

LIGHT



Wittenberg Journey:

***The 500th Anniversary
of Luther's 95 Theses***

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PUZZLE ANSWERS FROM BACK COVER

Across:

- 2. Carved; 7. Tradition; 9. Anyone;
- 11. Rather; 13. Everlasting; 15. Impossible;
- 19. Remembrance; 20. Render; 21. Baptized;
- 22. Repairer

Down:

- 1. Contend; 2. Christ; 3. Heavens; 4. Falling;
- 5. Without; 6. According; 8. Precious;
- 10. Prevail; 12. Commandment; 14. Nothing;
- 16. Priesthood; 17. Mediator; 18. Written

Facing page: A group of birders learning the different Michigan bird songs.

Divergent Discoveries—

Birdwatching by Ear



“**B**irding by Ear and Beyond” is an educational program on the environment offered by the University of Michigan-Dearborn to people who are blind. The University’s website description includes this: “While an emphasis is placed on bird identification by enhanced listening techniques participants can expect to be involved in a wide variety of activities, including gardening, seasonal nature walks, and science experiments. The program is managed by UM-Dearborn Environmental Studies student Donna Posont, who is blind.”

For more information, go to: <http://outreach.umich.edu/programs/birding-by-ear-and-beyond>.

The Reluctant Monk

by Bert Williams

For most commoners in 15th century Europe, personal success was not a goal to be pursued. Peasants lived and died, generation after generation, doing and thinking much the same things as their parents and grandparents before them.

Hans Luther, however, aspired to something better for his family. The son of a farmer, Luther had turned to copper mining, and was successful enough that he took up copper smelting. By 1491, Hans and Margarete Luther were among the respected families in their town of Mansfeld, Germany. It was into this family that Martin Luther was born.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE TIMES

It is almost impossible for us who live in the 21st century to imagine what it was like to live in Europe several hundred years ago. The church, frequently corrupt, dominated life as it had for more than a thousand years. Tribal conquests, famines, and disease ravaged the population.

In the 14th century, circumstances became increasingly hard for many in Europe. Early in the century famines swept the landscape, culminating in the Great Famine of 1315-1317. Climate change was taking its toll. The lengthy warm period of previous centuries was giving

Previous page: Wartburg Castle, near the town of Eisenach, where the exiled Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German.

way to the cooling trend sometimes known as the Little Ice Age. Successful harvests became increasingly rare; nutrition became increasingly meager; it was harder to stay warm; resistance to disease dwindled.

In 1347 the Black Death struck. In three years the plague eliminated one-third of the European population. This had a negative effect throughout the economy as fewer laborers were available to work the fields. The demand for food had, of course, also decreased but an imbalance between supply and demand continued, causing disruption and unrest throughout society. And the plague returned, sporadically, throughout the 14th century and into the 15th century, destroying families and much of society.

So much death caused a more urgent spiritual striving among the population, but this often resulted in the exploitation of uneducated and superstitious peasants by a corrupt clergy.

YOUNG MARTIN

This was life in 1483 when baby Martin was born to Hans and Margarete. Because his parents were more forward thinking than most, young Martin was enrolled in school at age 7, and was encouraged to study hard. Taking naturally to books, he graduated with a masters degree in grammar, logic, rhetoric, and metaphysics by age 18.

Hans Luther had hoped that his son would become a lawyer but Martin was caught one

day in a horrific thunderstorm that caused him to fear for his life. He cried out to Saint Anne, patron saint of miners, and promised that if he survived the storm he would become a monk. It was probably an idea that Martin had already been seriously considering. Despite his father's disappointment, he entered an Augustinian monastery.

ELUSIVE ENLIGHTENMENT

The monastery experience did not go well for Luther. He did not find the peace he had sought. Nevertheless, he pursued his academic studies relentlessly, impressing his peers and superiors with a quick and retentive mind. When he was 27, encouraged by his superiors who thought the experience would be inspirational for him, Luther was sent as a delegate to a church conference in Rome. But the Vatican only left Luther more discouraged—disillusioned by the immorality and corruption that was so evident in the heart of the church.

Continuing his search, Luther enrolled in the University of Wittenberg, earning a doctorate and eventually becoming a professor of theology at the university. Gradually, through his study of the Bible—an unusual pursuit for the times—Luther began to find answers that calmed the spiritual torment with which he had struggled for many years.

He studied Psalm 22. Jesus had cried out words from this Psalm while hanging on the cross:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The psalmist’s words mirrored Luther’s own heart cry and, strangely, brought him a measure of peace.

Two years later, as he studied Paul’s letter to the Romans, Luther encountered the words that would upend his life, and subsequently that of the European continent. In Romans 1:16-17 Luther read, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. . . . For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (NKJV).

“The just shall live by faith” was quoted by the apostle Paul from Old Testament prophet Habakkuk. It was the insight that Luther had sought for years, and he drank from it as a thirsty man from a cold spring. This scripture inspired and energized the remainder of Luther’s long, turbulent, and productive life.

Philip Melancthon, younger colleague of Luther, described the impact of Luther’s insight on the theological world of his time: “They beheld, as it were, Christ, the prophets and apostles brought out of darkness. . . . They perceived the distinction between the law and the gospel.”

CONFRONTATION

In January 1517 a Dominican friar, Johann Tetzel, was appointed Commissioner

of Indulgences for Archbishop Albrecht von Brandenburg in the dioceses of Magdeburg and Halberstadt. This included the region where Luther lived and worked. In promoting the sale of indulgences, Tetzel promised purchasers full forgiveness, even for sins not yet committed. The proceeds, it was said, would support the reconstruction of Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Luther began to preach openly against the idea that forgiveness could be purchased with cash. On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his soon-to-be-famous 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The act was, in itself, not especially unusual or controversial. Church doors, in that time, often served as community bulletin boards, and Luther also sent a copy of the document to Albrecht von Brandenburg, the Archbishop of Mainz, with the intention that the 95 Theses be considered propositions for academic debate.

