REFORMATION
2017 It's *Still* All About
Jesus

Reformation Reflections

500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION

Reformation Reflections

Edited by:

Kevin M. Peterson

2017 Reformation Celebration Task Force of the Montana District (LCMS)

Table of Contents

Preface

This booklet had its beginnings in early 2016. A new task force had been created with its sole focus being to assist the Montana District LCMS in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation the following year. The chairman of the task force, Rev. Ray Larson, approached me to join and, before I knew it, I was seated around a table with three others brainstorming and batting around various ideas.

One that I had already been thinking about was a series of bulletin inserts on the Reformation that could be sent out to the congregations in the district. The initial discussion placed the number at twelve, being that there would be one a month for a whole year. The thought at the time was that, perhaps, each of them could be linked to a historical event that occurred in that month. By summer, the number jumped from twelve to twenty-four. There were a lot of historical Reformation moments to choose from, so why limit ourselves to just twelve, right? It also became clear by then that, since I had initially come up with the idea, it was mine to shepherd.

I put out the plea for other pastors in the Montana District to help write the various inserts in the series. Seven others (who are listed on page 51) agreed to help and the booklet now in your hands is the final accumulated product of their work. To them I extend my deepest thanks for their contributions.

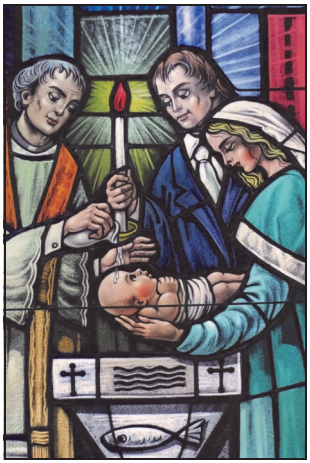
Each insert had a theme linked with a particular historical Reformation event. The first, *Baptism*, was sent out the first Sunday of November in 2016 and was linked to Martin Luther's November 10th baptism (1483). The last, *Repentance*, is slated for the last Sunday of October, 2017, and is, understandably, linked to the posting of the 95 Theses on October 31, 1517.

Now all twenty-four inserts have been gathered, reformatted, and printed in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Rev. Kevin M. Peterson

Baptism

Kevin Peterson



On a chilly Tuesday morning in November of 1483, Hans and Margarethe brought their infant son to church to be baptized. Their second child, he had been born just the day before, Monday the 10th, and yet here they were.

November 11th was a special day at the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul. It was the Feast of Saint Martin of Tours. So, when the day-old son of Hans and Margarethe was baptized, as was the custom, he received his name in honor of that blessed saint – Martin.

Years later, this would be a day Martin Luther would hold most dear. Not because he had any memory of it, but simply because of the wondrous gift he'd come to understand he'd been given that day by God.

He knew that there, in the waters of baptism, the Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — made His presence known through the spoken Word and decisively acted, claiming young Martin for Himself.

It was grace, pure and simple. **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense poured out abundantly upon day-old Martin, along with all who encounter the living God in baptism. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans:

> ***Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life*** (6:3-4).[1]

Some Christians mistakenly believe that God is not active in

baptism. Instead, they think the water is just water and the main thing about baptism is their own decision to follow Jesus and be baptized. They couldn't be more wrong. As Luther explains in his *Small Catechism*:

> **[It is] the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. (Titus 3:5-8)"** [2]

It is reported that in moments of great stress and anxiety, Martin would comfort himself — sometimes quite loudly! — by repeating to himself the words, "I am baptized! I am baptized!" Here's how he explained it in the *Large Catechism*:

> **Thus we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: "But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body."** [3]

Indeed! What comfort we have knowing that our salvation is in God's hands and not ours. What peace is ours resting in forgiveness of sins and new life that is ours in Christ. What joy we have in those three simple words: "I am baptized!"

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the ☩ life of the world to come. Amen.

(Nicene Creed)

Freedom of a Christian

Kevin Peterson

Have you ever tried to explain what it means to be a Christian?

Dr. Martin Luther, in November of 1520, did it with two seemingly contradictory statements:

- **A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.**
- **A Christian is a dutiful servant of all, subject to all.** [4]

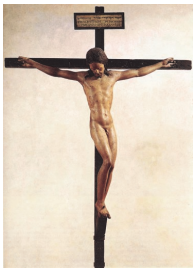
The year 1520 was a challenging one for Luther. He had kicked over the veritable hornets' nest with the posting of his 95 Theses back in 1517 and opposition had only grown in intensity since.

By June 15, 1520, **Pope Leo X** had had enough. He issued the papal bull or edict, *Exsurge Domine*, threatening Luther with excommunication unless he backed down. Luther's response? He wrote three tracts: the first two loudly and strongly challenged various forms of Papal authority and abuse, while the third was a relatively quiet one on Christian faith.

This last one — *On the Freedom of a Christian* — was, in some ways, the most subversive of the three. Intended as a bit of an "olive branch" to Pope Leo, it provided the ultimate reason why Luther would not back down.

> **Since faith alone suffices for salvation, I need nothing except faith exercising the power and dominion of it's own liberty. Lo, this is the inestimable power and liberty of Christians.** [5]

The Christian, according to Luther, is perfectly free by faith in Christ.



Free to stand before God blameless due, not to one's works, but strictly by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. All Christians are free from the law because Christ has kept it on our behalf and then died in our place to redeem us. His resurrected life is now our life. As Jesus says in John 8:38, "***If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed."***

> **A Christian has all that he needs in faith and needs no works to justify him; and if he has no need of works, he has no need of the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law.** [6]

But what of Luther's second statement about being a dutiful servant? The connection of the two is simply this: A Christian while perfectly free by faith in Christ is also bound to his neighbor by love — just as Christ, though Lord of all, made himself nothing and took on the form of a servant out of love for us (Philippians 2:6-7). Now the purpose of the law for the Christian is to direct his attention, out of love for Christ, to his neighbor, who is in need of his good works.

> **Each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.** [7]

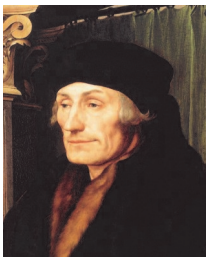
On December 10th, Luther gathered in Wittenberg with university colleagues and students and publicly burned the papal edict, along with the numerous volumes of Roman canon law. In January, Pope Leo X made good on his threat and officially excommunicated him. It mattered not to Luther, for in Christ he was already free.

Law and Gospel

Kevin Peterson

In December of 1525, Dr. Martin Luther curiously wrote the following in the conclusion to his seminal work, "The Bondage of the Will."

> **I praise and commend you highly for this also, that … you alone have attacked the real issue … and have not wearied me with irrelevancies about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such trifles …** [8]



So who was Luther "praising" for attacking him? It was **Desiderius Erasmus**, undoubtedly the greatest scholar of that age, who'd finally been convinced to write against Luther. From the title of Erasmus' earlier tract, "On the Freedom of the Will," as well as from the title of Luther's response (see above), you might guess the "real issue" was one of free will or the lack of it.

Actually, a closer look at both works reveals that it was more an issue of how one reads Scripture and applies it. In particular, Erasmus would frequently assert that God's commands to obey — that is, the Law — prove that we must have the moral ability or free will to do them.

Luther counters with Scripture: "**when you are finished with all your commands and exhortations … I'll write Romans 3:20 over top of it all,"** ("… through the law comes knowledge of sin"). [9]

In other words, God's commands (or his Law) are not there to reveal our ability to obey, but our inability.

Erasmus, for his part, was simply working within the framework established a century earlier by theologian **Gabriel Biel**, which can be summed up with the maxim: "Do what is in you and God will not deny you grace."

Luther, however, saw the fallacy of this—both in his own life experience and in Holy Scripture. There Paul reminds us that ***"none is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one who seeks for God"*** (Romans 3:10-11) and Jesus himself tells us that apart from him, we ***"can do nothing"*** (John 15:5).

Simply put, the Law was not designed to do what Erasmus wanted it to do—namely, to give us a way to save ourselves. As Luther points out:

> **The Law's purpose is to show what sin is and what it leads to—death, hell, and the wrath of God. The Law can only point these things out. It cannot free us from them.**[10]

No, the only thing that can save us from all that is the Gospel—the glorious good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting our sins against us (2 Cor. 5:19). After remarking that his own will was definitely not up to the task of saving him, Luther explained the Gospel this way:

> **But now that God has taken my salvation out of the control of my own will, and put it under the control of His, and promised to save me, not according to my working or running, but according to His own grace and mercy, I have the comfortable certainty that He is faithful and will not lie to me, and that He is also great and powerful, so that no devils or opposition can break Him or pluck me from Him.**
>
> **Furthermore, I have the comfortable certainty that I please God, not by reason of the merit of my works, but by reason of His merciful favor promised to me; so that, if I work too little, or badly, He does not impute it to me, but with fatherly compassion pardons me and makes me better. This is the glorying of all the saints in their God.** [11]

Turns out Jesus was right after all: ***"If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed"*** (John 8:36).

