

Martin Luther

I. Background of Martin Luther

A. Significance

1. Beginning of the Reformation: “What must I do to be saved?”
2. Very human, with strengths and weaknesses

B. Chronological Progress in Theology

1. 1505: Becomes an Augustinian monk
 - a. Works: Sought salvation in monasticism
 - b. Alienation: Feared God because he could not be righteous enough
2. 1510: Visits Rome—“Who knows whether this is true!”
3. 1512: Professor at the University of Wittenberg → Handling the Scripture
4. 1517: Posts the 95 Theses
 - a. Reacted to the sale of indulgences (remission of temporal penalty for a cash gift)
 - b. Still a “reforming Catholic” in many ways
5. 1518: Heidelberg Disputation (1518) → Contrasts theology of glory & theology of the Cross
6. 1519: Debates John Eck at Leipzig
 - a. Luther identified with Huss
 - b. Luther realizes that councils can err
7. 1521: Diet of Worms
 - a. “Here I stand”—accepting neither popes nor councils but only the Scripture
 - b. Excommunicated by the church and put under the ban by the emperor
 - c. In hiding, translates NT
8. 1525: Marries Katherine von Bora (“practical theology”)
9. 1529: Marburg Colloquy
 - a. Meeting w/ Zwingli to promote Protestant unity
 - b. Clashed over the Lord’s Supper
10. 1530: Augsburg Confession
 - a. Statement of Lutheran doctrine for Emperor Charles V
 - b. Written by Philipp Melanchthon (w/ input from Luther)
 - c. Most universally recognized Lutheran Confession

II. Theology of Luther

A. Approach

1. Anti-Scholastic, anti-philosophical
2. Very much characterized by paradox
3. Keep in mind that everything is not “Calvinist or Arminian”

B. Salvation

1. Justification

- a. “The doctrine on which the church stands or falls” [a paraphrase]
- b. *Sola fide*: By faith alone
- c. Terminology
 - 1) Justification: the forensic (legal) imputation (crediting or reckoning) of Christ’s righteousness to the sinner
 - 2) Alien righteousness: righteousness that is from outside the sinner, righteousness that is not his own doing

- 3) *Simul justus et peccator*: “simultaneously righteous and a sinner” → the sinner does not become more righteous to be saved.
 - d. Realizing human inability to achieve salvation, he asserted the totality of grace
 - 2. Predestination
 - a. Strong affirmation of Augustinian views of monergism
 - b. Helplessness of human beings in sin—“the bondage of the will” against Erasmus
 - c. Reserved to the inscrutable “hidden God”
- C. Scripture
- 1. *Sola scriptura*
 - a. Affirmed the authority of Scripture over any other authority
 - b. Allowed liberty on matters of tradition that didn’t conflict with Scripture (normative principle)
 - 2. Problem of the Epistle of James
 - a. Using justification by faith as his touchstone, Luther called the Epistle of James “an epistle of straw” compared to the writings of Paul.
 - b. Possible explanations
 - 1) Some have use the term “canon within the canon,” i.e., that Luther judged the value of canonical books by the criterion of the gospel of justification, particularly, What does it teach about Christ?
 - 2) Consistency of God’s Word—how can a truly inspired work contradict the rest of Scripture?
 - 3) Question of canonicity rather than inspiration
 - 3. Inspiration and inerrancy
 - a. Both sides used Luther in the debate over inerrancy.
 - b. Luther’s statements vary
- D. Sacraments
- 1. General
 - a. Probably the point of greatest difference that other Protestants have with Lutherans is the Lutheran view of the sacraments
 - b. Rejected the seven sacraments of Catholicism & settled on two
 - c. Efficacious only by faith, not *ex opere operato* (“by virtue of the act itself”)
 - 2. Baptism
 - a. Taught a form of baptismal regeneration
 - b. Efficacious by faith
 - 1) Luther thought there was faith in the infant
 - 2) Later Lutherans tended toward the faith of the parents
 - c. In reconciling baptismal regeneration w/ justification by faith alone, consider the place of catechism and confirmation
 - 3. Lord’s Supper
 - a. Consubstantiation
 - 1) Although Lutherans often do not like the term, *consubstantiation* expresses the idea that Christ is present “in, with, and under”
 - 2) Luther believed in the real presence, but it is important that he denied transubstantiation and the offering of a sacrifice in the Mass.
 - b. *Communicatio idiomatum*