Tetzel was not easily convinced to cease his efforts. He publicly railed against Luther, claiming the support of the pope, and urging that Luther be declared a heretic and executed.

The Elector of Saxony, Frederick III, also known as Frederick the Wise, did not agree with such rash judgment. Frederick consulted with other academics, including the noted scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam who responded that, in his opinion, Luther was correct in his theology but was perhaps “wanting in gentleness of spirit.”

Luther, at one point, apparently agreed to maintain silence if his opponents would do the same. However, the controversy had been set ablaze and was not to be so easily controlled.

In June of 1520, Pope Leo X issued his papal bull "Exsurge Domine" ("Arise, O Lord") in which he declared that there were 41 errors in Luther's 95 Theses and other writings. Luther was summoned to appear to answer the pope's charges. Frederick obtained an agreement that Luther was to be promised safe passage to and from the meeting.

From January to May 1521, Emperor Charles V presided over the imperial assembly known as the Diet of Worms. With other topics on the agenda, Luther's theology did not come to the fore until the middle of April.

THE CLIMAX

In the afternoon on April 17 Luther appeared before the assembly. The presiding officer, Johann Eck, put two questions to Luther: Did the collection of 25 books on display contain his writing, and was he prepared to retract their heresies? Luther requested time to consider his response, and was granted a day to do so.

The following afternoon he was again asked to retract the viewpoints contained in his books. He responded in some detail, finally concluding:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.

Eck responded that Luther was acting the part of a heretic.

Despite the promise of safe passage that had been negotiated by Frederick, a strong suspicion prevailed that Luther was soon to be arrested. Acting on this suspicion, Frederick had Luther apprehended as he traveled the road back toward Wittenberg. He was spirited off to Wartburg Castle near the town of Eisenach 165 miles from his home.

EXILED

Settling in at Wartburg Castle, the exiled Luther declared himself to be "Junker Jorg" (Knight George), and allowed his hair and beard to grow long. Not always at peace with himself or his circumstances, and sometimes feeling under attack from Satan himself, Luther undertook the task of translating the New Testament from the original Greek into

vernacular German, which he accomplished in less than three months! His work, edited by Melancthon, was printed for distribution, and quickly became popular. Besides having a significant impact on the Reformation, Luther's work of translation contributed to the modern development of standardized written German.

Late in 1522, word reached Luther that, in his absence, other leaders had sprung up in Wittenberg, steering the Reformation in radical directions—to the point of smashing statues in churches and even physically dragging priests away from altars. Alarmed at the reports, Luther left Wartburg Castle and returned to Wittenberg.

Though Luther's whereabouts was now well-known, the number of people supporting the Reformation had swelled, and the emperor apparently decided that he had more important things to do than to pursue Luther.

MARRIAGE!

Under the influence of the new ways of thinking, monks and nuns had begun leaving their cloisters. This presented particular challenges for the nuns because it was expected in society that, if not committed to the celibacy of a cloistered nun, a woman should be married.

Luther, assuming some responsibility for this development, set about the task of finding husbands for these women, one of whom was named Katharina von Bora. Luther had found

an elderly man for the 26-year-old Katharina to marry but, being more independent-minded than most, she refused, insisting, instead, that she should marry Luther!

Luther, now 42, was no longer bound by his monastic vows but he had stated many times that he would not marry. Nevertheless, to the great surprise of his friends and perhaps to his own surprise, Luther accepted Katharina's proposal.

It proved to be a warm and loving—though occasionally stormy—marriage that produced six children, three girls and three boys. In one letter, years later, Martin addressed Katharina, "To my beloved wife, Katharina, Mrs. Dr. Luther, mistress of the pig market, lady of Zulsdorf, and whatsoever other titles may befit thy grace."

LIFE IN WITTENBERG

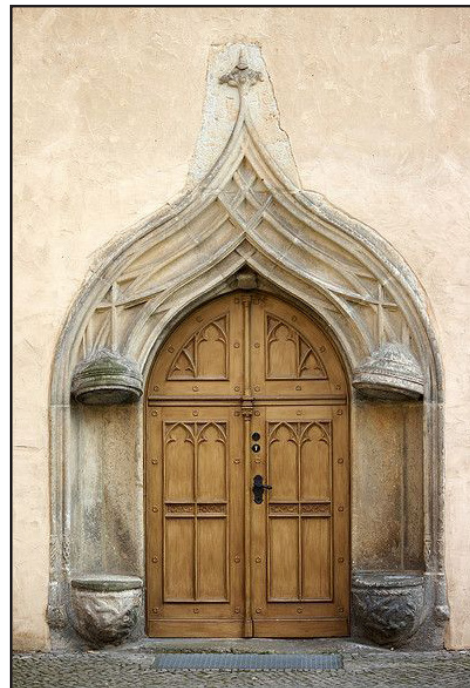
The Luthers settled into the building that, as part of Wittenberg University, had been the monastery where he lived previously. It was while living there as a monk that he had made important discoveries in Scripture, and had subsequently written his 95 Theses. However, during Luther's time at Wartburg Castle and in the years following, a peasant revolt had disrupted the university. As a result, some of the university's buildings, including the monastery, had been abandoned.

In 1524, the Elector of Saxony gave the empty monastery building to the Luther

family. They lived there until Martin died in 1546. Professor Luther held many influential “table talks” with his students in the rooms of the former monastery, as well as continuing his extensive writing—which included books on theology, instructional books for practical Christian living, and both the words and music for Christian hymns.

Luther, a musician himself, proficient on both lute and flute, popularized congregational singing, and composed hymns in the language of common people rather than Latin. Luther urged that hymns be sung in homes, as well as in churches, and that school teachers teach them to their students.

