctrine of justification. Many Protestants are quick to agree with Luther on the definition of justification: “the doctrine of Justification is this, that we are pronounced righteous and are saved solely by faith in Christ, and without work.”⁷⁴ This belief is also expressed in the above-mentioned, classic Reformation slogan *sola gratia et fides*, i.e., by grace and faith alone. It is a common assumption that this definition of justification means that God offers His righteousness to *all* humanity by His grace and it is the role of those who would believe to grasp God’s offer by faith and to respond affirmatively. Luther, however, did not hold such a

Luther’s understanding of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* may be found in his *Large Catechism*, where he makes a close connection between being part of the church and forgiveness of sins (122-123).

⁷¹ Martin Luther, “Sermon at Torgau Castle Church,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 51, ed. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 337.

⁷² Martin Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 68,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 13, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 14.

⁷³ Martin Luther, “The Gospel for the Early Christmas Service,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 52, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1974), 39-40 (emphasis added); cf., Mark Ellingsen, *Martin Luther’s Legacy: Reforming Reformation Theology for the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 269-270; Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 280; Althaus, 291.

⁷⁴ Martin Luther, “Lectures on Galatians, 1535” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 26, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 223.

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view of justification, which is more akin to the synergistic views of Philip Melanchthon and echo, to some degree, the *Formula of Concord* (1577).⁷⁵ Rather, together with other Magisterial Reformers, Luther embraced the Augustinian teaching of double predestination. He passionately believed that, in his foreknowledge, God elected those who would be saved and those who would be damned.⁷⁶ It was his re-discovery of Augustinian predestinarianism, rejected by mainstream medieval Catholicism, that laid the foundation for his soteriological breakthrough and that eventually led to the 95 theses. It appears that in his desperate search for Christian assurance, Luther found solace in the Augustinian view that God had predestined him for salvation in eternity past.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *The Formula of Concord* represents an authoritative confession of the post-Luther Lutheran Church. Completed in 1577, it was later included in the *Book of Concord* (1580). “The Formula of Concord,” in *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 168, 171.

⁷⁶ While it is not widely known, Luther was just as staunchly predestinarian as John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli. Jairzinho Lopes Pereira, *Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther on Original Sin and Justification of the Sinner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013), 362; Harry Buis, *Historic Protestantism and Predestination* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958), 2, 48. For Luther on predestination, see Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will Bondage of the Will*, in *Luther and Erasmus Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp, Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969); cf., Erickson, 846; Olson, 388; Peter J. Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 28; John Peckham, “An Investigation of Luther’s View of the Bondage of the Will With Implications for Soteriology and Theodicy,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2007): 274-304. Influenced by Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s successor, later Lutheranism rejected the predestinarian doctrines as incompatible with the gospel. For a detailed exposition of Luther’s view on predestination and how it impacted his views on justification see Darius Jankiewicz and Joel Klimkewicz, “Predestination and Justification by Faith: Was Luther a Calvinist?” In *Here We Stand: Luther, the Reformation, and Seventh-day Adventism*, ed. Michael W. Campbell and Nikolaus Satelmajer (Nampa: Pacific Press Association, 2017), 42-56.

⁷⁷ Such a conclusion clearly flows from a careful reading of Luther’s thoughts on chapter 8 of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. See Martin Luther, *Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1954), 117-134. In the *Bondage of the Will* Luther wrote “Here, then, is something fundamentally necessary and salutary for a Christian, to know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that he foresees and purposes and does all things by his immutable, eternal and infallible will. Here is a thunderbolt by which free choice is completely prostrated and shattered.” He further wrote “that everything we do, everything that happens, even if it seems to us to happen mutably and contingently, happens in fact nonetheless necessarily and immutably, if you have regard to the will of God. For the will of God is effectual and cannot be hindered, since it is the power of the divine nature itself; moreover it is wise, so that it cannot be deceived. Now, if his will is not hindered, there is nothing to prevent the work itself from being done, in the

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In view of Luther's position on predestination, it is evident that the Protestant slogan *sola gratia et fide* has different meanings for different believers. For the majority of Protestant Christians today, the slogan means receiving God's offer of grace through faith, based on a free choice. In theological circles, this is often referred to as "active faith."⁷⁸ In contrast, for Luther, conversion could be construed as the "aha" moment in which an elected believer *recognized* that which had *already been accomplished* on his or her behalf. In other words, by faith alone (*sola fide*) the believer recognized an already accomplished fact. "Alone" (*sola*) meant that there was no human element in the process of salvation; and "faith" (*fide*) meant trust in one's election. This, in turn, is often referred to as "passive faith."⁷⁹ For Luther, faith based on free choice would have implied a human element, which in turn would have implied a return to the old ways of medieval Catholicism. This also appears to be the reason why Luther's favorite definition of faith was "trust in God's promises."⁸⁰ This was all an elected person could do; namely, to *trust* that God had elected him or her.

place, time, manner, and measure that he himself both foresees and wills." Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, 118-119. Historical evidence suggests that while Luther did not speak much on predestination in his later years, he did not change his views. In a letter to Wolfgang Capito, regarding the publishing of his complete works, Luther wrote, "I would rather see them devoured. For I acknowledge none of them to be really a book of mine, except for perhaps the one *On the Bound Will*, and the *Catechism*." Martin Luther, "Letter to Wolfgang Capito, Wittenberg, July 9, 1537," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 50, ed. Gottfried G. Krodel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 172-173.

⁷⁸ Alberto Melloni, *Martin Luther: A Christian Between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)* (Berlin: De Gruyter GmbH, 2017), 842; cf., Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 69.