Women of the Reformation

Kevin Peterson

How many notable women of the Reformation can you name? If your list begins and ends with Katie Luther, Martin's wife, you're hardly alone. And yet, Katie wasn't (alone, that is).

One such contemporary of Katie was actually a friend of hers, **Elisabeth Cruciger**, though that friendship came later. Like Katie, Elisabeth spent a significant part of her life as a nun, having been sent to a convent as a young girl by her family. Around 1520, she left the convent in Pomerania and fled to Wittenberg—a trip of over 240 miles.

A few years later, she met and fell in love with a young university student named Caspar Cruciger. She went on to give Caspar two children, a boy and a girl, but tragically died in her mid-thirties.

So what makes her so notable? She wrote poetry and one of the earliest hymns of the Reformation is hers, *"The Only Son from Heaven."* Here's the second verse that is so fitting for both the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany:

O time of God appointed,
O bright and holy morn!
He comes, the king anointed,
The Christ, the virgin-born,
Grim death to vanquish for us,
To open heav'n before us
And bring us life again. [12]

Another woman of that era known for putting pen to paper was **Argula von Grumbach**. Born in 1492 to a noble family in Bavaria, she is best known for her letter of protest to the University of Ingolstadt. The year was 1522 and the Bavarian court in Munich issued a mandate condemning Lutheran teaching.

A young man who had studied under Luther in Wittenberg had returned to Ingolstadt as a lecturer and was teaching what he'd been taught. He was arrested, forced to recant, and sent off to a monastery.

Outraged by the persecution, Argula decided to write a letter the following year. Men had remained silent in this case, so she would write, for she could not allow the Gospel to remain stifled. Here are a few excerpts:

> **What have Luther and Melanchthon taught save the Word of God? You have condemned them. You have not refuted them. …**
>
> **Even if Luther should recant, what he has said would still be the Word of God. I would be willing to come and dispute with you in German …**
>
> **What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the Word of God: and [I write] as a member of the Christian Church, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail.** [13]

Printers got a hold of the letter and it became an instant sensation. The fallout was almost immediate. She came under vicious personal attack and her husband lost his job. Still, she stayed the course—even traveling to the Imperial Diet held in Nuremberg that year (1523), to encourage the German princes to join the Reformation.

There are other incredible women of faith we could consider, such as Ursula von Munsterberg, Elisabeth of Brunswick and her mother, Elisabeth of Brandenburg, just to name three, but sadly we lack the space. As for the previously mentioned first lady of the Reformation, who's husband would refer to her as "my lord Katie" and the "Morning Star of Wittenberg," **Katie Luther** would meet her death on December 20, 1552, with the following words on her lips: "I will cling to Christ, as a burr to a topcoat."

Providence

Vernon Sandersfeld

There are timely births and timely deaths. A change of direction for a nation or society or a world may be just a funeral away.

On January 12th, 1519, **Emperor Maximilian I** of the Holy Roman Empire died.

He was Austrian, of the Habsburgs, and known for his ambitious plans to acquire territory and influence through marriages. It was said "Let others wage war, but thou, O happy Austria, marry; for those kingdoms which Mars gives to others, Venus gives to thee." [14] He married off his 3 year old daughter to the young son of his chief antagonist, Louis XI of France, just to shore up relations.

Although he greatly expanded the Habsburg family rule, he was not known to look on the sunny-side of life. In fact, after suffering a fall in his 40's, he endured constant pain which rendered him rather gloomy. After age 55, he did not travel without dragging around his own coffin in the baggage wagon – just in case!

Maximilian's own son, Philip the Handsome, died before he did; so when at last the coffin was filled, the heir to the throne was his teen-age grandson, Charles.

Such a funeral is what we may call "providence."

It is due to the protective care of God that, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was confronted by a 21 year old **Charles V** and not his more politically savvy and cynical grandfather.

The responsibilities of young Charles were vast. His position made him ruler of the troublesome Netherlands, Spain, and all her

newly acquired conquests in the New World. To the east, the Turks were devouring portions of Hungry and Austria. The Germans were not necessarily his highest priority. He is to have said, “I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men and German to my horse."

Compared to his Austrian grandfather, Charles was at a distinct and uncomfortable disadvantage in front of the seasoned German electors and rulers at Worms as Luther stood his ground. Some of those same electors had actually helped put him in power!

Due to God’s providential care, the Reformation was a determined sprout in the fertile soil of Germany and northern Europe. It was allowed just enough time to grow.

Daniel says of God: ***“He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding”*** (2:21).

The funeral of Maximilian, at just the right time, meant good for the Gospel.

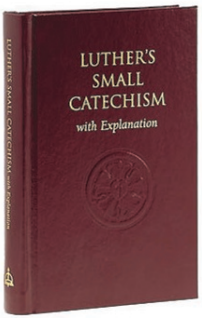
We also celebrate a birth that meant good for the whole world! ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons”*** (Galatians 4:4-5).

In Christ we have a King who reigns forever. He has called the church His bride and we have been named his children. Paul writes, ***“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him”*** (Romans 8:16-17).

Thank God for his loving care of times and rulers and heirs of His kingdom – His Providence!

Christian Education

Richard Schneider

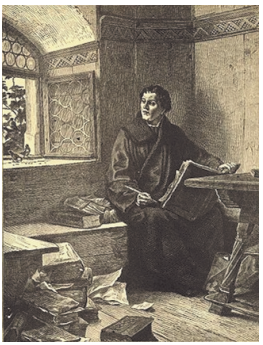


In a world where we demand "new," "fresh," and "different," there is a cornerstone of the Lutheran Church that turns 488 years old this year. That cornerstone is Luther's Small Catechism.

As Luther looked around in the early 1500s, he found himself part of a church where the Gospel was not preached, where the bishops, priests, and monks were concerned only for themselves and their own wellbeing, and where the word of God was not being taught. Because schools were uncommon at that time, many parishes were filled with uneducated members, and nothing of the Word of God was taught, much less to the young people.

The extent of Christian education was limited to a booklet published by the Roman Catholic Church which contained the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and a number of prayers, including idolatrous prayers and adorations of the saints.

These booklets were provided to the parents in order to teach their children, although in many cases the parents themselves could not read either. There was no follow up or reinforcement by the priests, much less instructions in the basic Christian faith for the young people of the church.



Luther began his corrective work in church education, using material from sermons prepared in 1516 and 1517. Covering the Lord's Supper and the Ten Commandments, he added a section on the Apostles' Creed, and published the *Confessional Mirror for the Common People*. In these three parts, explained Luther, are contained the essentials of Christian knowledge, for those who are unable to read the whole Bible.

Due to the miserable state of affairs he saw while visiting churches in Saxony the previous year, Luther began preparing what would become his “Small Catechism” in January of 1529. Initially, it was a series of posters that displayed the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments along with their explanations. Designed to be hung in the classroom, they were soon joined by two more “posters,” one with the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and one covering Confession and Absolution. These six formed the framework for Luther’s small catechism in booklet form.

Adding a preface, prayers for morning and evening and meals, a table of duties, and a marriage formula (later removed), the catechism was prepared and made available for home use, **“As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.”** [15]

While preparing the Small Catechism, Luther also wrote the Large Catechism. The Small Catechism was written for home and school use; the Large Catechism was written **“especially to all pastors and preachers that they should daily exercise themselves in the Catechism.”**[16] The Large Catechism was prepared both for the clergy and for the *hausfater* (literally “house father”) as a source of expanded teaching on the Small Catechism.

Luther also campaigned for Lutheran schools in which the Small Catechism was used as a primer to teach reading. This was due largely to the lack of education for “common children”, as most schools were classical Latin ones for the well-to-do. The need for good education — good Christian education — was addressed by Luther in his campaigns for the use of the Small and Large Catechisms. He encouraged their use in home, school, and church, as well as in literacy, so that everyone had access not only to the Catechism, but to the entirety of God’s Word.

His achievements in these areas are still in use today in parish education, both in Sunday Schools and Catechism classes, as well as in Lutheran Schools.

Witness

Kevin Peterson

When called to give **"*a reason for the hope that is within you*"** (1 Peter 3:15), what do you say?

Martin Luther, standing alone before Emperor Charles V at Worms in 1521, said "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me." **George, Margrave of Brandenburg**, standing with the other Lutheran princes before the same Charles V, this time in Augsburg in 1530, declared: "Before I let anyone take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let him strike off my head." [17]

The year was now 1537 and a new occasion to give witness to the faith had arisen for the Lutherans. The previous summer, the Pope finally called for a general council of the Church to be held in Mantua, Italy, in the spring.

"To go or not to go" is the question on the minds of the reformers and their princes. Of course, **Pope Paul III** didn't help matters when he declared in September of 1536 that the purpose of the council was "the utter extirpation of the poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy." [18] So much for a free and open council.

