

## Readers of this book have said:

*For years, I have sat in the pew Sunday after Sunday and thought to myself, “Wow! What a good and relevant sermon!” Nevertheless, all of these hundreds of Sunday sermons have not made me a disciple in everyday life! Shocking, but true!*

—Dorte

*When I read “The Last Reformation,” it became clear to me how the current state of the church happened and why there are so few real disciples in our country. The book reveals facts that most Christians are unaware of about the unbiblical traditions we have ignorantly accepted into the church. How far away from true Christianity we have come.*

—Ulla

*This book is credible, and hugely engaging. Torben is very transparent and extremely honest in sharing the difficulties of his own journey toward returning to the biblical way of making disciples, the way Jesus intended. The message is clear, concise, and biblical.*

—Klaus

*Torben’s book is a must read for anyone who has become dissatisfied with the way church is happening today in many parts of the world. Its pyramid system of leadership closes the door to all but a select few while everyone else pays their tithes into the storehouse, then sits and listens obediently. The abuses and control tactics (to keep us and our money), and the watered-down messages to please the “seekers” must change if we are to become the vibrant and powerful disciples who are carrying on His work and making disciples in all the nations, as Jesus charged us with doing. Let the reformation begin!*

—Nana

OTHER PUBLICATIONS BY  
TORBEN SØNDERGAARD:

“Sound Doctrine”

“Christian, Disciple, or Slave”

“Life as a Christian”

“Complete the Race”

“Deceived?” (Booklet)

“The Twisted Race” (Booklet)



# THE LAST REFORMATION

*Back to the New Testament model of discipleship*



by Torben Søndergaard



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By Torben Søndergaard

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helped to get this book published in English.  
You are a blessing.

— Torben Søndergaard

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

Throughout this book, the words “fellowship” and “church” are used as having two different meanings.

The word “fellowship” is used primarily for a gathering of believers who have no formal church building or structure and are led exclusively by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

The word “church,” when used of a gathering, refers to traditional “organized religion,” with a formal church building, assigned leadership structure, a congregation of listeners, etc.

Simply said, a “church” is with a building, and a “fellowship” is without a building. It does not always work out that way, but the context will make the meaning clear.

In the same way, if a reference to church does not say “state church,” it is referring primarily to evangelical or “free” churches.

References to the “West” or “Western churches” are referring to both European and American churches.

Bible quotations are from the *Modern King James Version* of the Bible.

*From the publisher:*

Torben Søndergaard, the author of this book, lives in Denmark. This book has been translated from the Danish language into English and contains many references to Denmark as well as the Lutheran Church, which is the “state church” in Denmark.



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## INTRODUCTION

**W**e have had the chance to get to know Torben Søndergaard and see him in action. What we have seen is God's kingdom being preached, people being saved, set free, healed, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit the way we read about in Acts—and the way it even happens today in many countries and many places where the gospel is being preached in the power of the Spirit.

Torben has a passion for the salvation of people and for the fellowship. People who get saved are quickly introduced into an active discipleship program and into varying fellowships. New Christians quickly begin practicing Jesus' life in word and deed, which in turn leads to others coming to faith in Him.

Torben has studied church history and the Bible, especially Acts, in order to find biblical principles that are applicable to reaching out to people. In this book, he describes his own journey, from which we can all learn something. The training of disciples is a subject that is in focus throughout the whole book, and Torben shows by many examples how we can best train disciples.

Most Christians, us included, have inherited a way to have fellowship and be disciples. Torben challenges us to question this, using examples from the Bible and from church history. This book is challenging and sharp, but we all want to see more people believing in Jesus, disciples being trained and fellowships growing stronger and

multiplying. This is why we believe *The Last Reformation* is important when thinking about how we are to be the church today.

We want to encourage you to read this book prayerfully and with an open heart and mind. How you apply what you learn from this book is up to you.

We are truly in need of a paradigm shift in regard to fellowships and discipleship—a Christian lifestyle that reflects what we read in Acts. We believe that it can happen in each country and in our age today!

For God's kingdom and for people's salvation!