⁷⁹ Martin Luther, "Commentary on Psalm 51," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 12, *Selections Psalm 1*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1955), 368; cf., Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 69; William H. Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 199. Luther also spoke of "passive justification." See Martin Luther, "Lectures on Galatians, 1535," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 4-7. Keeping in mind that throughout his lifetime Luther held to an *a priori* presupposition of divine determinism allows us to truly comprehend his teachings on justification by faith. Without this knowledge, passages such as those found in "Lectures on Galatians," cited above, sound very much like a textbook Adventist soteriology.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Palmer, *Faith in a Hidden God: Luther, Kierkegaard, and the Binding of Isaac* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 54; cf., Alister McGrath, *Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 101.

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Thus, for Luther, divine election was the ultimate foundation for Christian assurance of salvation.

How does this relate to Luther's ecclesiology and the slogan *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*? It is simply this: in His foreknowledge, God ordained that some would be elected and others would be damned. For those who were damned, the church was of no use. In contrast, however, those who were elected will be baptized and will become part of God's church. In his foreknowledge, God determined that baptism would be "a veritable bath of rejuvenation" for the elect, "a living bath which wash[e]d and purge[d] man of sin and death, which cleanse[d] him of all sin."⁸¹ Through baptism, the elect were received into the kingdom of God and their faith was initiated. Through the Lord's Supper, the faith of the elect was strengthened and augmented. But this strengthening and augmenting was available *only* to the elect.⁸²

It was Luther's understanding of Augustinian predestination that ultimately led him to embrace a sacramental theology that exhibited the characteristics of medieval soteriologico-ecclesiological confusion. Thus, it is not surprising that Luther never ceased to insist on the need for an institutional church,⁸³ which would mediate individuals' access to the Word of God and regulate the spiritual and moral lives of believers. Such a view neatly corresponded with his predestinarian theology.

As evidenced above, therefore, while Luther insisted on the Protestant teaching *sola gratia et fides*, he was unable to break away from the soteriologo-ecclesiological synthesis of the medieval church. This was primarily because of his *a priori* acceptance of Augustinian unconditional predestination.⁸⁴ Embracing the notion that salvation was God's gift to the

⁸¹ Luther, *The Gospel of St. John*, 283.

⁸² On this issue, both Luther and Calvin found themselves in remarkable agreement. A. Mitchell Hunter, *The Teachings of Calvin: A Modern Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 165; cf., E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1974), 16.

⁸³ Alister McGrath notes, that while Luther and the other Reformers "rejected the definition of the church offered by Catholicism, . . . the magisterial Reformation found itself defending a more 'institutional' definition of the church against their radical opponents." Idem, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 198. This defense of an "institutional definition of church" was certainly undergirded by Luther's predestinarian theology.

⁸⁴ In his masterful comparative study of Augustine and Luther, Jairzinho Lopes Pereira noted: "although it may not seem so to the unprepared reader, [double] predestination lay at the core of Luther's understanding of the salvation process." Lopes, 453.

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elect alone, therefore, enabled Luther to boldly proclaim that there was no salvation outside the church.

A second reason for Luther's increasingly institutional vision of the church and his embrace of the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* position may be sociological rather than theological. While the early Luther was exuberant and idealistic about the prospects of his movement, the later Luther was sober and more realistic. This attitudinal change was displayed in Luther's letter to his friend George Spalatin (1527), where he admitted that it had been "vain to hope that men could be ruled by the gospel alone."⁸⁵ Thus, confronted with the failure of his early idealism, Luther began to stress the need for earthly ecclesiastical institutions to regulate the life of the believers.

Conclusion

On the one hand, Luther's Reformation was a watershed in the history of the Christian church, provoking a massive turn toward a biblical understanding of salvation, thus challenging medieval Catholicism. It also ushered in a new era in biblical studies, eventually leading to a new understanding of the church, including its ordinances and government. Luther's achievements in these areas must never be underestimated and should always be celebrated.

On the other hand, however, a careful study of the Luther's writings reveals that, while he repudiated many Catholic ways of understanding and conducting church, and while he attempted to harmonize ecclesiastical structures and sacramental theology with the foundational principles of Protestantism, he was essentially unable to break away from medieval modes of thinking. Notwithstanding his rejection of the Catholic emphasis on the visible church, he struggled to free himself from reliance on institutional structures for salvation. Ultimately, Luther affirmed the necessity of the visible church for salvation. In His wisdom, Luther believed, God had decreed the church to be the means of grace, without which no one could be saved. As a result, while a person could be in the church and unsaved, the option of not being in the church was not open to those who were predestined for salvation by God. Abandoning the church was a sure sign that one had not been among the elect.

While each of the Reformation's *solas* represented some form of reaction against medieval Catholic soteriology, the fact that Luther's

⁸⁵ Eric G. Jay, *The Church: Its Changing Image Through Twenty Centuries* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1978), 164.

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soteriology developed within the context of Augustinian monergism resulted only in providing an alternative theological foundation for the Catholic doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Such a vision of the church was congruent with the social and political milieu of early 16th century. While beginning well, Luther's Reformation ultimately defaulted to its ecclesiastical and cultural surroundings.

Darius W. Jankiewicz is professor of Historical Theology and chair of the Theology and Christian Philosophy Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Dr. Jankiewicz earned his BA in Theology from Avondale College in Australia, as well as an MDiv and a PhD from Andrews University. He regularly presents on topics related to doctrines of Christ, salvation, and ecclesiology at various conferences and pastors' meetings around the world. He pursues an active research agenda, and his articles have appeared in several academic journals and books. Together with Martin Hanna and John Reeve he recently edited, as well as contributed to, the book *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*.