Regardless, a skeptical Elector John Frederick of Saxony commissioned an equally skeptical Luther to write up a list of articles of those things **"which we cannot yield without becoming guilty of treason against God, even though property and life, peace or war, are at stake."** [19]

The plan was for the Elector to present these articles to a meeting of allied Lutheran territories in February in Schmalkalden, Germany. A curious thing happened, though, between the commissioning of the articles and the delivery of them. Luther became ill — so ill, in fact, that he believed he was

dying. As a result, he looked upon the articles he was writing as his last will and testament.

As he would write in the preface to the Smalcald Articles (as they came to be known) when they were finally published in 1538: "**I wanted to do this so that those who live and remain after me will have my testimony and confession to present, … I have held fast to this confession until now and, by God's grace, I will continue to hold to it.**" [20]

The Elector did present them on February 8th, but, as he and Luther suspected, the council did not take place. In fact, it would be another eight years (1545) before a council would be convened — this time in Trento, Italy — less than a year before Luther died.

The Smalcald Articles would go on to have a tremendous effect on the movement Luther left behind, eventually being included in the 1580 Book of Concord. **Elector John Frederick** appreciated them so much that, as he was approaching his death in 1554, he ordered them attached to his own last will and testament.

Giving witness to our faith as part of a will is just as wonderful an idea now as it was way back then. You can even make it far shorter than Luther's 60 or so pages. Here's a sample preamble for a will published today by organizations such as LWML, LCEF, and the LCMS Foundation:

> ***First, realizing the uncertainty of this life, I place full confidence and trust in my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who promised: I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me,"though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26).***
>
> ***Second, knowing that the wages of sin is death, I believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, suffered and died for me, for the forgiveness of all my sins, which I neither deserve nor merit, but receive as a free gift of God, who is rich in grace and mercy.***
>
> ***Third, I urge my heirs not to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but to take hold of the life which is indeed through faith in Jesus Christ.***

Last Things

Christopher Tabbert

At 62 years of age, Luther was old and ailing. He was old in a world where the average man might expect to live into his mid-forties. He was old and worn down by numerous physical ailments including kidney and bladder stones, arthritis, a ruptured ear drum, ear infection and vertigo. He was now blind in one eye from a cataract and struggled to keep pace under advancing heart disease.

It had been a long journey since that day in late October, 1517, when Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg and unwittingly ignited the Reformation. Now, Luther was old from nearly three decades of ongoing struggle to liberate the Gospel from the twin tyrannies of the medieval church and state.

Luther was also old from dealing with the internal disputes and politics of a fledgling Reformation church, along with the demands on him as a leader and pastor.

One such demand led him to travel to Mansfeld in the early winter of 1546 to resolve an economic and political dispute. As faithful pastor and servant, Luther went, realizing that every dispute between Christian brothers and sisters is always ultimately spiritual at its heart. Luther went, not merely to arbitrate, but to bring reconciliation.

His health was worse than usual when he left, however, and his wife, Katie, was worried. In one of his letters back to her, just days before he died, Martin lovingly reminded her:

> **"I have a caretaker who is better than you and all angels,"** he consoled his wife, **"he lies in the cradle and**

rests on a virgin's bosom, and yet, nevertheless, he sits at the right hand of God, the Almighty Father. Therefore be at peace. Amen." [21]

By February 17, the issue was resolved. But on the return, he was experiencing serious chest pains. He went to bed praying the common prayer of the dying, ***"Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God"*** (Psalm 31:5).

His friend, Pastor Justus Jonas asked him, **"Reverend father, are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in his name?"** Luther answered clearly, **"Yes."** [22]

A short time after midnight he suffered a stroke, and died in the early hours of February 18, there in Eisleben, the city of his birth.

Luther was buried in the Castle Church of Wittenberg under the pulpit. His remains are there to this day. ***"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants"*** (Psalm 116:15).

Luther was asked, "Are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ?" Asked about the Man Jesus Christ, God's own Son, who also died and was buried. The Man who died for all that ails us, for every struggle, trial and dispute, and to liberate us in Himself from the twin tyrannies of sin and death; the Man who died to reconcile each and every sinner to our Almighty God and Father.

Only, the remains of our Lord Jesus did not stay buried – neither in Palestine, Wittenberg, or Montana. Death could not hold Him. He rose, and lives, and reigns to all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever.

And so to Luther, to each and every one of us, and to every child of Adam who ever was, whether worn old by age or struggle, threatened in youth, ravaged by disease, accident, illness, violence or threat, Jesus says this, ***"Behold, I make all things new"*** (Revelation 21:5).

Theology of the Cross

Arlo Pullmann

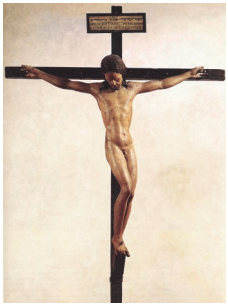
To know God is the goal of theology. A theology of glory seeks to know God by what is seen, by having success, by prosperity, and by having things go the way we want. Theology of the cross, meanwhile, makes God known by faith as we trust his promises even when they are contrary to our experience, as we carry a cross, and as we believe he is guiding the course of history for the sake of his church.

A theology of glory leads a person either to know the wrong god or to know the true God wrongly. Theology of the cross leads us to Jesus. To know Jesus is to know God. To trust in Jesus is to trust in God. To take up your cross and follow Jesus is to be on the way to eternal life.

Dr. Martin Luther desperately wanted to know God. He quit studying law in order to take up theology. As he studied, Jesus was revealed to him in a way that he had never been taught before. He wanted to share with others that Jesus was not to be known as an angry judge but as a loving Savior who laid down his life for his loved ones.

Since Luther's official calling and vocation was to be a teacher of the church, he taught, wrote, and sought out debate. But instead of having the glory of changing the minds and hearts of the religious and political leaders of his day, his newly found understanding of theology of the cross was almost immediately put to the test.

He was summoned to appear before the Imperial Assembly of the Holy Roman Empire (known as a Diet) at the German city of Worms. There he was to defend his teaching against the accusation of heresy in order to avoid the threat of capital punishment.



The Holy Spirit led Luther deeper into the sacred Scriptures, enlightening him with gifts of wisdom and understanding of Jesus, sanctifying him with an ongoing life of repentance, and keeping him in the true faith. As he once wrote, **"It does [a man] no good to recognize God in His glory and majesty, unless he recognizes Him in the humility and shame of the cross."** [23]

Our places in life as children of the heavenly Father are not about us and our glory. Jesus said, "***Take up [your] cross and follow me***" (Luke 9:23). God promises to use your cross for good, so do not call your cross evil. Those who impose it on you may be evil, but your suffering isn't. Which is why St. Paul reminds us that we can "***rejoice in our sufferings***" (Romans 5:3).

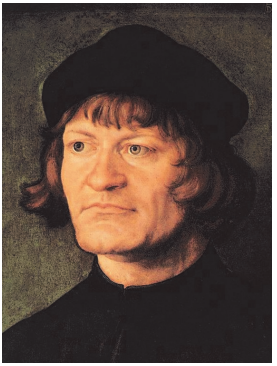
As willing servants in the kingdom of God, we offer ourselves in whatever way may serve the will of God. "***We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered***" (Psalm 44:22; Romans 8:36) were, no doubt, words echoing in Luther's ears as he headed to Worms. But then he would also remember, so was our Lord Jesus "***led like a sheep to the slaughter***" (Isaiah 53:7; Acts 8:32).

Too easily we ask questions of glory like, "Is your church growing?" We know the Father's kingdom is coming. Let us be content with that. We cannot see what our Father is doing to bring it about. Therefore, we live by faith. And we carry our crosses, doing what he has given us to do in our vocations.

The Lord's Supper

Richard Schneider

"God is omnipotent; he can do more than we see; therefore I believe his words as they stand." (Martin Luther) [24]



While Martin Luther's struggles with the Roman Catholic Church are well known, there were other opponents, as well. One such group, known as the Sacramentarians and led by Swiss theologian **Ulrich Zwingli**, challenged Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper.

Both sides agreed that Rome's novel and convoluted doctrine of transubstantiation was to be rejected. Where they parted company was on the meaning of Jesus' words, "This is my body, … my blood." Luther held, like countless Christians and theologians before him, that Christ's words should simply be taken at face value and believed.

For Zwingli, however, the Lord's Supper was only a memorial meal in which the participants are drawn away from created things, and drawn TO the Creator and Savior. Zwingli even went so far as to say that the body of Christ was too "creaturely," or bound in human time and space, to be a place where our faith resides. It was essentially useless for us.

The crux of the matter, though — which was realized by both Zwingli and Luther — was not over bread and wine, or real presence versus spiritual presence, or even the meaning and work of the Holy Spirit in the words of institution. The crux of the matter was — and is — the meaning of "faith." They both said that "faith" is trust in Jesus Christ and that it is a purely spiritual relationship.