As a birthday gift to his beloved Katharina, Luther created a graceful entryway to their residence in the former monastery. The doorway came to be known as the Katharineportal. The building, including the doorway and the rooms where the Luthers lived, remain much the same as they were at that time, and are routinely open to visitors. Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, the site of Luther’s exile, is also open to visitors.



Nails, Paper, and a Church Door

How Martin Luther Nailed It

by Jonathan Gallagher



Interesting things, nails. They hold our buildings together. How much construction would happen without them? So where did they come from? Who invented the humble but oh-so-important nail? Who knows? They've certainly been around a long time—at least since the time of the Ancient Egyptians. Bronze nails from Egypt have been dated to 3400 B.C. They were created individually, by hand, until the 19th century, making them costly. Nails have even been taxed—one of the issues that led the American colonies to oppose the English Crown!

But here we are talking about nails hammered into a Wittenberg church door in 1517. It was not an unusual act—the church door was the community notice board—but this piece of paper, held there by these nails, on this church door, was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Nails held the 95 Theses there for all to see. Nails hammered into the wood by a resolute 33-year-old Martin Luther who was determined to challenge what he saw as massive abuses in the church. These nails stood for the force of his argument, driven home by unassailable logic and energetic passion.

Nails that called for answers.

HAMMERING ON THE DOOR

So what led up to that momentous hammering on the door, nails piercing the wood, and what were the consequences of that action?

Martin Luther had been troubled for some time over the sale of indulgences. The sellers of these documents claimed immediate escape from purgatory was guaranteed to the purchaser—whether for themselves after death or for another. Pardon was assured by the pope himself. And in one of the world's first advertising jingles, coined by Johann Tetzel, the message was made clear to everyone:

“As soon as the coin in the coffer clinks,
The soul from purgatory springs.”

(It sounds better in the original German!)

The pope of the time, Leo X, had begun a major campaign to sell indulgences as a way of funding the building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. While officially these paper indulgences were meant to accompany sincere repentance, most people treated them as a kind of spiritual Monopoly get-out-of-jail-free card. Such a situation provoked Luther to demand a debate on the issue, which is what led to the nailing of his 95 Theses to the church door.

A GREAT ABUSE

A quick review of Luther's theses shows that he was primarily concerned to end what he saw as a great abuse. He certainly was not thinking to part ways with the church, or to provoke division. He simply wanted to raise what was to him a serious matter that affected the lives of his fellow Christians.

He had already rejected the whole basis for indulgences, preaching against them as early as 1514. He argued that by issuing indulgences the church was complicit in sin since you could always buy your way out of punishment for wrongdoing—in this life and the next. He was horrified by some of his parishioners who had gone to buy indulgences and then announced that they could act with impunity since they had a general indulgence which covered all their sins.

Luther took time to gather his facts and make his argument before getting out the hammer and nails. In 1517 he preached several times against indulgences, and between April and October he studied out the issue, before sending letters to both his bishop and archbishop on the matter. It was not until October that Luther felt he had to go public and issue a demand for a debate.

He surely had little idea what a firestorm his nailed-down Theses would create. Not so long before this, his ideas would have only been shared locally. But with the invention of the moveable-type press, his Theses could be printed and reprinted. As a result, there were few who were not aware of the argument. As we would say today, his message “went viral.”

Adding to that was the opposition of the salesmen who took exception to Luther’s attack on their trade. It wasn’t long before the pope, himself, had heard the news.

A more careful response and an open discussion of the issue might have resulted in placating Luther and those who agreed with him. But the church hierarchy saw this as a direct assault not only on their authority but also on a vital source of revenue. The attacks on Luther began immediately. Instead of a reasoned debate, what Luther experienced was unbridled hostility: How dare he question the process of granting indulgences? His comments were an attack on the legitimacy of the church as the channel through which pardon could be granted! He was arrogantly questioning the very right of the church’s priests to grant absolution!

CONFRONTATION

While Luther’s aim was clearly to provoke an academic debate on indulgences, his challenge to the system meant that a confrontation over church power and politics could hardly be avoided. Those who examine the 95 Theses closely may be surprised that the later fundamental issues of the Reformation such as justification by faith alone are not completely clear in what Luther wrote there. Luther also tried not to attack the pope too directly.

Nevertheless, Luther’s act in posting the Theses caused more than an academic debate. He challenged the money-making system of indulgences, the ability of the pope to have

any jurisdiction over purgatory, and the belief that the church could take the place of God in forgiving sins. He said that indulgences made people selfish and greedy, and made them think they could sin with impunity. He wondered why the pope had not already emptied purgatory if he had that power, why the pope charged for offering forgiveness, and why the pope, being very rich, needed money from the poor. It was hardly surprising, then, that the church reacted so strongly!

CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of Luther's nails? Well, they were significant, to say the least. Those hammer blows were heard not only in Wittenberg, but resounded throughout Europe. Initially, several hundred copies of the 95 Theses were printed in the original Latin, and then they were translated into German. Luther himself expressed surprise that they were circulated beyond his expectation.

The archbishop, to whom Luther had written about his concern, asked his counselors for advice, and they recommended that Luther be prevented from preaching against indulgences. The pope instructed the head of Luther's religious order to do the same. Johann Tetzel began a pamphlet war against Luther, which only served to create more interest in the subject. Tetzel called for Luther to be burned for heresy. Leading theologians argued against Luther's Theses.

Luther was again called to defend himself against charges of heresy before the pope's representative in Augsburg in 1518. Again he refused to recant; again supporters helped Luther avoid arrest; again he found himself back in Wittenberg, at least theoretically a fugitive. But he was never apprehended, and he was finally excommunicated in 1521.

JUST THE BEGINNING

Though the 95 Theses were just the beginning, and Luther later observed that they were not nearly as important as subsequent issues, they remain as the pivotal spot at which the Protestant Reformation erupted. Luther's desire for debate and change was behind his assertiveness—an act that took courage and conviction. As he nailed that document to the church door, Luther was tackling not simply a matter of theological understanding but an abuse that reached to the heart of the church's financial and power structure.

