

THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH¹

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1. Introduction

The subject of the “apostolicity of the church” has not received much attention among Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) discussions on ecclesiology. As a general rule, SDAs tend to focus on more pressing and practical subjects rather than understanding the nature and mission of the church. It might seem that for SDAs, who came into existence after the 1844 Millerite revival, that this movement developed far too late to deal with the issue of the apostolicity of the church. However, a closer look at the issue reveals that this question is foundational for any discussion of ecclesiology and touches upon many other important theological issues. This article provides a brief overview of the issues involved in the question of the apostolicity of the church in different traditions, deals with the question of what the apostolicity of the church means from the SDA perspective, and finally examines foundational theological questions connected with it.² The issue of the apostolicity of the church is highly significant for the SDA understanding of the church (i.e., ecclesiology).

¹ This paper is adapted from a presentation at the EUD Bible conference in Cernica, Rumania, Sept. 5, 2012.

² According to the Roman Catholic scholar Herbert Vorgrimmler the apostolicity of the church designates that “the church, which exists today, despite its historical developments and changes, is identical in its substance with the church of the apostles. Together with the unity, the holiness and the catholicity of the church the Apostolicity [of the church] belongs to the identifying marks, according to which in classical theology the ‘true church’ of Jesus can be recognized.” Herbert Vorgrimmler, *Neues Theologisches Wörterbuch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 56-57; my translation. The Roman Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott is convinced that “from all Christian confessions the Roman Catholic Church matches those four marks alone or at least in the best possible manner.” Ludwig Ott, *Grundriss der Dogmatik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1957), 372; my translation.

2. Definition

The apostolicity of the church is one of four so called *notae*, or characteristic marks of the church:³ the unity, the holiness, the catholicity, and the apostolicity of the church. Thus, the apostolicity of the church is a substantive characteristic of the Christian faith, as can be seen in the references in the apostolic confession.⁴ Indeed, in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381) the church is called the “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”⁵

The term *apostolicity* is derived from the noun *apostle*. The original and most general meaning of the word *apostolic* is “to stand in connection with the apostles.”⁶ The decisive question is how this connection with the apostles is most appropriately understood: is this connection understood primarily in terms of an unbroken historical continuity that is derived from the first apostles and transmitted through a sacramental act of ordination? Or, is the connection with the apostles in terms of belief, i.e., is there a harmony with the apostles with regards to the biblical-apostolic content of our faith?⁷

3. The Meaning of Apostolicity in Different Ecclesiastical Traditions

Examining various church traditions reveals different understandings about what apostolicity means and what it entails. Orthodox churches understand the apostolicity of the church as an important and God-ordained mechanism by which the structure and teaching of the church is

³ Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Abriss der Dogmatik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1980), 287.

⁴ Cf. Sabine Pemsel-Maier, *Grundbegriffe der Dogmatik* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 2003), 22.

⁵ As quoted in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 672.

⁶ Hans Küng, *Die Kirche* (München: Pieper Verlag, 1980), 409; my translation.

⁷ Cf. Wilfried Härle, “Apostolizität,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Jakowski, Eberhard Jüngel, and vierte völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1:654. Similarly also Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 491.

perpetuated.⁸ Eastern Orthodox churches understand apostolic succession as “the unbroken connection of a hierarchy with Christ and the Apostles through the Sacraments of holy Ordination.”⁹ In Eastern Orthodoxy bishops are sometimes referred to as “successors of the apostles.”¹⁰ Strict Orthodox ecclesiology and theology maintains that all legitimate bishops are properly successors of Peter. This also means that presbyters (or “priests”) are successors of the apostles. This implies a certain sacramental succession.

In a similar even more pointed manner, the Roman Catholic understanding of apostolicity is put forth. According to Roman Catholic theology the *magisterium*, the office of the bishop and the office of priests with their respective authorities are transmitted in an unbroken historic succession to their successors by means of laying on of hands. This historic succession (Lat. *successio*) warrants the identity of the Roman Catholic Church with its apostolic beginnings. Early on, this apostolic succession was also used to legitimize the leadership authority of the bishops, who are dependent upon the pope in Rome who sees himself as the successor of Peter. This perspective is maintained even in the Second Vatican Council,¹¹ which demonstrates that the Roman Catholic Church has not changed in its understanding and ecclesiastical claims even in recent times.