However, when Zwingli said this, he meant that this spiritual relationship draws faith away from created things. Because of this, in his view, faith must have no earthly object, even the body of Christ, for its object. Hence, the sacrament couldn't have been instituted to provide a bodily eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. Instead, it lifts our faith to where Jesus sits now, at the Father's right hand, giving us Christ's spiritual presence.

Luther's most complete response to Zwingli came in March of 1527, when he published his *Great Confession of the Lord's Supper.* As he had before, Luther maintained that faith is spiritual in that God the Holy Spirit produces it and nourishes it. But because God chooses and uses earthly means to come to us, faith must cling to those earthly means. They are not the objects of our faith, but are the signs of the very presence of God, the points where we shall seek and find God.

Luther (rightly) held that the God we find in these means is none other than Christ himself, the very Word of God made flesh, Immanuel, God With Us, and that, because of this, his humanity cannot be called useless in our salvation. Rather, it is essential. Luther further explained that being at God's right hand was not a place but a manifestation of God's power—namely, wherever God works, there is the divine-human Christ Jesus at work.

In the Lord's Supper, then, God works through his means in which Christ gives himself to us, not where we do anything for him. It is a means of grace, where Christ feeds his people, and this can't be useless since Jesus commanded it. It matches what Scripture has revealed to us about how God reveals himself to us and, like Luther, we **"believe his words as they stand."**

Making the Good Confession

Terry Forke

"I shall go to Worms though there be as many devils as tiles on the roofs." [25]

Martin Luther was traveling to Worms to stand before the Emperor of the Roman Empire, Charles V. Back in June of 1520, Luther had been threatened with excommunication. By January 3, 1521, his grace period had run out and the deed was done.

The Pope expected the Emperor to enforce the excommunication, but Luther's protector, **Elector Frederick of Saxony**, demanded that Luther first be given a trial on German soil. Frederick had influence with Charles because he had declined nomination to be emperor and then voted for him.

This, and the fact that the new emperor needed the support of the German princes, prompted Charles to call for Luther to come to Worms. He even guaranteed him safe passage.

These were the political circumstances surrounding one of the most harrowing confessions of faith the world has ever known. It happened at the meeting known as the Diet of Worms. A Diet was a meeting of the Holy Roman Empire's electors, princes and city representatives. This particular meeting lasted from January 28 through May 25. Luther was called before the assembly on April 17, 1521.

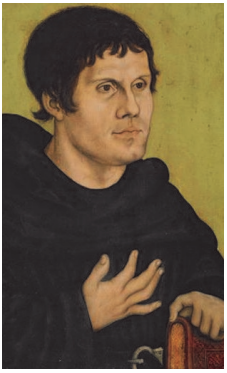
An aide to **Pope Leo X** noted that, during Luther's ten day trip from Wittenberg to Worms, he was received as a hero of the German state. He wrote a message to Rome saying, "Nine-tenths of the people are shouting 'Luther,' and the other tenth are crying, 'Death to the Roman Court.'"

It may have been easy for Luther to defy the devils on the roofs under such conditions. When he arrived in Worms, however, things changed.

In a hushed room, before the most powerful men in the world, Luther was asked two questions: would he acknowledge the books lain on a table as his, and would he recant all that he had written? Luther seemed to be unprepared for this moment. He quietly acknowledged the books, but asked for more time to consider the second question.

What weighed in the balance of Luther's confession was the true Word of the Gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, was at the core of all that he wrote. If he recanted, the Gospel would suffer. If he refused, he would suffer.

The next afternoon, April 18, Luther was again before the Court. When pushed for a simple answer as to whether he would recant he replied:



Unless I am convinced of error by the testimony of Scripture or … by manifest reasoning, I stand convinced by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me. [26]

God gave Luther strength to make the good confession. Under extreme pressure, he found Jesus' promise to be true — that the Holy Spirit would give believers the words to speak when called before kings.

The same promise and the same strength is yours. You may not stand before kings, but in your daily life God uses you to make the good confession of salvation through faith in Jesus.

Freedom of Conscience

Vernon Sandersfeld

We Lutherans protest.

Much of the time, Lutherans are thought of as inheritors of a quiet mid-western sort of friendliness. We might be more associated with promoting jello-salad and sewing quilts than protesting anything.

But we protest!

It was the Second Diet of Speyer in 1529 when the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (a very busy man) left affairs to his brother, **Ferdinand**, while he attended to a war with France. Three years earlier at the First Diet of Speyer, the Emperor (through his brother then as well) had tried to calm the contention of the Reformation by allowing each prince of any given region to hold what beliefs he could justify before King and God.

But now the Reformation had grown. Charles was losing patience and the religious divisions seemed to be making his Empire weaker militarily. To correct this, he wanted a reversal of the first Diet of Speyer and a “freezing” of the Reformation and outlawing of some reforming leaders.

Honestly, the Anabaptists and other religious radicals, who were the primary target of this action, aggravated Luther and most evangelicals as well, but a number of those present could not let such a thing stand. They were told that they must submit to the “fair decision” of the majority. The Lutherans could not bear the idea that a person’s faith should be governed or bound by the government! They walked out of the assembly on April 19th.

When the vote came, the majority prevailed and made it as the Emperor wanted. The six princes and 14 representatives of free cities who'd walked out, then formulated a "Letter of Protestation" and presented it the next day. They protested the rule of the majority over their conscience and faith.

Ferdinand, however, refused to receive the letter from the "Protestants," so they gave it to a printer instead, and, from that time on, the name stuck.

Sadly, things have not changed. The majority of our culture has thrown cold water on Christianity. The world would like to reverse any previous freedom of faith and "freeze" any talk of what is sin, murder, or adultery. The world wants to bind our conscience in matters of sin and religion.

But these laymen at Speyer did not rise in armed revolt. They protested. So we lift up our voices. We put the Word out front. That Word tells of sin that brings death and a Savior upon the cross that brings life: Jesus Christ.

We act *contra mundum*, that is, "against the world." It has always been the nature of Christianity to plant ourselves against the current. We do not do it out of mere conservative thinking or stubborn obstinacy (it should never be for that!), but out of a conscience truly bound to the Word of God.

"***For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***" (1 John 5:4-5)

Worship

Arlo Pullman

In April of 1507, Martin Luther was ordained as a priest. His first time to say the Mass happened a few weeks later on May 2nd.

The warnings and requirements put upon the new priest made his first mass a momentous, often fearful, occasion. The Roman Catholic Church taught and still teaches that Christ is sacrificed in the Mass, both for those in attendance as well as for those who *"have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified"* (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1371).

Offering the Roman Mass required making the sacrifice to God in the proper way. In Luther's day, to do something wrong, even to dress improperly, was considered a grave sin. More than that, Luther was terrified at his first Mass because he thought he **"had to speak to God without a Mediator."**

"I was so frightened," he said years later, **"that I would have fled if I hadn't been admonished by the prior."** Then he asked, **"Who can bear the majesty of God without Christ as Mediator? … I almost died because no faith was there. I reflected only on the dignity of my person, that I wasn't a sinner, that I shouldn't leave anything out."** [27]

By way of contrast, true God-pleasing worship is not about our ability to cleanse ourselves so that we are holy, without sin, and worthy to approach the almighty hater of sin. For apart from Christ, by our own efforts, we are never able to offer anything holy or acceptable to God. Besides, he does not want us to make ourselves worthy. Attempting to do so is an affront to Christ and a dishonor to his name.

Instead, Jesus Christ has already made full atonement for us. We are fully and completely forgiven. The blood of Jesus **"*cleanses us from all sin*"** (1 John 1:7). There is no deed or work that we can do to make ourselves cleaner or more worthy. He is our Mediator through whom we have access to God.

For the sake of Jesus, God has declared that you are righteous. Let that declaration go all the way through your ears and to your heart. Trust God's promise, not your own good works.

Luther eventually denounced the Roman Mass as an abomination in his Smalcald Articles. He realized that the benefit of the Sacrament does not depend on human performance but on the Word of God.

He rightly concluded that the worthy one at Communion is the one who has faith in the words of Jesus: **"Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins"** (Luther's Small Catechism). Together with him, we confess that worship is chiefly **"the desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness"** (Augsburg Confession).

Believing his promise of righteousness, we offer praise, we sacrifice time to hear him, we bring our children to him, we bear the cross which he puts on us, etc. Such acceptable sacrifices flow from faith in his promise of righteousness for Christ's sake.

Christian Unity

Arlo Pullmann

On May 28, in the year of our Lord 1577, the Formula of Concord was presented to Elector Augustus of Saxony. Its purpose was to establish unity and concord through the truth of God's Word because, sadly, discord had reigned since the death of Martin Luther three decades earlier.