Luther began to see that the system was gospel-deficient. How could you square the sale of indulgences with God's free gift of salvation? In what way could the massive ecclesiastical edifice reflect Jesus' good news to the poor? Most of all, what of salvation by faith alone?

Luther had begun by dealing with a clear abuse, but ended up rediscovering the gospel truth of a loving God who freely forgives, and who is far more interested in a love relationship

than in dispensing sacramental rites. Led into deeper Bible study, Luther realized that Jesus preached the priesthood of all believers.

GOSPEL

Luther's rejection of the sale of indulgences was just the beginning. He and other leaders of the Reformation hammered out biblical principles in contrast to church tradition, emphasizing faith and grace, and rejecting any idea that we can be saved by our good deeds.

Luther's successful confrontation with church practice and papal authority could not have happened without many factors—the opportunity to print and disseminate his views, the support of other believers, the protection provided by civil and political leaders, and surely divine intervention. Luther had many supporters and protectors, and his ideas were spread widely and were readily accepted.

But nothing would have happened if he had not picked up his hammer, walked to the church door, held the paper to the wood, and nailed it.

Jonathan Gallagher is a freelance writer who lives in Laurel, Maryland.



"Next to the word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world."
—Martin Luther



95 Questions for Discussion



by Marvin Wray

The date is not absolutely certain. Some say it was mid-November, but most agree it was on October 31, 1517 that Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. He may have nailed copies on the doors of other churches in the city as well. What is certain is that this act, and more importantly the content of his 95 Theses, changed the face of the Christian Church in a dramatic way.

What was it all about?

PAYING INSTEAD OF CONFESSING

Beginning in 1514, Luther was not only a professor of theology at Wittenberg University, but also the priest at the City Church in Wittenberg. It was during this time that he noted a sharp decline in the number of people coming for confession. It became apparent that people were paying in advance for their sins by purchasing indulgences.

The Catholic Church proclaimed that individuals could attain salvation through acts of righteousness and, further, that church members could lessen, or even avoid, punishment for sins through the purchase of indulgences. The pay-and-then-play plan was a significant money maker for the church.

Previous Page: Marvin and his wife, Ingrid, at the Wittenberg door (top), the study at Wartburg Castle (bottom).

The struggle to finance a church organization will very often result in lessening the emphasis on basic Bible truth.

Luther, with no thought of abandoning his church, posted these 95 thoughts, or questions, to support the biblical teaching that salvation is attained as a free gift of God, by faith, and that a human's part is to confess to God, rather than to another human, and to repent of wrongdoing. Good works, such as relieving the suffering of the poor, should be acts of love and thanksgiving, and not a means to gain merit.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

In 2009 my wife and I had the privilege of visiting Wittenberg for the second time. It is our intention to be there once again this fall as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of this act that sparked the Protestant Reformation. Why is this important to me, and to members of any Christian church?

We need to remember the journey of others who have brought us to where we are today. God has been leading His faithful people through all time. As Christian author Ellen White has written, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." We must worship in a state of awe, but mingled with an intense desire to question our understanding of God.

Luther's statements were not intended to *protest* as much as they were seeking to *provoke* thought. This is his preface to the theses:

Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

We need always to live in an atmosphere that allows for a thoughtful re-examination of beliefs. This seeks to re-affirm the fundamentals of our faith as we seek greater understanding.

POWERFUL CHALLENGE

Luther was not the only one, during his lifetime, expressing questions. However, he was in a position of prominence and his voice became the most powerful. His proclamation that the just must live by faith and, even more significant perhaps, that the Bible alone should be our source of truth, rather than the traditions and edicts of the church leaders, was a powerful challenge.

Let's look again at the intent of Luther's message half a millennium ago. He clearly was not intending to launch a Lutheran Church. However, he saw the danger in allowing the church to become so controlling that its primary purpose was to protect its power and to control the members.

Luther believed that our salvation is not attained by obedience to the church or any human mandates, but by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is surely just as important for us today as it was in Luther's time. While the church must have an organizational structure and some form of common belief, we must recognize and embrace the reality that God calls us and directs us as individuals and that unity of the body of believers does not require, or benefit by, our song being sung in unison. Certainly there are key lessons to be gleaned today by thinking back to what took place 500 years ago.

WITTENBERG AND WARTBURG

There is something special in thinking about these themes while standing in the places where Luther walked and taught. I've been privileged also to visit Wartburg Castle where Luther spent several months disguised as Knight George as he translated Scripture into the common language. I've been to Luther's birthplace as well as the place of his

death. To spend time in meditation where he strove to bring the message of righteousness by faith to light is a sacred journey not unlike walking where Jesus walked in Jerusalem or Capernaum.

I have stood in the pulpits from which Luther preached. I have walked down the streets where he roamed. I have set my feet and prayed on the spot where Luther stood at the Diet of Worms and declared, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