4. Apostolicity and Its Significance for Other Theological Questions

Protestant theologian Wilfried Härle points out in a remarkable article that the question of the apostolicity of the church opens up a number of significant theological questions and issues. He specifically lists five:

- ⁸ Cf. “Apostolic Succession,” in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1:40-43.
- ⁹ *Eastern Orthodox Catechism*, 197, p. 47, as quoted in Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, vol. 3 of *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2001), 358.
- ¹⁰ Cf. “Apostolic Succession,” in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1:40-43.
- ¹¹ Cf. DH 4119, 4144, 4207-4211; quoted in Härle, “Apostolizität,” 654. Cf. also LG 20; as quoted in Werner Löser, “Apostolic Succession,” in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 27.

- (a) The relationship between the teaching of the church and divine revelation;
- (b) The relationship between Scripture and tradition;
- (c) The relationship between invisible and visible church;
- (d) The relationship between the priesthood of all believers and the ordained priesthood
- (e) As well as foundational questions that pertain to biblical authority and biblical interpretation.¹²

These questions are not the only ones that are related to this subject. However, this reveals why the apostolicity of the church has become *the* decisive question of ecclesiastical controversy among Christian confessions, as Otto Karrer has stated succinctly and pointedly in his article "Apostolizität" in the Roman Catholic Encyclopedia *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.¹³

4.1. The Relationship between the Teaching of the Church and Divine Revelation

The concept of the apostolicity of the church or even an apostolic succession is not found in the NT or the rest of the Bible. This is even acknowledged by Roman Catholic scholars.¹⁴ Only after the death of the apostles towards the end of the first century or at the beginning of the second century some church fathers took recourse in the continuity with the apostles in their struggle against Schismatics and heretics. They did so in order to demonstrate their doctrinal orthodoxy.¹⁵

Hence, at the end of the first century Clement of Rome points to apostolic succession to argue against Schismatics.¹⁶ Similarly Papias refers to a line of church representatives who are significant for the church

¹² Härle, "Apostolizität," 1:654.

¹³ Otto Karrer, "Apostolizität der Kirche," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1957), 1:765.

¹⁴ Werner Löser, "Apostolicity of the Church," in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroads, 1995), 25.

¹⁵ Philip J. Hefner, "The Church," in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 2:210.

¹⁶ Justo L. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 1:147.

tradition as criterion for authentic preaching.¹⁷ Some years later Ignatius of Antioch upholds the authority of the bishops and elders as representatives of Christ and his apostles against heretics.¹⁸ While Ignatius makes reference to the bishops, he does not mention the issue of succession, which later in church history gained a great importance in the reasoning of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁹ The first fully developed principle of apostolic succession does not appear until the church father Irenaeus.²⁰ In North Africa the church father Tertullian argues for similar ideas and coins the expression *Ordo Episcoporum* for the line of succession.²¹ The well-known and respected church historian Justo Gonzales correctly points out, however, that even during those early times Irenaeus and Tertullian did not understand apostolic succession as the only means to legitimize the office of a bishop. To the contrary, some bishops could claim such succession for themselves, but others could not. Yet even the later bishops and their churches were considered apostolic, because their faith was in harmony with the apostles.²²

The issue of the apostolicity of the church is firmly embedded in the confession of faith not until relatively late in the second ecumenical council of Constantinople (AD 381). The fact, that an apostolic succession is not found in the NT, raises important questions about the relationship between Scripture and tradition and the authority of proper biblical interpretation. Can the question of the apostolicity of the church be decided by Scripture alone? Or, is the larger testimony of later church tradition needed to decide this issue? Does Scripture remain its own expositor, even in this question, or does the church interpret Scripture for believers, and thus stand above Scripture? Is the Bible for SDAs indeed the final authority for faith, the highest norm (*norma normata*) that decides questions of faith or does later church tradition gain an equal standing for theology and theological identity?

¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.3.1 and *passim*; quoted in Wilhelm Breuning, "Apostolic Succession," in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 38.

¹⁸ Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought*, 1:147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.3.1 and *passim*; quoted in Breuning, "Apostolic Succession," 38.

²¹ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 4.5.2, quoted in Breuning, "Apostolic Succession," 38.

²² Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought*, 1:148.