There had been military discord as Roman Catholic rulers took up arms against the Lutheran rulers in the Smalcald War during the mid 1540s. Then there was political discord when **Maurice, Duke of Saxony,** betrayed the Lutherans by joining forces with the Roman Catholics. The Lutherans suffered defeat and Elector John Frederick I was imprisoned and compelled to give up the Saxon Electorate. Maurice became the new Saxon Elector until 1553 when he suddenly died and was succeeded by his brother, Augustus.

Religious discord was evident as Emperor Charles V sought to defeat the Lutheran "heretics" and restore his Empire to Roman Catholicism. Though Charles won the war, he could not force the Lutherans to stop being Lutheran. Therefore, he tried to achieve his ends by theological compromise which was not well received. He was eventually driven out of Germany in 1552 *(by Maurice, of all people!)* and settled for signing peace treaties which allowed Lutheran rulers to have Lutheran churches.

His earlier attempt at compromise, however, only led to theological discord among the Lutherans. They began arguing among themselves about which doctrines, if any, could be compromised. Even after the peace treaties were signed, the theological discord continued. They were divided over eleven significant issues including original sin, free will, good works, Communion, and God's eternal foreknowledge and election. Much needed concord required agreement with the Word of God and with each other.

After all, we confess the unity of the Church in our creeds. Apostle Paul teaches that we are to be ***"eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit ... There is one body and one Spirit"*** (Ephesians 4:3-4). The Scriptures teach that such unity is a desirable and beautiful thing: ***"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity"*** (Psalm 133:1). But Jesus reminds us that Christian unity is established only by the truth of God's word (John 17:17-21).

Appropriately then, the movement from discord to concord began with a series of sermons preached by **Jacob Andreae** in 1573. After much encouragement, he later reformatted them as a formal confession of faith known as the Swabian Concord. It was then widely distributed for discussion and comment.

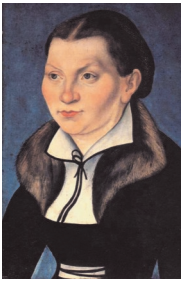
Martin Chemnitz and others, at Duke Julius of Brunswick's direction, used the suggestions, comments, and criticisms of Andreae's work to revise and rewrite the confession, which, in 1575, resulted in the Swabian-Saxon Concord. Meanwhile, at the behest of Elector Augustus, Lucas Osiander and Balthasar Bidenbach produced another document known as the Maulbronn Formula.

In 1576, Augustus gathered six leading theologians who blended the Swabian-Saxon Concord and the Maulbronn Formula into a new document called the **Torgau** book, named for the city and castle where they met. It was circulated around various parts of Germany for review, criticism, and comments. By May of 1577, the responses had been taken into consideration and the final form and content were completed. It was accepted by Augustus and over the next few years more than 8,000 pastors, teachers, and rulers signed it as their own confession.

We know it as the **Formula of Concord**, which, to this day, uses the word of God alone to establish unity and harmony among us.

Marriage

Matthew Nelson



On June 13, 1525, something pretty scandalous happened. A former Roman Catholic nun was married to a former Roman Catholic priest. On that day Martin Luther married **Katharina von Bora,** with whom he had six children and, by all accounts, a very happy life.

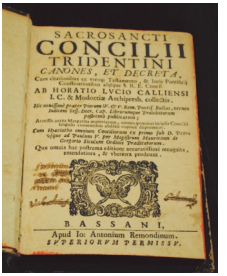
Luther summed up his understanding of Christian marriage this way: "**This is a true definition of marriage: Marriage is the God -appointed and legitimate union of man and woman in the hope of having children or at least for the purpose of avoiding fornication and sin and living to the glory of God."** [28]

This stiff theological statement was tempered and placed into context with a gentler and more personal observation:

"**And I have been very happy in my marriage, thank God. I have a faithful wife … She spoils nothing for me … [marriage] is above all chastity."** [29] In other words, Luther and Katie found great joy in married life, and well they should have. It was and is a gift of God.

But Christian marriage, as God ordained it, was a subject of conflict in Luther's day. In the 16th century, marriage was viewed as low and base and beneath the higher calling of celibacy. Luther's remark that marriage "is above all chastity" describes a radically different take on it.

And so, springing up from among the other theological reforms of the Reformation, came a Biblical view of marriage as a gift of God that is pleasing in His sight and has been established for our good.



Later, in response to the Lutheran Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1563 had this to say: *"If anyone says that the married state excels the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is better and happier to be united in matrimony than to remain in virginity or celibacy, let him be anathema."* (Session 24, Canon 10).

Biblical Christian marriage in our day also finds itself under attack. Even as the prevailing 16th century view of marriage was contrary to Holy Scripture, so too we contend with false teaching and an anti-Biblical view of Christian marriage in our day.

In Montana, for example, the established precedence from the U.S. District Court is summed up this way: *"Montana no longer can deprive Plaintiffs and other same-sex couples of the chance to marry their loves. This Court recognizes that not everyone will celebrate this outcome."* (CNN, November 19, 2014).

For us, though, the beauty, strength, and purpose of Christian marriage is well defined by God's Holy Word. One man, one woman, one flesh — established by God for our great good even before sin entered the world (Genesis 2.18-25; Matthew 19.6; Ephesians 5.31-32).

Christian marriage is used by our Lord as an example of the relationship between Himself and His Church. Christian marriage transcends our "feelings" in any given moment and allows us the opportunity to serve one another in the closest and most profound earthly relationship. Christian marriage continues to bless us because it provides stability for children, for families, for communities, and for our congregations.

Justification

Ryan Wendt

In October of 1529, **Suleiman the Magnificent** of the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Vienna. The invasion ultimately failed, but the strength of the Turks and the division and weakness of the Holy Roman Empire became very apparent.

In January of 1530, against this backdrop of war, Emperor Charles V ordered that a diet of the Holy Roman Empire be convened at Augsburg, starting April 8th.

He wanted to determine the best course of action against the Turkish invasion and to consider what "might and ought to be done and resolved upon regarding the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion." [30] In the Emperor's mind, the theology issues had to be addressed in order to unite the German states against the invading Turks.

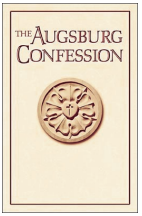
Martin Luther was still under the Papal edict, so he did not travel to Augsburg. Instead, he left that to his co-worker, **Philip Melanchthon** (among others), remaining nearby in the Coburg castle and in close contact through letters delivered by couriers. Upon arrival in Augsburg, however, the delegation was given John Eck's "404 Propositions", in which he had falsely charged the Lutherans with "every conceivable heresy." [31]

The defense that Philip had prepared was no longer adequate to address the charges and was quickly expanded into a full confession of the Christian Faith.

It was originally written for just the delegation from Electoral Saxony, but, after reading it, the princes and leaders of a number of other German territories and free cities clamored to sign it, as well.

On June 25, 1530, at 3 PM, the confession of the Lutherans was presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, in both Latin and in German. It was read in German by Saxon chancellor **Christian Beyer**, in its entirety, loudly and clearly enough that those gathered outside in the courtyard could hear it plainly.

Emperor Charles V was concerned that the Holy Roman Empire would be lost unless the German states united with him against the Turks. The Lutherans, however, were concerned that something much more important would be lost, namely, the Gospel. The truth that we are justified by grace through faith for Christ's sake could be lost again, all for the sake of expediency.



Thankfully, that did not happen. Instead, the clear confession of Justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone was made in Augsburg by faithful electors, princes, leaders and theologians, and has been made in many countries, cities, pulpits, and homes ever since. By God's grace, the unaltered Augsburg Confession remains our clear confession today.

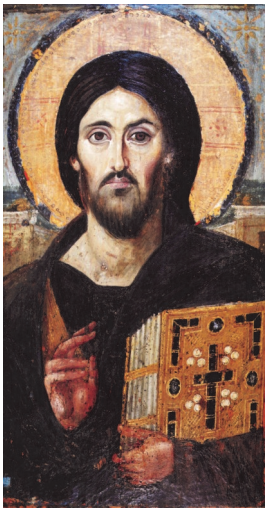
The heart of that confession, Article IV on Justification, reads as follows:

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4). [32]

Please consider setting aside time today to read the Augsburg Confession. Our churches and your pastor have subscribed to it ***because*** it is in accord with the Word of God and your pastor will happily find you a copy to read.

The Church

Christopher Tabbert

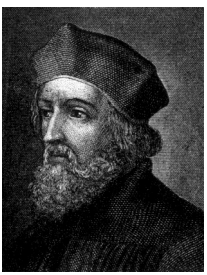


What is the Church? God's Word gives illustrations: "the Body of Christ," "the Bride of Christ," "living stones built up a Spiritual House – built on Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone," and there are many more. In every case, however, it is always and only in, on, and through our Lord Jesus Christ that the Church exists.

