

CENTENNIAL YEAR

# The Sabbath Watchman

July-August 2014

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# Not-So-Subtle Implications

History was made this past May in Friedensau, Germany, as Seventh-day Adventists and Reform brethren officially met for the first time since 1920; but it was no *déjà vu*, except for the place and number of Reformers present—17 this time and last. See pages 11-14 of this issue for a brief explanation of how that came about.

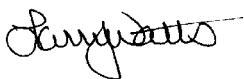
The week after the symposium, *Spectrum* magazine, which had at least one representative at the meetings in Friedensau and asserts that it is “not part of, or affiliated with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® or any of its subsidiaries,” contained the following comment about the origin of the Reform Movement: “The movement’s founders took issue with church leaders, initially in Germany, who, under pressure from their governments, broke with the dominant pioneer position of refusal to bear arms in war. Many of those who joined the Reform Movement were summarily disfellowshipped.”

The statement’s first implication is that that men founded the movement—that this is just another independent movement. However, if someone is going to say that men “founded” the movement, he should point to those who disfellowshipped the ones who held to the Adventist Church’s original position on military service.

Next, the comment implies that people joined the Reform Movement and were “summarily disfellowshipped” for that. But how could they have been disfellowshipped for joining (or even founding) the Reform Movement when that movement did not come together until some five to ten years later? Later, those who showed interest in the Reform were disfellowshipped—that is the view from the *Spectrum* side of the issue. But for someone to become a member of the Reform Movement, he or she must first resign from membership in any other denomination, union, or secret society to which he or she may have belonged. Therefore, the statement implies something that simply was not and indeed could not be true.

As for implying that a Reform Movement was in existence at the beginning of World War I, this was so only in God’s eyes, and the war revealed it. But there was no formal, visible Reform Movement organization when faithful men and women were unrighteously deprived of membership rights in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and left churchless for promoting and defending the principles held sacred by the church from its beginning.

The truth as it is in Jesus, along with its many subtle implications, is altogether true.



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## The Sabbath Watchman

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**Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.**

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus’ representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God’s dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God’s Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth’s history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world’s only Redeemer and their Lord.

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## What Happened in Friedensau?

From May 12 to 15, 2014, the Institute of Adventist Studies (IAS) of the Seventh-day Adventists sponsored a symposium at Friedensau Adventist University in Friedensau, Germany. The theme was “The Impact of World War I on Seventh-day Adventism.” When the brethren of the International Missionary Society (IMS), General Conference, first heard about this event, they contacted the organizers to find out if there was interest in having papers submitted concerning the Reform Movement as related to the symposium topic. This was accepted. There were 18 Adventist and 2 Reform Movement presenters. All were qualified by having a Ph.D. degree. The papers submitted will be published in a book by Friedensau Adventist University. In addition, each presenter gave a 30-minute verbal synopsis of his paper. Total participants in the symposium numbered about 100, including 17 Reformers.

There were two parts to the program—a normal program and a special program. During the normal program, Adventist scholars presented general topics about World War I, apocalyptic prophecy and interpretation, and Adventism and the challenge of war. For example, the first presentation on Monday evening, May 12, was by George R. Knight on the topic of “Faith, the Great War and the Implications of Being an International Church, and a Lost Part of Adventist Heritage.” This addressed the Adventist Church’s change in its attitude toward military service.

Other presenters spoke about prophecy and interpretation as well as concepts of nonviolence and pacifism. Some mentioned the Adventists who later formed the nucleus of the Reform Movement and also addressed current thinking, including “modern Adventism” and “post-modern Adventism.”

On Wednesday evening, May 14, a special program convened. The program booklet contained the following Note: “The special program on Wednesday evening provides a historic opportunity to bring together two groups of Seventh-day Adventists who started to go separate ways during World War I: representatives of the ‘International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement’ and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

Brother Idel Suarez, Jr., president of the IMS General Conference, gave a presentation titled “The Reform Movement Perspective on 1914.” Before his presentation, Rolf Polher, Director of the IAS, and Johannes Hartlapp, Dean of Theology at Friedensau Adventist University, with the assistance of Holger Teubert, read a “Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany Regarding the Centennial Anniversary of the Outbreak of the First World War” in German and in English. Issued by the German Unions on April 13, 2014, and signed by two officers, the statement was an acknowledgment of wrong doing on the part of the German Union leaders in issuing letters endorsing “military service” with “weapons,” even “on the Sabbath,” from the outset of the Great War in 1914. The writers apologized for accusing their former Adventist “members who contradicted them of having ‘fallen’ from the truth” and “having people pursued by the authorities.” The statement asked the “Reform Movement for forgiveness for our failings.” It acknowledged that “the children of God are called to be people of peace, and to reject every form of violence against the innocent.” It quoted Neal C. Wilson, former President of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference, who said in 1985 that “Seventh-day

Adventists want to be known as peacemakers.”

The full document of the apology is published on page 12 of this issue, along with “The Reform Movement 7-Point Response” to it, which was promised to those who presented the statement of apology and was forwarded to them.