- 1) Luther adapted idea of the *communicatio idiomatum* to say that Christ's human body shared omnipresence with his deity; therefore His physical body could be present in the sacrament
 - 2) Luther called opponents rationalists and accepted this as a "mystery" accepted by faith.
- E. Law and gospel
1. Hermeneutical principle: Luther thought this distinction essential to understanding the Scripture
 2. All Scripture is either Law or Gospel
 - a. Law: condemns sin & causes fear in sinner
 - b. Gospel: relief found in Christ, to Whom the law drives the sinner
 Scripture either terrifies (Law) or comforts (Gospel).
 3. E.g., Lutherans dislike term "ordinances" because it implies Law (what someone must do) and prefer "sacraments" because Christ is offered in grace. The sacraments are grace, not law.
 4. Contrast with other views
 - a. Lutherans say Reformed theology confuses Law and Gospel—either saying Law contributes to sanctification or Law is an evidence of salvation
 - b. Lutherans reject Dispensationalism because it allegedly makes the OT all Law and everything since the NT all Gospel.
- F. Theology of the Cross
1. God is not known in a "theology of glory"
 - a. Idea that God is known through reason and speculation (natural means)
 - b. Sees God in terms of power
 - c. Appeals to appeal to human pride
 - d. Rejected reliance on reason
 2. God known in weakness & suffering through Christ on the cross
 - a. Consider the picture of Christ on Calvary, "God forsaken of God," and crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
 - b. Stresses revelation over reason—God is known as He reveals Himself
 - c. Stressed predestination & bondage of the will; synergism gives glory to human reason & ability
- G. Eschatology
1. Amillennial—typical of the reformers
 2. Rejected purgatory—a significant revision
- H. Church and State
1. "Magisterial Reformation": All except the Anabaptists advanced the reform and conducted the work of the church with the support and aid of the magistrates.
 2. "Two Kingdoms"
 - a. Believer is a citizen of two kingdoms established by God, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of this world.
 - 1) As *justified*, the believer is a citizen of heaven & world has no claim on him
 - 2) As *sinner*, the believer is a member of a state that exists to limit sin
 - b. Neither kingdom has authority in the other's realm
 - 1) State has no authority in God's kingdom

- 2) Believer has no authority (inherently, i.e., as a believer) to rule in the earthly kingdom
 - 3) However, God rules over both kingdoms.
 - c. The Christian has duties to both kingdoms which must be followed, despite tensions and difficulties
 - d. There is no “Christian state,” for the state exists to regulate the sinful.
- I. Christian and Culture
- 1. From *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr (1951)—How does the Christian relate to his culture?
 - 2. “Christ and Culture in Paradox”
 - a. There is a tension between “loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture” (Niebuhr)
 - b. There are two spheres (Christ and culture), each with its own rules and principles: “Take no thought for tomorrow,” but plant, tend, & harvest your crops.
 - c. One does not try to escape culture nor to Christianize it.
 - d. Niebuhr uses the illustration of an amphibian, one who operate in two realms with equal ability.
- III. Lutheran Theology After Luther
- A. Philipp Melanchthon
- 1. Great theological assistant Luther
 - 2. Attempted to systematize Lutheran theology (like Calvin): *Loci Communes*
 - 3. In process, moved away from Luther
 - 4. Advocates of his views often styled “Philippists”
- B. Controversies—Attempts to resolve tensions in Luther’s theology
- 1. Synergistic Controversy
 - a. Prominent Figure: Philipp Melanchthon
 - b. Point of Tension: Monergism in salvation
 - c. Melanchthon and the Philippists began to teach a form of synergism (human cooperation in salvation)
 - d. Lutheran response: Reaffirmed monergism
 - 2. Eucharistic Controversy
 - a. Prominent Figures: Philipp Melanchthon and the “Crypto-Calvinists”
 - b. Point of Tension: The Lord’s Supper
 - c. Some Lutherans (including Melanchthon) began to follow the Calvinist teaching of “real spiritual presence” in the Lord’s Supper instead of Luther’s teaching of a physical presence
 - d. Some of these gravitated to the German Reformed Church
 - e. Lutheran Response: Real presence affirmed
 - 3. Controversy on the hypostatic union
 - a. Prominent Figures: Crypto-Calvinists, Martin Chemnitz
 - b. Point of Tension: The Lord’s Supper
 - c. Against the Crypto-Calvinists, Chemnitz defended Luther’s idea that the *communicatio idiomatum* makes the body of Christ ubiquitous (not omnipresent but able to appear where Christ chooses)
- C. Formula of Concord (1580)
- 1. German Formula of Concord settled these controversies

2. Leading theologian: Martin Chemnitz
3. Settled the accepted Lutheran position on controverted points but not as universally accepted as Augsburg Confession