Jesus once asked His disciples, ***"Who do you say that I am?" "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"*** was Peter's reply, to which Jesus declared, ***"On this rock I will build My church"*** (Matthew 16:15-16, 18). The "rock", of course, was not Peter's person, but his confession of Christ.

This is essential for the life of the Church — namely, the confession of Christ. Indeed, our salvation depends on it. God's Word reveals that the Church, in its most basic sense, is that body of believers — that fellowship, *koinonia,* communion — that shares faith in, and the confession of, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Across the centuries, God in His mercy sent forth men, ***"apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers"*** (Ephesians 4:11), to call His people back to Himself, back to the truth, and to build them up in faithful confession and lives. In other words, he was calling them to be nothing other than the Church.

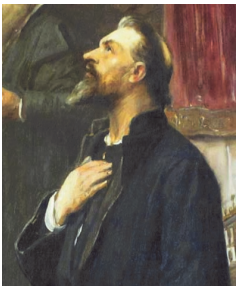


One such man, a century before Luther, was **Jan Huss**. Born in Husinec ("Goosetown") in 1369, in what is today the Czech Republic, Jan shortened his name to "Hus" – "goose" – and apparently enjoyed the puns that followed him throughout his life. Despite his peasant origin, he rose to become a priest, scholar, and preacher at one of the largest churches in Prague.

It was the philosophical, political, and theological debates of the times, however, that led Jan Hus to his re-discovery of the Bible and the true nature of the Church.

Like Luther a century later, Jan Hus publicly rejected the notion of indulgences, the corruption and worldliness of the church leadership, and focus on the "traditions of men" as opposed to the Word of God. Hus argued that Christ alone is head of the Church, that even a pope **"through ignorance and love of money"** can make mistakes, and that **"to rebel against an erring pope is to obey Christ."** [33]

Hus wrote, he spoke out, and, in 1409, he was excommunicated. In November of 1414, Jan Hus was called to give an account of his doctrine before the Council of Constance. He was even promised safe conduct.



Immediately upon arrival, however, it was revoked and he was arrested. Brought before the council in chains, he was ordered to recant. When he realized there would be no fair hearing, Hus said, **"I appeal to Jesus Christ, the only judge who is almighty and completely just. In his hands I plead my cause, not on the basis of false witnesses and erring councils, but on truth and justice."** [34]

On July 6, 1415, Hus was publicly defrocked, condemned, and taken to be burned at the stake. He prayed, **"Lord Jesus, it is for Thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray Thee to have mercy on my enemies."** [35] He died in the flames. His ashes were scattered into the Rhine so that nothing would remain of him.

Something vitally important did remain, however: Jan Hus' confession of the faith and the example to the Church of his faithfulness even unto death. The 2nd century Christian apologist Tertullian once wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." [36]

Earlier still, Jesus Christ promised, ***"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life"*** (Revelation 2:10).

Vocation

Matthew Nelson

Whose work is more important? Surely keeping house and changing diapers is less important than the preaching office… right? Since the time of Luther, we would answer that question loud and clear: "Wrong question!" For the medieval church, however, there were churchly "vocations" which were a high, noble, and God-pleasing calling, and then there was everything else.

Led by this notion and encouraged to believe he would secure his salvation through such work, on July 17, 1505, **Martin Luther** entered the Augustinian cloister. Yet even there his conscience tortured him because he was acutely aware of his sin and any appearance of righteousness in the eyes of men was just that — superficial.

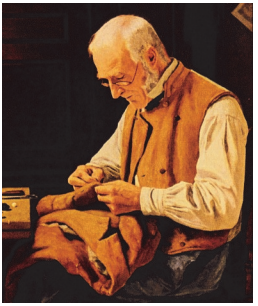
> **When I was a monk, I crucified Christ daily, and I blasphemed Him by that false confidence which constantly clung to me… I constantly fostered mistrust, doubt, fear, hatred and blasphemy of God with this sort of sanctity and self-confidence. And this righteousness of mine was nothing but a dunghill and a realm most pleasing to the devil.** [37]

Luther's later doctrine of vocation grew from his realization that works done to earn salvation did not please God or accomplish anything but "false confidence."

But those things done in faith and for the benefit of the neighbor were all good works. And this "good work" extended beyond the church to the family and community.

Dr. Gene Veith has observed that "Luther was the first to use 'vocation' to refer also to secular offices and occupations." [38]

In the doctrine of vocation, we are brought to learn that the various offices and activities that God calls us into are the means by which we serve the neighbor, and thereby honor God. As Luther explains:



The same is true for the shoemaker, tailor, scribe, or reader. If he is a Christian tailor, he will say "I make these clothes because God has bidden me do so, so that I can earn a living, so that I can help and serve my neighbor. When a Christian does not serve the other, God is not present… [39]

The doctrine of vocation liberates the Christian to bring faith into every aspect of life. There is no "holy" work over and above "other" work. All our works, done in faith, fulfill our Lord's instruction to love the neighbor. We are all called into multiple vocations and it is in each of them that we find the neighbor we are to serve.

To serve God simply means to do what God has commanded and not to do what God has forbidden. And if only we would accustom ourselves properly to this view, the entire world would be full of service to God, not only the churches but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field of townsfolk and farmers… In this way a man could be happy and of good cheer in all this trouble and labor; and if he accustomed himself to look at his service and calling in this way, nothing would be distasteful to him. [40]

The Lutheran doctrine of vocation allows us to see that God is at work in our day-to-day activities. For it is there that we serve the neighbor we are given to serve, with the gifts provided by God, and in faith in Jesus.

Luther's Co-Workers

Kevin Peterson

It was a warm August day as Philipp Schwartzerdt walked to his first class at the university. By the look of the slender young man, one would have thought he was a student. He was not. He was the new professor of Greek literature. The year was 1518, the university was that in Wittenberg, Electoral Saxony, and the young man in question – better known as **Philipp Melanchthon** (his last name translated into Greek) – was just 21 years old.

Philipp would quickly become indispensible to the university's famous professor, Dr. Martin Luther. Just ten months before, Martin had posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church. Now he had a brilliant young co-worker to help him as the Reformation picked up speed. He wouldn't be the only one.

Georg Burkhardt, who went by the name **Spalatin** (from his hometown of Spalt), was tutor to Elector Frederick the Wise's nephews when Luther was first appointed a professor at Wittenberg. Although ordained a priest, theology did not interest him much. Instead, he moved from tutor, to librarian to, finally, court chaplain and secretary. It is uncertain just when he made contact with Luther, but what a connection that would turn out to be!

His name shows up in nearly all the early events of the Reformation. As a close advisor to the Elector, for example, he was there at the Diet of Worms in April of 1521, when Luther appeared before Charles V and refused to recant his writings. It was he who would translate Luther's Latin works into German so the Elector could read them. One of his other tasks was, on the Elector's behalf, to implore Luther not to write against the Papacy in ways that would inflame the situation even more. When he did it anyway, though, Spalatin would be the first to back him up, with both the Elector and others.

Following Frederick the Wise's death in 1525, Spalatin left to be a pastor in Altenburg, but was frequently called upon as a highly valued advisor by the next two electors.

Johannes Bugenhagen had been a priest and lecturer at a monastery in Pomerania when he first encountered Luther's writings. A year later, in April of 1521, he left his post and headed for Wittenberg to study theology. On October 25, 1523, he was called to be the pastor of St. Mary's in Wittenberg, making him Dr. Luther's pastor and confessor.

Johannes would be tapped by Luther to assist him in his translation of the Old and New Testaments into German. He would play an integral role in numerous debates and colloquies among the various Protestant factions. In addition, his administrative skills were frequently put to use throughout northern Germany and even Denmark, where he helped territorial churches reorganize and reform.

He was the first of the Wittenberg reformers to marry and was the one who officiated the wedding of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora. He would also be the one to preach at Martin's funeral, as well as look after the good doctor's widow and children.

When the Lutherans were called to Augsburg for the Diet in 1530, it would not be Luther who would write their statement of faith to be presented to the emperor. He had to be left behind, due to the price on his head. Instead, the task fell to Philipp, who took the preliminary work that Luther, Bugenhagen, himself, and others had done earlier and crafted what became the Augsburg Confession. Of this seminal document, Luther would write to a friend:

> **"I am tremendously pleased to have lived to this moment when Christ, by his staunch confessors, has publicly been proclaimed in such a great assembly by means of this really most beautiful confession."** [41]

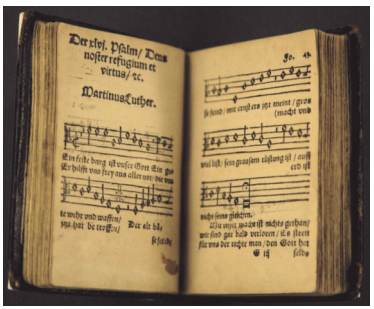
Music

Arlo Pullmann

In Luther's day, it was not uncommon for minstrels to sing the news in rhyming verse so that people would know what had happened in the surrounding region. Luther tried his hand at this genre when he wrote a song about two Lutheran men who were martyred in Brussels on July 1, 1523. Shortly after that, he began to regularly use music and verse, not merely to broadcast the news, but to proclaim the Good News.