— Charles Kridiotis and Mattias Nordenberg



# PREFACE

## THE THIRD REFORMATION

**A** German researcher, Christian Schwarz, looking into church growth, says that many things are indicating that we are living in a time when we are going to see a third reformation.

The first reformation took place in the fifteenth century when Martin Luther opposed the Catholic Church and its teaching. He revived the very essence of the Gospel, namely justification by faith alone. One might say that this reformation concerned theology. If you look at the structure of the Lutheran Church today, which is the “state church” in Denmark, you will see that it resembles the structure of the Catholic Church to a great extent. This is because Martin Luther did not introduce very much change to the structure itself.

The second reformation took place in the eighteenth century around the time of the ministry of the Wesley brothers’ activities. In this reformation, personal intimacy with Christ was rediscovered. This was mainly a spiritual reformation; a reformation in which the passionate love for one’s personal Savior was cherished. It resulted in a passion for missions and evangelism. However, once again, the structure itself—the framework of the church and the service—did not change very much. It was, again, like putting a new patch on old clothes.

If you look back through history, you will see that none of the revivals of the past have seriously done anything about the church structure. What we really need is a new and radical reformation, a third

reformation that, as Christian Schwarz and many others think, is going to transform our whole church structure.

The third reformation is not just about small changes here and there. No, it is a reformation that goes so deep that it requires a complete new start. I absolutely agree with Christian Schwarz, Wolfgang Simson, and others who speak out on this subject. What I am about to present in this book is definitely not just my own opinion. Many good books have already been written about this topic, but a large number of them go into such depth that the reader needs a special interest in church history and its structure in order to be able to read them. If that background and training are lacking, then it might be a little difficult to go through them. Therefore, I will not be going into such depths in this book as many others have done. Instead, I want to give the reader a taste of what God is going to do, a taste of the future of the church. Although I am not presenting anything new, it will still be new to most people. It seems that this message has not yet had as much of a breakthrough in Scandinavia and Europe as it has in many other places in the world. I hope, therefore, that this book will help to start a reformation in you, the reader, and that after reading it, you will start to examine the Bible more deeply for yourself to see what it has to say about these things.

I know God wants something new to happen. I also know that this reformation is necessary. Yet, despite the fact that I am so absolutely convinced about the things I am writing, I am still writing it with great fear and trembling because I know this will not be easily accepted.

We are all still glad today for the reformation that Martin Luther introduced. Yes, after five hundred years, we think how fantastic that Reformation was and have an almost idyllic understanding of what really happened. We imagine how Luther stood by the church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, and quietly and peacefully nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door while people were standing behind him applauding. Yes, it was beautiful, and it laid the foundation for the Reformation, which we are happy for today.

We forget about many things, however. We forget that this reformation was not accepted so easily. It created great opposition, resulting in Luther's books being burned and him being accused of having been sent by the devil to wage war with God's church. We forget that it led

to violent fights in which thousands of men, women, and children were killed. We forget that the church of that time did not want the reformation, and they did everything to fight it. You might be thinking now: *Yes, but that was the Catholic Church.* Here is my response: *Yes, it was the Catholic Church, but it was still the church.* Today, another church denomination will try to fight what God wants. Why do we think it will be any different today? I am not saying that we will see thousands killed, but why should we think that everything will go smoothly, without divisions, and without being accused of working against God and trying to destroy the church?

The truth is, we need to see this reformation, and it is not going to go smoothly! We are going to be accused of destroying the church. We are going to experience the opposition of many Christians who will be against what we are aiming at. We are going to be accused of having been deceived and of being dangerous. We know, however, that what we are doing is for the church and for God because we have seen something that God wants to happen.

Why did the church turn against Martin Luther? Was it because his words were opposed to the Word of God? No, that was not the reason. For the church, it was not a matter of what the Bible said, but of something completely different. Martin Luther's teaching opposed a system based on finances, power, and control. We can say that this is also relevant today. People will oppose it today as well, not because it is unbiblical, but because it will destroy the system they have helped to build. Finances, power, and control still matter a lot to the church leaders today. This is not because pastors do not want to serve God and do not want to do the right thing. It is mostly due to the fact that they either cannot see it or that they have much to lose that makes it hard for them to go in this direction. When they see others abandoning their system, they will fight it because that is how they lose their members and, together with them, the money that keeps the system running. We will look at this more closely in this book.