After Brother Suarez gave his presentation, Brother Woosan Kang, IMS General Conference second secretary, gave another presentation prepared by him and Brother Antonino Di Franca, titled “Pacifism, Nonviolence, and Conscientious Objection—the Reform Movement Position.”

The last part of the special program was a lengthy question-and-answer period in which the symposium participants asked questions of the IMS brethren, who responded according to the counsel of the apostle Peter: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” 1 Peter 3:15. The meeting was cordial, Christian, and orderly. Reformers were allowed to speak without any censorship. The participants were free to ask any questions they desired about the Reform Movement.

A more extensive account and additional materials from the symposium in Friedensau, including the questions asked of the Reform Movement brethren and their answers, will be published in *Centennial Highlights*, a book inspired by the Centennial Commemoration at the General Conference headquarters in Cedartown, Georgia, July 30-August 4, 2014, along with other articles and pictures significant to the centennial year. Readers of *The Sabbath Watchman* will be notified when the book may be ordered in English and in Spanish. **SW**

# Apology of the German Unions

## STATEMENT

### **of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany regarding the centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War**

On July 28th, 1914, a war broke out in Europe. Its dimensions eclipsed everything before it. Many Adventists saw the outbreak of the “Great War” as a sign of the end of the world. Before the war, many Adventists had served in the military but refused to carry out duties on Sabbath, risking potentially severe penalties. Now, other Adventists considered it part of the preparation for the imminent return of Jesus to refuse to carry weapons or to participate in the military immunization program.

However, shortly after the general mobilization on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1914, the Central European leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hamburg issued a circular letter to the Adventist congregations in Germany recommending, “Insofar as we are members of the military or receive orders to enlist in military service, [we should] fulfill our military duties wholeheartedly and with joy[...] In Joshua 6 we read that the children of God bore weapons and also served on Sabbath.” This letter and other publications provoked a complex protest in Adventist congregations, leading to tensions and divisions. In 1915, this state of affairs led to the rising of a separate organization, the self-designated “Reform Movement”, which accused its mother church, the “greater church,” of a Babylonian apostasy from the true Advent faith.

Today we recognize and concede that during these disputes our Fathers often did not act in the spirit of love and reconciliation demonstrated by Jesus. Out of concern for the survival of the denomination in Germany, advice contradicting the Word of God was given which led to division and profound hurt. We also concede that the former Adventist leadership did not adequately fulfill their responsibility to the congregations. They unjustly accused members who contradicted them of having “fallen” from the truth, and in individual cases went as far as having people pursued by the authorities.

During negotiations with the Reform Movement from June 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920, in Friedensau, Germany, Pastor Arthur G. Daniells, then President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, objected to the statement of the German Church leadership regarding military service and emphasized, “We would not have made such a declaration.” At the Pastors’ meeting, which took place immediately after the negotiations in Friedensau, those responsible for the documents rescinded their statements as “erroneous”. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1923, they again expressed their regret “that such documents have ever been released.”

Even though none of those directly involved are still alive, we ask their descendants and relatives along with the two still existing groups of the Reform Movement for forgiveness for our failings. From these painful experiences we have learned that the children of God are called to be people of peace, and to reject every form of violence against the innocent. We believe that disciples of Jesus are truest to the statements of the Holy Scriptures when they act as ambassadors for peace and reconciliation.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1985, Pastor Neal C. Wilson, former President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, expressed the same idea in his “Declaration of Peace” to the General Conference in Session in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. “In a world full of fighting and hatred, a world of ideological and military conflicts, Seventh-day Adventists want to be known as peacemakers, and want to advocate for global justice and peace under Christ as the head of a new humanity.”

*Hanover/Ostfildern, 13 April 2014*

*In the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany,*

*Johannes Naether, President*

*Gunther Machel, Vice President*

# **The International Missionary Society, S.D.A. Church, Reform Movement 7-POINT STATEMENT CONCERNING THE CONFESSION AND APOLOGY OF THE S.D.A. GERMAN UNIONS**

**Acknowledgment and Appreciation.** During the Symposium on “The Impact of World War I on Seventh-day Adventism,” held at Friedensau Adventist University, an official copy of a “Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany regarding the centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War,” which had been issued and published by S.D.A. German Unions, was translated into English, read publicly, and given to the Reform Movement representatives. The S.D.A. German Unions made a courageous and noble step toward a noncombatant position. They acknowledged the Adventist Church’s involvement in the Great War and that it was wrong for Adventist leaders and members to endorse “military service” with “weapons,” even “on the Sabbath,” from the outset of the war in 1914 through its termination in 1918. They conceded that some Adventist leaders had their former “members ... pursued by the authorities.” Their formal and public petition asking the “Reform Movement for forgiveness” is received with sincere thanks and praise to God. We concur that the “children of God are called to be a people of peace, and to reject every form of violence....”<sup>1</sup>

**Origin and Organization.** The faithful Adventists who protested starting in August 1914 were not motivated by personal ambitions, time-setting, dreams, or fanaticism. As a past Adventist General Conference President, Robert Pierson, wrote in 1977: “During World War I, ... some ... believers were by church discipline disfellowshipped from the church, even though they themselves would not have separated, nor had they rejected the fundamental principles of the church. New organizations were formed in order to gather the believers that were separated in this manner.”<sup>2</sup> After the war ended, the faithful Adventists initially adopted the name in 1919 of “Internationale Missionsgesellschaft der Siebenten Tags Adventisten Alte seit 1844 stehengebliebene Richtung Deutsche Union” (International Missionary Society of Seventh-day Adventists, Old Movement standing firm since 1844 German Union). During their first international conference in 1921, and again during their attempted appeal to the delegates in session of the General Conference world assembly held in 1922, in the city of San Francisco, the name International Missionary Society, S.D.A. Reform Movement was used.