At the dawn of the Reformation, worship was conducted in the Latin language, which most people did not understand. Even the Bible was inaccessible to their ears because it was read from the Latin translation. What singing there was during worship was typically done by choirs and was almost always in Latin.

Knowing the importance of people being able to sing the Good News in their own language, Luther began writing hymns for them to use during worship. He wrote both texts and tunes and often collaborated with others. In less than two years (1523 and 1524), he wrote twice as many hymns as he did during the rest of his life. The total number was around 40 and with them he returned singing to the congregation, so much so that even to this day the Lutheran Church is known as the "Singing Church."



Luther loved the Psalms and a fair number of his hymns are based on them. Psalm 46, for example, was the basis for his most famous hymn, **"A Mighty Fortress Is our God."** Reportedly penned in August of 1527, it eventually became the signature hymn of the Reformation. It has been translated into many languages, and into English dozens of times.

Even outside of Lutheranism, it is well known and often used. It was used in the National Cathedral in Washington D.C., for example, for President Dwight D. Eisenhower's funeral in 1969, as well as at the prayer service held there on September 14, 2001.

"A Mighty Fortress" illustrates a style of songwriting that Luther liked to use in his hymns. He sometimes repeated a portion of the melody in order to make the hymn easier to learn. In other words, a set of notes (a bar) would be used for the beginning portion of each stanza. That same set of notes would be repeated for the second portion. Then the third portion would conclude with a different melody line. This style is sometimes called a bar tune, which led to the rumor that he used tunes from familiar drinking songs for his hymns. He did not.

Providing German hymnody for his people to sing was not enough, however. So Luther set about translating the liturgy for them, as well. He took the Latin Mass, cleaned it up, translated it into German, and included some of the hymns he wrote. Known as the German Mass, it was printed and used regularly from 1526 onward. It's also the basis for every Lutheran communion liturgy to this day.

With such a strong desire to teach the Good News of the Christian faith, it is not surprising that he also set to music the chief parts of Christian doctrine. He wrote hymns so that people could sing the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper.

Luther took seriously the Bible's often repeated command to sing. He united that with the command to proclaim the Good News. Lutherans have been singing ever since.

Scripture

Terry Forke

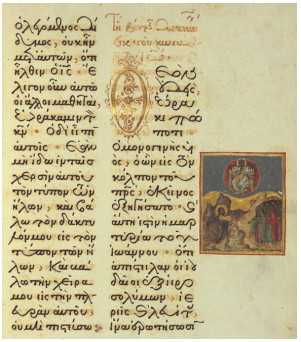
What is a man to do when he has just been declared an outlaw of the Holy Roman Empire, whisked away to an out-of-the-way castle, disguised, and hidden from those who might want to kill him? Why not translate the New Testament from Greek into German, and, in so doing, not only provide a foundation for Christian faith, but also contribute to the unification of the German people?

So it was that Luther, outlawed at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and disguised as the bearded "Knight George" (see above), found himself safely, though not happily, ensconced in the **castle Wartburg**. With nothing but time on his hands, he began the herculean task of translating the New Testament, so that the German people could read the Gospel in their own tongue.

Contextualization of the language was a deep love of Luther's. He wanted this translation to be something other than a dry reading of a technically correct rendering. He wanted it to sound like the same language people spoke in the local German shops. As he once wrote:

The proper method of translation is to select the most fitting terms according to the usage of the language adopted. … To translate properly is to render the spirit of a foreign language into our own idiom. … I try to speak as men do in the market place.[42]

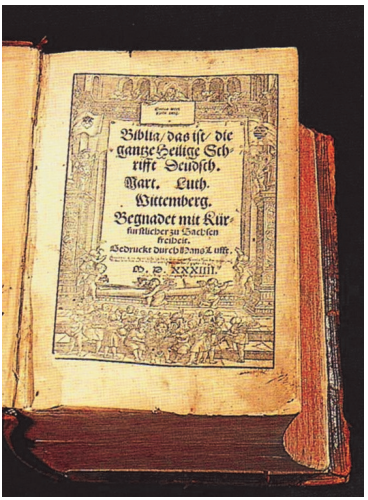
Luther's love of language was intense, but his love of the Gospel was the essence of his life and work. His production of the New Testament in German was undertaken for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel. This he reiterated in the preface of the translation published in September 1522:



So the New Testament is a book in which are written the Gospel and the promises of God, together with the history of those who believe and of those who do not believe them. For "gospel" is a Greek word, and means in Greek a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report, which one sings and tells with gladness. … A poor man, dead in sin and consigned to hell, can hear nothing more comforting than this precious and tender message about Christ; from the bottom of his heart he must laugh and be glad over it, if he believes it true. [43]

Luther went through very trying times while he cowered in the castle. He was afraid of satan *(would he destroy Luther's work?)*, of men *(would someone come to kill him?)*, of himself *(had he been deceived?)*, and even of God *(perhaps Luther's teaching was wrong)*.

Through it all, it was the Word of God, and the very Gospel he was translating, that sustained him. That Word, given to the people in their own language, sustained and nourished the German people, as well.



God uses His people, in spite of the difficult circumstances of their lives, to speak and live the Gospel. Like Luther laboring away in the Wartburg, God is using you today, in your vocation, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Peace

Christopher Tabbert

"'They cry out "Peace, peace" when there is no peace!' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 6:14). As we look back on this 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we see the truth of it.

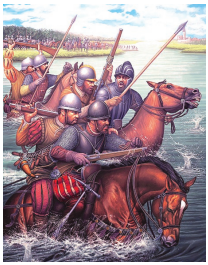
Ancient kingdoms were beginning to falter at the rise of modern nation-states. Feudalism was giving way to new social and economic realities, fueled by a growing middle-class. And a largely illiterate population was being transformed by the emergence of a tremendous new technology — the printing press.

But of greatest importance was the recovery of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ from generations of neglect and abuse at the hands of both a church and a state entrusted with its care.

The twin tyrannies of the Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire struggled to maintain their power and supremacy in their changing world, especially with the surging impact of the re-emerging Gospel. Additionally, uprisings by anarchists and heretics across Europe, along with the ever present threat of invasion by the Islamic Ottoman Empire from the outside, threatened the whole social order.

Almost from the day he posted his 95 Theses, Martin Luther found himself in the middle. Over the next decades he often found himself in the dual roles of "troublemaker" and "peacemaker" simultaneously. And no wonder!

Truth must always contend against falsehood. The true confession of the faith must always find itself "cross-wise" with this world of sin and unbelief, as Jesus clearly warned, ***"In the world you will have tribulation"*** (John 16:33).



Not unlike today, the 16th Century was a complex world of shifting politics, with alliances made and betrayed and treaties written and broken. Luther died in February of 1546. In mere months, open war finally erupted between the Lutheran princes allying themselves in the Schmalkaldic League and the Catholic forces of Emperor Charles V, with the Emperor coming out on top.

Not able to permanently subdue the Lutheran territories, Charles established the Augsburg Interim — a compromise agreement heavily favoring the Catholics — in the hopes that it would bring peace to the Empire. It didn't. It was followed by the Leipzig Interim, which failed as well. In 1552, the Second Schmalkaldic War began, which ended better for the Lutherans with the Peace of Augsburg on September 25, 1555.

This, too, was a compromise. The terms allowed the ruler of each region to determine the religion of his territory, either Lutheran or Catholic. Nonetheless, at last, (for the time being) there was peace. However, the fatal flaw to long-term religious peace within the Empire was the exclusion of other Protestants, as Calvinists and other sects remained illegal in both Lutheran and Catholic lands.

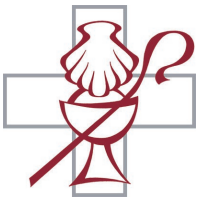
This set the stage for what was arguably the worst religious war in European history – the Thirty Years War. At its end in 1648, the Peace of Westphalia declared that all lands would return to their pre-war status. The net gain on all sides? Zero. The net loss? More than 8 million people killed in the German territories alone.

Peace Treaties among men can never establish lasting peace. Men are sinful. Only Jesus Christ who has triumphed over sin and death can bring real peace, peace without compromise, lasting and eternal peace! And it is Jesus who not only says, ***"In the world you will have tribulation"*** but also, ***"Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world"*** (John 16:33).

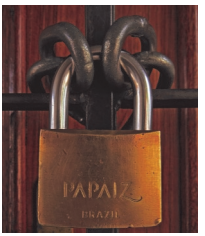
Sacraments

Christopher Tabbert

In 1520, Luther wrote three pivotal documents that profoundly impacted the direction of the Reformation. The second, which he wrote in October of that year, was entitled *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. In it, Luther likened the tyranny of the Roman church to the Old Testament captivity of Israel under Babylon. But the church's tyranny was spiritual. It had usurped the very Word of God and replaced it with the words of a man — the pope.