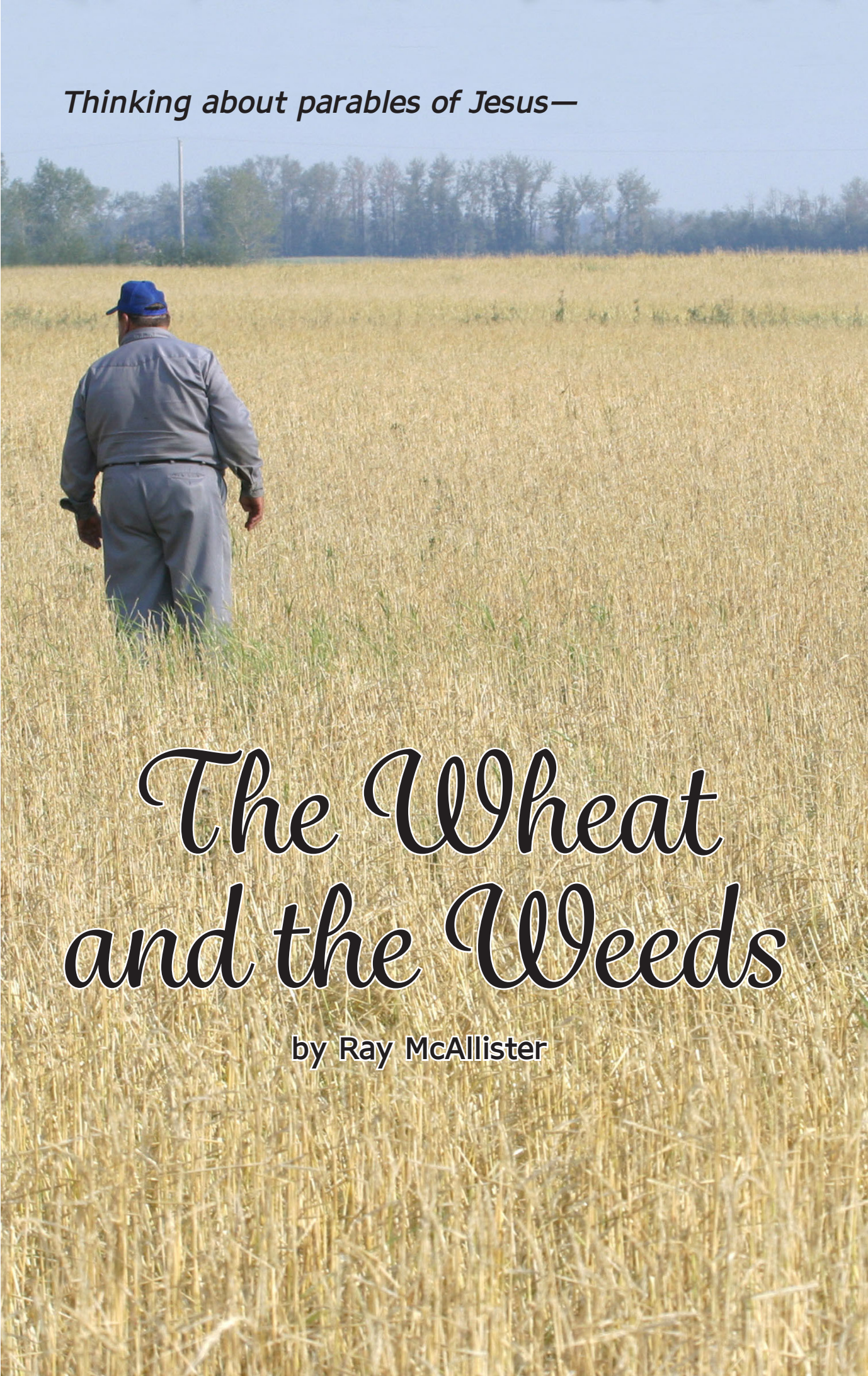
Yes, Luther was a man of great courage. More than that, he was a man of great faith and a man of fervent prayer. He strove to be faithful to the church he represented, but he could never put that above the surrendering of his heart to God.

Marvin Wray recently retired from full-time ministry. He had pastored the Napa Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in Napa, California for the past seventeen years.



"Pray, and let God worry." —Martin Luther

Thinking about parables of Jesus—



The Wheat and the Weeds

by Ray McAllister

In light of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the question arises: How should Protestants relate with Catholics now, in the 21st century? As a Protestant, myself, I must ponder how I should relate with those who belong to an organization that Martin Luther and other leaders of the Protestant Reformation believed needed such great reform.

In one of Jesus' parables, He offers counsel that can be applied to this and many similar issues. Jesus tells the story of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30). In this story, a farmer sows good seed in his field. He is happy about the growing crop until his field workers report that vandals have snuck into the field and sowed weeds among the wheat. Just as someone might hack an e-mail account today, people were "hacking" fields in Jesus' day.

The workers ask the farmer if they should uproot the weeds. The farmer replies that doing so would uproot wheat, as well. At this early stage, the weeds and the wheat would not be easily distinguishable, and so one would inadvertently pull up wheat seedlings. All the plants must be allowed to grow together until the harvest. Jesus indicated that, in the parable, He is represented by the farmer, the world is the field, the people are the plants, the devil is the enemy, the harvest is the end of the world, and angels are the reapers.

FIRST YARD

I know from personal experience how difficult it can be to differentiate between good and bad plants. My wife and I recently bought our first home, and we are learning about the property. There are some thornbushes in our backyard. They might just be useless. However, a friend thinks they could be wild roses and some might be blackberries. We won't know until the season reveals their identity. Jesus taught that this is often as true with people as it is with plants.

Now, I am not suggesting that Catholics are weeds and Protestants are wheat. Only God knows the heart. God, who is the righteous Judge, is patient. His counsel is to judge not lest we be judged (Matthew 7:1-2). The point is simple: It is not our place to determine who is part of the good crop and who is a weed. It is angels, at Christ's direction, who will do the separating on judgment day.

Jesus, in Matthew 7:16-20, does mention judging people based on their "fruit"—that is, their actions. One claiming to be righteous ought to act righteously. Jesus is clear about that. This does not, however, assign to you or me the task of final judgment. If someone commits a crime, and I am on a jury at his trial, I will need to pass judgment. The final judgment, however, is left to God (2 Corinthians 5:10).

THEN AND NOW

Let's look, now, at history and the world today. What can we learn about the situation of Catholics and Protestants now? First, I will admit that I disagree with many doctrinal and theological positions taken by Roman Catholic theologians. However, I have also read inspirational and encouraging books, on the subjects of prayer and falling in love with God, by Catholic writers. Bernard of Clairvaux's book *On Loving God* contains beautiful insights on how one learns to love unselfishly. The life and writings of Mother Teresa tell us much about how to show true, self-sacrificing compassion for people who are less fortunate.