**Christ is the Center.** The separation in Adventism, the Laodicean message, the needed Reformation,<sup>3</sup> and the predicted war crisis were not unrelated to the message of 1888 which presented Jesus as Christ Our Righteousness.<sup>4</sup> As an eyewitness of that memorable conference in Minneapolis wrote: “The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, [and] in love,....”<sup>5</sup>

**Suffering and Sinfulness of War.** While we appreciate and acknowledge the confession of the German Unions’ involvement in the division that occurred 100 years ago, the new Adventist combatant position adopted during the Great War was not an issue limited to Germany, nor to World War I, but has permeated many countries up to this day. Adventist members supported by the church in serving as combatant soldiers have suffered injury and continue to die on the battlefield. On the other hand, conscientious objectors have suffered imprisonment, torture, and loss of life with minor or no recognition. As our mutual pioneers preached, taught, and wrote in the context of the American Civil War, bearing arms, engaging in war, and causing human bloodshed is “sinful.” It is transgression of the law of God (Exodus 20:8-11, 13, 15), lack of faith, and contrary to the spirit of the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> John 18:36. The General Conference resolved in 1868: “Believing that war was never justifiable except under the immediate direction of God ... we cannot believe it to be right for the servants of Christ to take up arms to destroy the lives of their fellow men.”<sup>7</sup>

**Pacifism.** Therefore, it has ever been the position of the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement worldwide that all members as conscientious objectors abstain from participating in war<sup>8</sup> and promote peace. James 3:17, 18. Its doctrinal teaching is that true Christians must not seek the death of others of like or different faith by fighting in

the armed forces, and that the Sabbath is to be kept holy under all circumstances by God's grace, following the example of Jesus Christ, who advocated pacifism as the Prince of Peace. Matthew 5:43-48.

**Apology.** We concede that nominal Reformers in the past have acted improperly with a wrong attitude, such as emphasizing personal sins of Adventists and Reformers, thus diminishing the influence and the power of the present truth message and its principles. May God forgive us for not doing more to reach out to our Adventist brethren and the world with the pacifism principles and the message of the peace-loving "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.<sup>9</sup>

**Praise and Prayer.** Looking back across the nearly 100 years of this Reform Movement's existence, we humbly praise the Lord, who has preserved us to see this day. We encourage all who uphold pacifism and nonviolence within the Adventist Church and throughout the world. During this centennial of the Great War, may everyone bearing the name of Adventist understand the experiences and sacrifices of the faithful survivors and martyrs so as to inspire every child and youth to be prepared for future crises, trusting the Almighty God. Revelation 12:11. It is our desire and prayer that Adventists in other countries, as well as the brethren at the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, return to the historic position of Adventism in its first love, as it resolved: "That it is the judgment of this [General] Conference, that the bearing of arms, or engaging in war, is a direct violation of the teachings of our Saviour, and the spirit and letter of the law of God."<sup>10</sup>

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9.

*For the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, General Conference, Inc.,  
info@sda1844.org and www.sda1844.org,*

*Cedartown, Georgia, U.S.A., July 1, 2014*

*Pastor Idel Suarez, Jr., President*

*Elder Woonsan Kang, 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary*

*Pastor Tzvetan Petkov, Ministerial Director*

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Naether and Günther Machel, "Schuld und Versagen," *Adventisten heute*, May 2014, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Robert H. Pierson to believers who at this time are not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, DC, February 1977, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> "Unless there is a decided reformation among the people of God, He will turn His face from them." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> "Since the time of the Minneapolis meeting, I have seen the state of the Laodicean church as never before." Ellen G. White, "The Righteousness of Christ," *Review and Herald*, vol. 67, no. 33 (August 26, 1890), p. 1. "I thought of the future crisis, and feelings that I can never put into words for a little time overcame me." Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12 (Silver Spring, MD: E.G. White Estate, 1993), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Uriah Smith, *Compilation of Extracts from the Publications of Seventh-day Adventists, Setting Forth Their Views of the Sinfulness of War Referred to in the Annexed Affidavits* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865).

<sup>7</sup> J.N. Andrews and U. Smith, "Sixth Annual Session of the General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists" (Business proceedings, Battle Creek, MI, May 14, 1868).

<sup>8</sup> "In the army they cannot obey the truth and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers. There would be a continual violation of conscience." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mt. View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 361.

<sup>9</sup> "God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform, ... Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places." Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), p. 678.

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Aldrich, and U. Smith, "Fifth Annual Session of the General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists" (Business proceedings, Battle Creek, MI, May 14, 1867).