From their very beginning, SDAs claim that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the highest and final norm for faith and teaching so that everything else has to take the Holy Scripture as its decisive authority. This priority of Scripture still holds and is expressed in the slogan *solā scriptura*, which SDAs affirm in their apologies.²³ SDAs are convinced that later developments and traditions always have to be measured by the inspired text of Holy Scripture.

The apostolic testimony, as found in the Bible, gains an important role. The proclamation of the apostles, as found in the writings of the NT, SDAs believe, is the original, foundational, and normative testimony about Jesus Christ for all times. The Christian church is bound to this word, is called to be faithful to its testimony, and is to follow the example of the apostles.²⁴ The church always stands *under* the normative character of the biblical transmission of the apostolic teaching or the church forfeits its claim to be apostolic.

In as much as the apostles were the immediate and direct witnesses and messengers of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, and were called by Him, they are the normative apostles. No other apostles were called subsequently. There is no repetition or reinstatement of the apostolate, as found in the New Apostolic church, for instance. What remains in the Bible is the apostolic charge and the apostolic commission, to which all later disciples of Jesus are bound.²⁵ Only in obedience towards the biblical transmitted teaching and the example of the apostles can the church properly be called apostolic.

When apostolic succession is understood merely as historic succession, the church stands in danger of not being subject to the authority of the living word of God but sees itself under the authority of its Episcopal successors. This led the Roman Catholic Church to the point where it understands the church, represented by the *Magisterium* and the pope, to interpret the Bible for the layperson in an authoritative and binding manner. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) confirmed this understanding and expounded that the bishops, because of their divine appointment, took the place of the apostles as shepherds of the church. Thus, those who, according to Roman Catholic understanding, hear a

²³ As part of the great Protestant family, SDAs acknowledge the Bible, together with the Reformers of the 16th century, as *dux* (leader), *magistra* (teacher), *und* (and) *regina* (queen).

²⁴ Cf. Küng, *Die Kirche*, 420.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 421.

Roman Catholic Bishop, hear Christ and those who reject a bishop, reject Christ.²⁶

Here the teaching *magisterium* of the church holds a position that was never intended by Jesus. For Jesus, Scripture was *the* decisive source and authoritative norm of faith. In his discourse and reasoning with others, Jesus often refers to Scripture: "Has not the Scripture said..." (John 7:42), or he used the phrase "it is written..." (John 6:45). Referring to Moses Jesus said, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46-47; cf. 5:39). Similarly, Jesus referred to Scripture when Satan tempted him (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). In a similar manner, the apostles used the Scripture time and again to legitimize their faith. This constant reference to the Scriptures by the apostles and Jesus demonstrates that the Bible is the ultimate foundation of apostolic life and teaching.

A mere historical descent and succession or even a sacramental succession is not the decisive criteria for true faith. The apostle Paul points this out when he writes to the Christians in Rome, many of whom were of heathen descent, referring to "Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Rom 4:16). In Galatians he becomes even more explicit when he writes, "It is those *who are of faith* who are sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7, emphasis added). For the apostle Paul, faith-relationship is more important than a direct biological-historical descent. Furthermore, he states, "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29). Hence, Paul writes to the gentile Christians in Galatia: "And you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise" (Gal 4:28). Of course, the believers did not have a direct biological lineage to Isaac, and certainly there was no sacramental transmission between them. The connection is based on a faith-relationship, a spiritual harmony, and congruence with the biblical-apostolic faith.

Furthermore, if the question of apostolicity was merely fulfilled in historical succession, then the reality of unbelief, unfaithfulness, and the possibility of a spiritual deformation of the biblical truth are not serious concerns. The apostle Paul warns about this in Acts, where he writes specifically to the bishops as leaders of the church: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with

²⁶ *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, chap. 3, "The Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate," sec. 20; quoted in J. Rodman Williams, *The Church, the Kingdom, and Last Things*, vol. 3 of *Renewal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992), 37.

His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29).

God through the Bible is the one who protects the church from the danger of heresy. Faithfulness to the word of God leads the church to become a holy church, which is another mark of the true church. As a result, it is imperative to take seriously the hermeneutical principle that the apostle Paul outlines in 1 Cor 4:6, calling the church to remain within the principles of scripture.