Jeremiah wrote long ago that if one seeks God with the whole heart, God will make Himself known (Jeremiah 29:13). Whether Catholic or Protestant, those who truly seek God find Him. For this reason, I have no problem saying that a Roman Catholic is showing Christ's character with kind acts toward the less fortunate. I need not agree with everything that person believes in order to say that.

Looking at the negative side, there was a time when Roman Catholics literally burned "heretics" at the stake. For a time, this was common practice. However, Protestants may not remember the story of John Calvin, Protestant reformer, when he ordered Michael Servetus to be burned at the stake for his

differing views. Both sides have shed blood. It seems that whoever gained power, during the Middle Ages, tended toward violent resolution of disagreements.

Regrettably, in recent years, some Catholic priests have been accused of sexually abusing children. Equally regrettably, however, there are also stories of Protestant ministers doing unseemly things.

THE NEIGHBOR DOWN THE STREET

Listen, the Catholic neighbor down the street has probably not been burning heretics or abusing children. If you are unkind to this neighbor, or speak ill of her, are you not engaging in persecution? Are you not manifesting a characteristic of weeds rather than wheat?

How, then, should Protestants think about Catholics in 2017? The simple answer is: by loving our neighbors as much as we love ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). But perhaps some require something a little more specific. The rest of this article is devoted to the practical aspects of how to live in a world where not everyone agrees on theology.

A DIVERSE WORLD

The first thing I would say is that we all must be true to our consciences. Acts 5:29 makes clear that a person must obey God. Period.

I believe differently, on some points, than a Roman Catholic probably believes. I suppose if that were not the case I would be a Roman Catholic. I know what I believe, and I am convinced of it. I am not suggesting that anyone should sacrifice beliefs for the sake of agreement, kindness, or unity. Right and wrong, though, covers more than just theology.

If my actions are unkind, I am wrong, regardless of my theology. If I am not loving my neighbor as myself, then I am not truly following Jesus, however correct my theological beliefs may be.

I should also note that many good people have disagreed in the past over all kinds of issues. Paul and Barnabas disagreed on how to relate with the young John Mark (Acts 15:37-40). In fact, Paul and Barnabas parted company over this disagreement. Barnabas ended up working with John Mark, while Paul joined with Silas as his ministry partner. One does not find Paul condemning Barnabas over this disagreement. Paul did what he believed was best and Barnabas did what he believed was right.

Of course this was a disagreement over strategy, not theology. But the truth is that today, even in the same denomination, it is not uncommon for theological disagreements to arise. Whether a disagreement is between members of the same church or between members of different Protestant denominations,

or between Protestants and Roman Catholics, a Christian should always be Christlike. There is never a valid reason to be unkind.

BE FAIR

Secondly, we should be true to history, and that means all of history. If one believes that it is important to emphasize doctrinal differences, that person should understand well the group with whom he or she is disagreeing. This means understanding the good aspects of that group as well as what one may disagree with.

The Catholic Church has been responsible for many great acts of charity, and that should not be forgotten. “Fake news” is actually not so new. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics have been guilty, often, of believing false reports about those they may have considered spiritual enemies. A person who does choose to focus on the theological differences between these groups—and there certainly are some basic differences—is obligated to seek out genuine information, and not to trade in sensational reports that unfairly and dishonestly promote one unbalanced point of view.

BE HUMBLE

Finally, we should be humble. While I am convinced on the matters where I disagree with the Roman Catholic system, I do not believe that I have all the truth on all relevant issues of

life. I honestly have gained rich insights from reading the works of Catholic authors who write on practical matters such as faith, prayer, and truly loving God.

I also believe that I am more likely to be received openly by a Roman Catholic if I avoid thinking, speaking, and acting as if I am superior and have all the answers. If I have a haughty, judgmental attitude, the possibility of our having positive, productive conversations about our beliefs is remote, at best.

BE KIND

Consider Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats found in Matthew 25:31-46. Here, the final judgment is compared to the process of separating sheep from goats—the righteous from the unrighteous.

It may come as a surprise that the criteria Jesus says will be used in making these eternal decisions do not involve theology. Nowhere does Jesus say to the sheep, "When people needed theological guidance, you corrected them," or, "when someone belonged to an organization you disagreed with, you showed them their error."

Instead, Jesus' ultimate concern, in this parable, is with issues of human kindness. The good are those who clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and feed the hungry. The wicked turn out to be those who do not care about others. I suspect both Protestant

denominations and the Roman Catholic Church include, on their membership rolls, people who fit both of the categories identified in Jesus' parable.

And having said that, I must remind myself that it is Jesus, and not me, who is responsible for making those decisions. It is not my place to separate the wheat from the weeds, the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the wicked. In fact, if the definition of blasphemy is claiming to be God, such judgmental attitudes on my part could reasonably be considered blasphemy.

Jesus died for us all and rose again for us all. Only one, Jesus, will return to take us Home. Maybe if we'd spend more time focusing on what makes us one, leaving the judgment to Jesus, we would fulfill His desire (John 17:22) that we be one as He and the Father are one.

Ray McAllister, who is blind, is both a licensed massage therapist and a theologian with a doctorate in Old Testament studies from Andrews University. He lives in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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Page 3—<http://outreach.umich.edu/programs/birding-by-ear-and-beyond> (August 2017)

Cover, pages 14 and 23—Marvin Wray

Page 38—Sugar Grove

The Nerve and Imaginative Thought

Doc Watson, trailblazing flatpicking guitarist from Deep Gap, North Carolina, speaking of his dad, who put him to



work on the end of a crosscut saw when he was 14 years old: "You know that one thing, putting me to work, realizing I was worth something gave me the nerve to tackle music as a profession and get out there and face the world. No offense meant to the school I went to but they didn't understand blind

people, and they made you feel like a misfit—a misfit in society. It was out of ignorance, of course. Some of it was. I'll leave it at that, right there. But if I'd gone on to that school and left feeling like that, I wouldn't have been worth my salt and my bread."