Let's read what Jesus did and said:

*Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He*

*had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (John 2:13-17)*

God does not live in a temple built of stone. He lives in us—Christians, His disciples. However, if Jesus walked upon the earth today and saw what was happening, He would react in the very same way. He would not sit back, like we do, and tolerate it.

*"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ... Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right?" (Luke 12:51-53, 57)*

Jesus is zealous for God's church on earth. Do we have the same zeal today? Jesus said there would be a price to pay if we followed Him. Are we willing to pay that price? It will cause division, and some Christians will fight it because it seems to be something that will destroy the church. I can honestly say on my behalf that I have absolutely no intent of destroying God's church by publishing this book. I am not doing this because I am against the church. I love the church, and, because of that love, I want to rescue it. I love God's people, and I love God, and that is why I do what I do. The only difference is that my view of what God intended His church to be is different from that of many other people.

After the Reformation with Martin Luther, God began to use various revivals in order to reveal to the church lost truths from His Word, truths that have existed from the day of Pentecost but that had mostly been abandoned by the fifth century. Throughout the Middle Ages, they were preserved only by small groups of believers here and there. There have been many revivals in history, and each one of these

has reintroduced a truth, e.g., “justification by faith” brought by Luther. By looking at these revivals, we can see clearly that, every time, it has brought the church closer and closer to what the first church was that we read about in the Bible.

It did not stop with Martin Luther and the Reformation. Afterward came the Baptist revival, where God again revealed the “biblical baptism of believers” (full immersion based on one’s personal faith). Later, the Methodist revival occurred, where the truth about “justification by faith” was revealed in a new way. Then there was the Adventist revival with “the hope of Jesus’ second coming.”

The next revivals renewed the focus on “baptism with the Holy Spirit” and the “gifts of the Spirit.” The last big revival took place in Wales with Evan Roberts. This revival dealt with a renewal of the “five-fold ministry.” The offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher being given to the church by God received a new focus. To a large extent, they had become lost as a result of the Synod in 325 A.D., where they started to rebuild the church according to the structure of the Roman Empire, with the pope, bishops, priests, monks, and nuns, who later, through Protestantism, became replaced with pastors, bishops, and the board of elders.

As a consequence of all these revivals in which God has renewed truths from His Word, we have today various denominations, such as the Lutheran Church, Methodists, Adventists, the Pentecostal movement, and the Apostolic Church. All these revivals have been important, as they have brought a new understanding of lost truths. None of these revivals, however, dealt with the “structure” of the church. Again, the effect was the same as when you sow a new patch on old clothes.

Jesus is coming back very soon, and I am convinced that we are the ones who will see His return. Before His coming, He wants to prepare His church like a bride who is being prepared to meet her bridegroom. When we look at these revivals, it seems like the only thing we still lack is a reformation of the structure of the church. It has never been God’s intention for these revealed truths to result in independent church denominations that, after a while, quench the fire of revival. God did not intend to create separate churches and denominations with their own “little” truth, while ignoring the other parts and, thus, hindering

their members from gaining the whole truth.

Justification by faith is important, and it is the beginning of a new life in Christ, but after justification, there is a life to live in order to follow Jesus. In this life, we need to be baptized in water to bury our old sin nature and to rise to live in resurrection life in Christ. We also need justification by faith because Jesus did not die “just” to forgive us of our sins but also to break the power of sin, so that, in faith, we can live the holy life to which God has called us. In addition, we need the baptism of the Holy Spirit, among other things, in order to be able to live as disciples and followers of Jesus Christ and see the church grow.

Our starting point is not Martin Luther and the Reformation, nor is it one of the other revivals. Each of them only managed to present a small part of God’s truth. Our starting point is the Word of God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ because, in Him, we have everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). This is also relevant when we look at the structure of the church.

I believe that we are coming close to the third reformation, but I also believe that this will be the last reformation before Jesus comes back. This is a reformation where God is going to put together all the pieces and prepare the church to meet her Bridegroom.

So, let the reformation begin.

—Torben Søndergaard