It is important to recognize that there is no other way to Jesus Christ, except through the words of the apostles and prophets. Without them there can be no apostolic church. Therefore, an authentic apostolic church is bound to the inspired words of the apostles, as they are faithfully transmitted in Holy Scripture.²⁷ In Eph 2:20, Paul writes that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, where Christ Jesus is the cornerstone." This is significant, because from a biblical perspective the church is founded not just on the apostles and on Jesus Christ but also on the OT prophets. Any church that forgets the Hebrew Scriptures and the apostolic exposition of it cannot be properly called apostolic.²⁸

The apostle Paul portrays his apostolic office always in harmony with the pre-Pauline biblical tradition. In Gal 1:9 he writes, "If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed" even if it would be an angel or he himself. Paul does not invent a new gospel. He preaches the everlasting gospel—a gospel that began already in the OT and was fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From a biblical perspective, the word fixed in written form by the OT prophets and the NT apostles is the authentic norm and the apostolicity of the church.

The church consists of believers, who, through the ages, have come to know Jesus Christ, through the inspired words of the Bible. The church comprises of believers, who have entrusted their lives to Jesus Christ, have been transformed by God, and have experienced a radical new birth through the work of the Holy Spirit. The church is made up of believers, who have been called by God and have the prophetic word of Scripture to guide them (2 Pet 1:20f). The church can only be called apostolic if it is faithful to the prophetic-apostolic word of God. It is apostolic only, if it takes the Bible seriously and passes on biblical truth faithfully and if its members live the biblical truth accordingly.

²⁷ Cf. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 355.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

The task of the apostolic church, therefore, is not to improve the biblical message because in trying to do so, the message would irreparably be damaged. An apostolic church has to be faithful to all that the Bible teaches.²⁹ Such faithfulness also includes a sacred responsibility to give testimony about the faith that was entrusted to the believers once and for all. Therefore, the church is called “a pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). What the first eyewitnesses saw and heard from Jesus Christ, they proclaimed so that even believers today can have fellowship with him (1 John 1:3). Hence, even those who have never seen Jesus can experience what the apostle Peter expresses in the following words: “and though you have not seen Him, yet you love Him” (1 Pet 1:8).

4.2. Apostolicity and Mission

When talking about the apostolicity of the church there is one aspect that often is easily overlooked. The original meaning of the word *apostellō* signifies a person who is being sent, a messenger of somebody else, who has sent him. An apostle is not a person who has appointed himself. He is not even appointed by the church, nor is he elected by the church into his office. Instead, he is sent by Christ.³⁰ His primary task is the proclamation of the gospel. Paul writes, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). Hence, an apostle is not to teach his own teachings but has to proclaim the message of him, who has sent him. This now better explains why Jesus Christ is called the “Apostle and High Priest” in Heb 3:1. Jesus is indeed the one, who is sent by God, to preach the gospel and to reveal the true character and nature of God. In this sense Jesus is the archetype—the role model—of every apostle.³¹ Jesus expands this appointment to all the disciples, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, first to Israel and then to all the nations (Mark 3:13-19; Matt 10:1-42; 28:16-20).

To be an apostolic church, therefore, means: to be a missionary church, sent, and commissioned by God, proclaiming the everlasting gospel to every nation and all people so that the entire world is prepared for his soon coming. This message is for *all* people not just for secularized people or for people who have not yet heard the name of Jesus (Rom 15:20-21). It also has a restorative element that appeals to those who are familiar with

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁰ Küng, *Die Kirche*, 416.

³¹ Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 350. Cf. also Williams, *The Church*, 35.

some biblical truth. In Acts 18:24-25, about Apollos is described as “an eloquent man, ... mighty in the Scriptures” who “had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus.” Yet Priscilla and Aquila, when they heard him, “took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).

Moreover, the apostles did not simply preach the gospel but also disciplined, in other words, trained and taught the newly converted persons. In Acts 11:26, Paul remained in Antioch for one year and taught many. Additionally, the missionary mandate of Jesus and the apostles was accompanied by two phenomena: the prophetic gift among the believers of the early church and healing miracles reaching the believers and the larger community. In the context of an extended teaching of the church members, Acts 11:28 points out that the prophetic gift was present in the apostolic church as well. For example, Agabus (Acts 21:10) as well as the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) prophesied. Thus, an apostolic church replete with all the spiritual gifts will also have the prophetic gift present.