Watson went on to have a stellar performing career, and continues to be revered by guitarists worldwide. He died five years ago, performing publicly until very near his death at age 89.



"Those who possess disabilities know that the systems customarily used by others are not always readily available to them without adaptation. Consequently, using such systems often demands ingenuity. The necessity for imaginative thought becomes a pattern of behavior in many disabled people, and invention of systems, techniques, or products accompanies this imaginative thought. Invention is a necessity for disabled people who want to participate in society."

—Dr. Marc Maurer, "The Nature of Blindness"

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Seeing Through

by Ginger Ketting-Weller



My husband used to be the principal of a boarding high school in Hawaii. He once told me of walking across campus in the afternoon and seeing a female student sitting in the doorway of the gym, with its doors ajar to the mild, tropical breezes outside. As he glanced at the student, she suddenly caught his attention. He said it was like he could see right through her exterior and into her soul.

I've heard that anecdote from my husband several times over the years, and have found that when I try, I too can sometimes look past the exterior and catch a glimpse of a person's soul.

Parenthetically, my own belief is that the soul cannot be separated from the body. When one lives, the other lives; when one dies, the other dies. Body and soul are inseparable. But I also believe that there is an inner spark which God puts there and which grows with life and human development: the character and personality of a person. The inner spark is something we know and love, and that is what I refer to as "soul." We can love it because we are made in the image of God, who is love.

AN ART EXPERIMENT

A teenage artist named Shea conducted an art experiment a few years ago that has caught fire: the "You're Beautiful" experiment. She set up a camera and posed people in front of it, and then told them, "I'm taking pictures of things I find beautiful." The video (available on YouTube) and the still photos are both striking. Her assessment of people as "beautiful" actually makes them beautiful. It's like a window opens and it seems like you can see their souls—lovely, vulnerable, and intensely personal. The copycat video experiments posted to YouTube are just as striking and touching as Shea's original.

Why do I talk about seeing a soul? Because, for me, that has been the only way to give up a grudge. Somewhere behind the facade of that person who has caused me pain, is a *soul*. I don't always know the story of the person, but I have gathered bits and pieces often enough to know that inside a person who offends is someone whose soul has been deeply scarred and shaped by events that have enabled them to turn and hurt others. Maybe it's my imagination, but those who have been the most hurtful to me seem to have been making it from one day to the next with either twisted souls, or very calloused souls. Either way, both outcomes are caused by trauma.

Does that devalue the importance of my hurt at their hands? Not at all.

NEVER ALLOW YOURSELF

My dad taught me in my teenage years—until I could recite it perfectly—to say to myself, “Never allow yourself to believe that anyone is deliberately trying to hurt you.” Saying this has been a way to open my own eyes to what is happening in another person's soul. Actually, they *may be* trying to hurt me. It's a human reaction to strike back when struck. Or to lash out as a way of self-protection, much as I yelled angrily at two threatening dogs that charged at me on my walk in the wee hours one morning. Self-protection and striking back, however, arise from fear. And fear comes from prior injury.

So consider my own struggle with grudge-holding: I once spent eleven long years working as a teacher in a school where a fellow teacher publicly and privately lashed out at me, accused me, denigrated me, and questioned my efficacy and fitness for my job—any time he had an opportunity. To complicate matters, he had once been my classmate. When such a person possesses talent, high intelligence, cleverness—and tenure—there's not a whole lot you can do. It felt horrible. It was worse because I had to deal with some very difficult situations. Despite much prayer, I wasn't always sure if I was handling them well. His public and personal critiques were painful.

I deliberately chose to do nothing reactive in response, but it was only because of my desire to be like Jesus. I wanted to be like Jesus only a smidgen more than I wanted to strike back, to take revenge. But I didn't walk away from that experience without emotional baggage. I have fought over and over with the grudge that rises up and tries to lay eggs in my nest as I remember the accumulated memories of those eleven years and how beaten down I felt.

I think about that situation often. I always come back to this man's soul, and when I do, the questions arise: What makes a person so vicious? Why did he have such a deep-rooted conviction that I was out to make his life miserable, and thus he must strike out at me over and over? How deeply must he have been

hurt at some earlier time of life! What kinds of hurts would make him so disdainful toward me and toward other authority figures in his life? How did he arrive at the conclusion that an organization operates on an economy of doing favors and cashing in on emotional debts? What kind of family system taught him to say such insidious, mean-hearted things with such calm and iciness?

While I was living with this situation I looked through to this man's soul with as much objectivity as I could muster, and saw it to be poisonous and grimy on the side he showed to some of us, yet bright and winsome and funny to others. Jekyll and Hyde, callousness and vulnerability, brilliance and evil, scarred and bleeding on one side but brandishing a figurative dagger on the other side, dripping with blood from the backs of others. Such a mix of darkness and light. Yet somewhere at his core, I realized, was a child who was deeply hurt and still weeping. I wish I could say I saw this on my own, but I believe it was an insight coming as an answer to my heartfelt prayer.

SOMEONE'S SOUL

That kind of effort, "seeing through" until you are able to catch the picture of someone's soul, makes it impossible to hold onto a grudge. Seeing a soul forces me to lay down my anger, at least for a while if not forever. It may not be

your solution to letting go of a grudge, but it's the one thing that works for me.

Really *look* at the offender. Be willing to see him or her with supernatural eyes provided by the Holy Spirit, and perceive something beyond flesh and bone and hatefulness.

This is what I have learned thus far in my reflections on grudge-holding. I continue to ponder the ways in which grudge-holding ties us down, walls us off, and limits our joy in life.