To make his case, Luther addressed the matter of the Sacraments. Christ had established Baptism and the Lord's Supper, along with Absolution (the word of forgiveness), as His special means of bringing grace to His people. The Lord even joined physical, tangible, "sacramental" signs to the first two to help us receive His words of promise, namely, water in Baptism and bread and wine in the Supper.



But the church added others along the way: Marriage, Confirmation, Ordination (of priests), and Last Rites. Luther noted that these are commendable practices in and of themselves, but with them there is no divine promise of grace and forgiveness. Instead, Rome used all seven to burden God's people and hold them captive.

A closer look at Luther's analysis of the Lord Supper is helpful here, where he detailed three abuses, or "captivities," of it by Rome. The first, contrary to Christ's own words, was the withholding of the cup from the laity in the Lord's Supper. Luther responded:

> **Christ says, "This is my blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."**

Here you see very clearly that the blood is given to all those for whose sins it was poured out… Does He not give it to all? Does He not say that it is poured out for all? [44]

The second was Rome's peculiar doctrine, called *transubstantiation*, that they demanded the faithful believe. In it, they declared that only Christ's body and blood were truly present in the Mass, and merely appeared to be bread and wine. For Luther, this was nonsense based on "**an absurd and unheard of juggling with words."** It is enough, he declared, **"that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and real blood are present."** [45]

The third and worst, however, was how Rome took this most wonderful gift of Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and changed it into a human "good work" and sacrifice to be performed by us, through the church, to earn God's favor. God's grace was upended. The Gospel was transformed into law, and not even God's Law, but human law. To Luther, this was Rome's greatest travesty.

Thanks to the Reformation, however, we rejoice to know that, through the Sacraments, our Lord still comes to us. Born again by water and the Word in Holy Baptism, we live in the divine promise that, "***He who believes and is baptized will be saved"*** (Mark 16:16). We receive our Lord's promise of forgiveness and everlasting life given with His real body and blood in the Supper. And, as often as we hear God's own Word of Holy Absolution, we trust that our sins are most truly forgiven.

Luther declares, **"Who would not shed tears of gladness, indeed, almost faint for joy in Christ, if he believed with unshaken faith that this inestimable promise of Christ belonged to him?"** [46]

Repentance

Ryan Wendt

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther sent 95 Theses to **Albert of Brandenburg**, the Archbishop of Mainz, inviting scholars to participate in a theological discussion. The Theses, in Latin, were also nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

They were quickly translated into German (purportedly by some of Luther's students), printed, and widely distributed. They had broad reaching appeal and consequences. In the language of today, they went viral. This is why October 31, 1517, is now celebrated as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The chief issue, among many for Dr. Luther, was the sale of indulgences. An indulgence, then and now, is a grant, given or sold, on the authority of the Pope which gives remission of the temporal punishment in purgatory still due for sins after absolution.

Luther's argument was this: If forgiveness can be purchased, then Jesus did not need to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Also, if any sins remain after being absolved by Jesus (making a place like Purgatory necessary), then His words, **"*It is finished*"** (John 19:30), along with the rest of Scripture, are not true.

Indulgences lead Christians away from true repentance and sorrow for their sins, away from Christ and His free and complete justification by grace through faith, and, therefore, away from the only hope for a troubled conscience.

Luther's concern for troubled consciences is clear from his very first thesis: **"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."** [47] Luther here refers to Jesus' first publicly preached words, **"*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*"** (Matthew 4:17).

God's Kingdom comes with the preaching of repentance so that the conscience might be convicted of sin and thus prepared to hear the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus has come to save you from your sins. The law says that you have a debt for your sins. The Gospel says that Jesus paid the *entire* price. **"*The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*"** (Romans 6:23).

The whole concept of indulgences is a complete confounding of law and Gospel. You cannot earn or buy forgiveness or eternal life, **"*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast*"** (Ephesians 2:8-9). True repentance and living faith are only worked by the Holy Spirit through the application of God's law and Gospel.

The granting of indulgences — which the Roman church still does to this day — is not Biblical, it does not comfort consciences, and it leads us away from reliance on Jesus alone. That is why Luther opposed the practice and those who sold this false hope.

For his trouble of being concerned about consciences, for preaching, teaching, and discussing the Biblical means of life and salvation in Jesus Christ alone, Dr. Luther was excommunicated from the Roman church in 1521. But the truth of God's Word cannot be silenced.

Looking back, we see that Luther's 95 Theses were, as one scholar put it, "a protest against bad pastoral care." He knew repentance and trust in Christ alone are the very heart of the life of a believer. To claim otherwise is not just unbiblical, but unchristian.

Citations

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[2] *Luther's Small Catechism*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 24.

[3] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 462:44-45.

[4] Timothy F. Lull, ed, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), "The Freedom of a Christian", 596.

[5] Ibid., 607.

[6] Ibid., 601.

[7] Ibid., 619-20.

[8] Ibid., "The Bondage of the Will", 225.

[9] A common attribution to Luther, likely a paraphrase of this passage as found in Henry Coles's 1823 translation: "Wherefore, friend Erasmus, as often as you throw in my teeth the Words of the law, so often I throw in yours that of Paul, "By the law is the knowledge of sin,"—not of the power of the will." (Section 56).

[10] Martin Luther, *Born Slaves: The Bondage of the Will*, (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2017), Argument 4, Paragraph 1.

[11] Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957), 313-314.

[12] Lutheran Service Book, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 402.

[13] Wikipedia contributors, "Argula von Grumbach," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,* https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Argula_von_Grumbach&oldid=745674221 (accessed June 15, 2017).

[14] *"Bella gerant alīī, tū fēlix Austria nūbe/ Nam quae Mars aliīs, dat tibi regna Venus":* quoted and translated in, Hare, Christopher Hare, *The high and puissant princess Marguerite of Austria, princess dowager of Spain, duchess dowager of Savoy, regent of the Netherlands*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), 48.

[15] *Luther's Small Catechism*, 11.

[16] Paul T. McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005, 2006), 351.

[17] Ibid., 25.

[18] F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 47.

[19] Ibid., 52.

[20] Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 298.

[21] Michelle DeRusha, *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 3.

[22] Ibid., 1.

[23] Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, "Heidelberg Disputation", 43.

[24] Ibid., "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper", 378.

[25] Philip Schaff, *History of the Reformation, Volume 1*, (New York City: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), 298.

[26] The translation is from H.C. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (1903), based on Luther's *Opera Latina* (Frankfurt, 1865-73]

[27] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* (St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress,1958-1986) (hereafter: *LW*), 54, 234.

[28] Ewald M. Plass, compiler, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 884.

[29] Ibid., 887-888.

[30] Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 15.

[31] Ibid., 16.

[32] McCain, *Concordia*, 33.

[33] Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume 5*, *Part 2*, (New York City: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 369.

[34] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, eds., *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, (Nashville: Christianity Today, Inc., 2000), 371.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Common quotation of Tertullian, from his work *Apologeticus*, Chapter 50.

[37] Plass, *What Luther Says*, 834.

[38] Gene Edward Veith, "The Doctrine of Vocation: How God Hides Himself in Human Work", *Modern Reformation*, Nov/Dec. 2012 Vol: 21 Num: 6.

[39] Martin Luther, "Sermon in the Castle Church at Weimar" (25 October 1522, Saturday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity), in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* 60 vols. (Weimar: Herman Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883–1980) 10/3:382, as translated by Frederick J. Gaiser in his editorial, "What Luther *Didn't* Say About Vocation", *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* (St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, Fall 2005), 361.

[40] Plass, *What Luther Says*, 560.

[41] Letter to Conrad Cordatus, July 7, 1530. Cited at http://lutheranreformation.org/history/luther-and-melanchthon/.

[42] WA Tr 2, No. 2771a; translated in Preserved Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1968 reprint), 266.

[43] Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, "Preface to the New Testament", 113-114.

[44] Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church", 278.

[45] Ibid., 285.

[46] Ibid., 296-297.

[47] Kurt Aland, eds., *Martin Luther's 95 Theses: with the Pertinent Documents from the History of the Reformation*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1967), 55.

Contributors

Terry Forke	Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Harlowton, Montana, and President of the Montana District LCMS.
Matthew Nelson	Pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Columbia Falls, Montana.
Kevin Peterson	Pastor of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Salmon, Idaho.
Arlo Pullmann	Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Laurel, Montana, and a member of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
Vernon Sandersfeld	Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Hamilton, Montana.
Richard Schneider Jr.	Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ronan, Montana.
Christopher Tabbert	Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Eureka, Montana, and First Vice President of the Montana District LCMS.
Ryan Wendt	Pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Billings, Montana, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Montana District LCMS.

"I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept...the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all."