Second, the apostolic church in NT times exhibited healings and signs that went along with the preaching of the gospel. The gospels present Jesus as heavily engaged in the healing and restoration of his fellow man (e.g., Mark 2:1-12). Jesus instructs his disciples to go out and also engage in healing (Matt 10:1.8) and the early church of Acts is characterized by a healing and restorative ministry as well (Acts 3:1-10; 6:1-6). Because the human person, biblically speaking, is a unity of body, soul, and mind, physical health has implications for one’s spiritual relationship with God.³²

³² Ellen White states, “The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God’s servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. For this reason the Lord has marked out a way in which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work. Thus a guarding influence is thrown around those who come to the sanitariums for treatment.” Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958), 2:54.

4.3. Ordination

The issue of the apostolicity of the church also has implications for the transmission and commissioning of the pastoral ministry. Based on the concept of succession, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and even some Protestant (state) churches endorse a sacramental understanding of ordination. Then, it becomes a sacramental passing on of the apostolic authority in an unbroken historical succession of the ecclesiastical office that entitles the recipient of the sacrament to perform spiritual things. Alternatively, ordination can also be viewed as the recognition of a spiritual calling that the church recognizes. The individual has demonstrated a visible faithfulness to the word of God. In its voted statements, the SDA Church does not support a sacramental understanding of ordination.³³

4.4. Apostolicity and the Visible Church

Härle points out that the question of the apostolicity of the church also touches on the issue of the visible or invisible church. The apostolic origin and the continuation of the missionary task include not only the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the biblical message but also the act of baptism (Matt 28:19-20). Baptism is a visible sign of church membership. In all Christian churches, baptism signals the entry into the church. Since baptism is a visible entry sign into the church it implies that the church also is a visible entity, if it wants to be faithful to the commission of Jesus. Obedience and faithfulness towards the commandments of God always leads to a visibility of this faithfulness: "here are those who keep the commandments of God and who have the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12).

In reaction to the dominant (visible) Roman Catholic Church of his time, who had distorted much of biblical faith, Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers before him (i.e., John Hus) emphasized an understanding of the church where personal faith is emphasized more than its visible body.³⁴ For Luther, the essential invisibility of the church is grounded in God's eternal predestination that includes all believers—from

³³ See Don F. Neufeld, ed., "Ordination," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 2:253-255.

³⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*, vol. 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 173.

eternity—even those, who are not born yet and hence are invisible to the human eye.³⁵ Since God has predestined from eternity who will be saved and who will be lost, the elect are known only to God and are invisible to human beings.³⁶ The Bible, however, teaches that election has visible signs. The Bible never speaks about an invisible church.

At this point the divergence between the *universal* and the remnant church needs to be clarified. SDAs affirm in their Fundamental Belief number 13 that the “universal church” constitutes all who truly believe in Jesus Christ. Thus, SDAs acknowledge that there are genuine Christians in other churches, which means that they respect and love them. But in these last days, in a time of widespread apostasy, there will be a group of God’s people, called the remnant, who are faithful to his commandments and have the faith of Jesus (Rev 12:17; 14:12). This remnant church has a special commission and unique task: to prepare the world for the soon coming of Jesus. SDAs do not believe that only SDA believers will be saved but do believe that the SDA Church has an unique task and evangelizes to include all who wish to join it. In this sense, the SDA ecclesiology is unique in all of Protestantism and offers a universal alternative to the visible Roman Catholic Church.

5. Conclusion

The question of the apostolicity of the church is indeed a decisive mark of the true church. This issue has far reaching implications. The apostolicity of the church is, biblically speaking, not a historical succession in sacramental transmission. It is instead a spiritual succession in harmony with the words of the apostles. This idea is forcefully expressed by the apostle Paul in 1 Tim 6:3-5:

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men.

³⁵ In this understanding of predestination, Luther was influenced by Augustine. Cf. *ibid.*

³⁶ See the discussion in Frank M. Hasel, “The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 175-179.

Then, the church is a living testimony as part of an honored and long historical tradition. God calls for a missionary church, following the commission of Jesus to go into all the world (*catholikos*) to preach the good news to all the inhabitants of the earth (*oikumene*). The church by the Spirit of God himself, grounded in the trustworthy word of God, the Bible. The word of God changes lives and brings harmony with the will of God. In this way the opportunity is given to witness what it truly means to be an apostolic church.