Grudge-holding breaks friendships and sours marriages, shadows the workplace and shackles organizations, starts internal wars and produces interpersonal strife. I believe that laying a grudge down is bigger than just forgiving. It's more than acknowledging the hurt but choosing not to suffer. It's more than letting it go simply for your own health and well-being. It's a willingness to see *through*, to see beyond, to see beauty and vulnerability somewhere in the offender and to choose to protect that little bit of God's image in the person.

And oh boy, is that ever a tough job! But there's a sense of satisfaction and freedom every time you succeed in it.

Ginger Ketting-Weller is dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.

Sola Scriptura

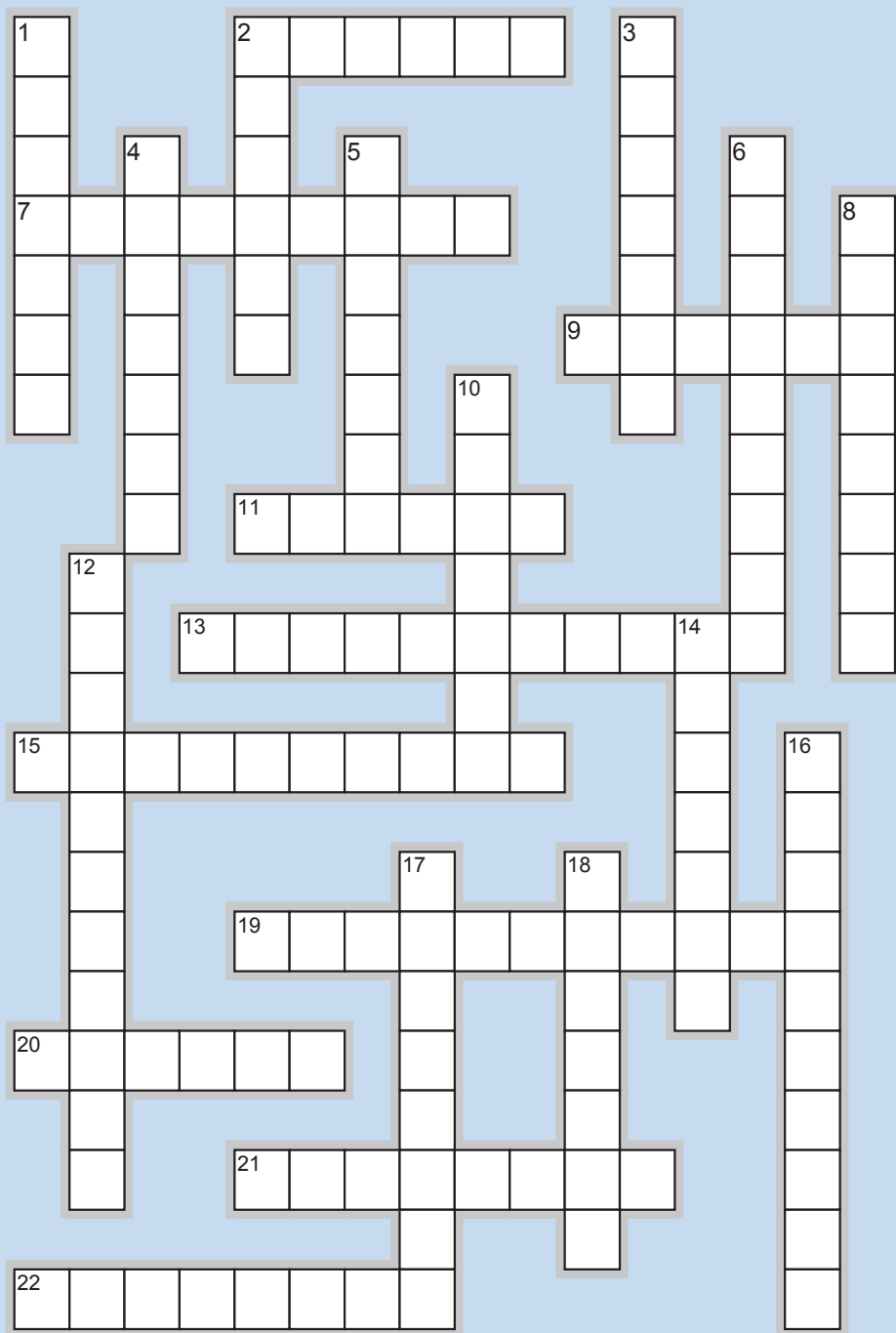
A crossword puzzle by Richard Clark Jr.
(Answers from the NKJV)

Across

2. You shall not make for yourself a ___ image ...; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. Exodus 20:4-5
7. All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your ___. Mark 7:9
9. Do not call ___ on earth your father; for One is your Father. Matthew 23:9
11. We ought to obey God ___ than men. Acts 5:29
13. I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the ___ gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 14:6
15. Without faith it is ___ to please Him. Hebrews 11:6
19. Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in ___ of Me. 1 Corinthians 11:24
20. ___ ... to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Luke 20:25
21. Repent, and ... be ___ in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38
22. You shall be called the ___ of the Breach. Isaiah 58:12

Down

1. ___ earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 1:3
2. That Rock was ___. 1 Corinthians 10:4
3. We have a great High Priest who has passed through the ___, Jesus the Son of God. Hebrews 4:14
4. That Day will not come unless the ___ away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed. 2 Thessalonians 2:3
5. As the body ___ the spirit is dead, so faith ___ works is dead also. James 2:26
6. To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak ___ to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah 8:20
8. You were not redeemed with ... silver or gold, ... but with the ___ blood of Christ. 1 Peter 1:18-19
10. On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not ___ against it. Matthew 16:18
12. The law is holy, and the ___ holy and just and good. Romans 7:12
14. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do ___. John 15:5
16. You are a chosen generation, a royal ___, a holy nation, His own special people. 1 Peter 2:9
17. There is one God and one ___ between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:5
18. It is ___, "The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17



Answers on page 2

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