

# Church History

Unit 5

Martin Luther and the  
German Reformation

Manuscript



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# Church History

## Unit Five: Martin Luther and the German Reformation

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### BACKGROUND TO THE GERMAN REFORMATION

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#### Who was Johan Tetzel, and why did his actions anger Martin Luther?

##### **Dr. Sean Lucas**

Johan Tetzel was a Dominican friar who was one of the most important and significant preachers that the Roman Catholic Church had in this period. He was, like other Dominicans, known as almost a kind of revivalist. The power of his preaching was quite significant. So, when the pope needed additional revenue in order to complete St. Peter's Basilica, he knew what kind of person he needed to recruit in order to raise funds. It was a preacher like Tetzel. And so, Tetzel was tasked with both preaching but also fundraising. And part of the means in which Tetzel raised funds was the sale of indulgences... Luther's opposition to Tetzel was not only on the fact that he was a bit of a fundraising scam artist; his real problem with Tetzel was a pastoral one — the idea that someone could buy salvation and, particularly, prey upon the weak consciences of God's people in order to save their loved ones who, perhaps, are in purgatory. And so, when Luther objected to Tetzel and the sale of indulgences, both in the September 1517 disputations and in the October 1517 95 Theses, he was objecting pastorally to a major problem that the indulgences created, something that bound the consciences of God's people in ways that were utterly illegitimate.

##### **Dr. R. Scott Clark**

Indulgences were payments that one could make to the church in lieu of suffering either in this life or, ostensibly, in purgatory after this life. And what's not always understood is that it wasn't strictly the buying of salvation, but it was the buying of time out of purgatory. And at various times through the late medieval period, the church had issued indulgences, as she still does. Now she does so on a more restricted basis and, specifically, only the pope issues them today, but the pope still issues plenary indulgences so that someone could pay for their entire time in purgatory and

not spend any, and that's, of course, what Tetzl was doing. And the point of purgatory was to stimulate people to godliness, to obedience, to piety. And what frustrated Luther, and other people at the time, was that you could simply buy your way out of having to be pious, holy, and struggling with sin and against sin, toward godliness. So, there was that, and then there was another aspect, and that was that you didn't even have to be in a state of grace, whereas ideally, at that point anyway, Luther was saying, you know, one ought to be at least in a state of grace.

**Dr. Robbie Crouse**

Tetzl was known as something of a great “car salesman,” we might say, who had great charisma and was able to sell these indulgences. He even had a jingle, a kind of ad commercial you might say: “As soon as the coin the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.” Tetzl was also known for putting on great dramatic acts showing the fires of hell and the pain of purgatory, and then pleading with the common people that once you've seen this, now give your money and you can escape, you and your loved ones can escape this punishment. Luther had a quite visceral reaction to Tetzl's selling of indulgences. He believed that he was misleading the common people who were quite poor already and giving their money toward this. The early Luther was not yet set against indulgences entirely, that he thought they were wrong entirely, but he did think that Tetzl was abusing these indulgences, leading the people astray, emptying themselves of their money for this. Later Luther would actually come to believe that the indulgences themselves were quite wrong and that he was causing the people to put their salvation in something other than Christ.

**Why did Pope Clement VII offer indulgences to build St. Peter's cathedral?**

**Dr. Jim Maples**

The building of St. Peter's Cathedral was actually started by Pope Julius II, but as the work progressed, Clement VII was the pope, and he began to offer indulgences — one was a jubilee indulgence, but then there were others — because the real need was money, and the sale of the indulgences was to fund the building project. It was quite that simple.

**What was the impact of the “deal” that Pope Clement VII made with the Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz to sell indulgences?**

**Dr. Jim Maples**

Pope Clement VII engineered a deal with the Archbishop of Mainz to sell indulgences primarily to raise money for the construction — rehabilitation if you will — of St. Peter's, but they agreed to split the money. The archbishop wanted his cut, and they decided to split the money. And the archbishop actually hired a fellow named Tetzl to be the salesman, so to speak, for that particular area which included Frederick the Wise's territory in which lived one Martin Luther, which began a cascade of events that we now know as the Reformation.

### What caused Luther to have his “breakthrough” that began the Protestant Reformation?

#### Rev. Clete Hux

What caused Luther to have his “breakthrough” that caused the Protestant Reformation was basically a proper understanding of the phrase “righteousness of God.” He no longer saw the righteousness of God as something to be feared — God trying to punish him — but he saw the righteousness of God as a gift. And with that gift became his interpretive principle for Scripture, that salvation was a gift and not something that you had to work for.

#### Dr. Piotr J. Malysz

First of all, when we talk about Luther’s “breakthrough,” there has been some debate for quite some time right now about whether or not that breakthrough was kind of an instantaneous breakthrough, or did it rather happen over several years as Luther sort of deepened his insight into the nature of the gospel. Luther wrote a couple of accounts of his, what we might describe as a breakthrough. Probably, the most famous one is the account that he gave in 1545, the year before his death, reflecting back on the late fifteen-teens, so probably the years from maybe 1515 to about 1519. And it’s really, sort of, in those years that we have to locate that breakthrough. Luther describes the breakthrough as, on the one hand, precipitated by his study of Romans. So, certainly as he looked back, it seemed to him that it was maybe not quite a moment, but it was sort of like a lightning bolt.

But on the other hand, there is enough in the account to sort of say, well, it really did take him some time to figure it out. He kept coming back, especially to Romans 1:16,17 — “The just shall live by faith.” So, that’s one aspect of Luther’s breakthrough, and I think it’s an aspect that is not all that important to us because whether it happened in a moment, or it happened over some time, is less important than the question what it actually consisted in. And it really had to do with the medieval view of God. On the one hand, the image of God that Luther grew up with was the image of God as judge. God possessed a certain kind of righteousness, and it was our task to live up to the righteousness of God, and it was out of his righteousness that God, then, would judge our own attempts at righteousness. So, this sort of active righteousness, by means of which God exercises his divinity and something which he guards, then we can only, sort of, try as best we can to measure up to, whether through grace or even before grace. There were various takes on that in the Middle Ages. But Luther said that by reflecting on Romans, he began to think of God differently, not as a possessor of this, sort of, inherent righteousness which God guards very jealously and to which we have to live up, but rather the kind of God who actually gives his righteousness away, that his righteousness is not a guarded possession by means of which he is God, but rather is something that he can share and precisely be God in sharing that with us; not the active righteousness to which we measure up to but the passive righteousness which we receive as a gift. And we receive it only by simply believing that it’s ours. And this was really the essence of

the breakthrough, that it's not by having to make something of ourselves ... or by living up to some sort of standard, but rather by believing that we are already more than we could ever make of ourselves precisely in faith because God gives his righteousness away. And Luther says that it's not just God's righteousness that is like that, it's really any attribute of God, that God shares that with us. He shares with us his wisdom. He shares with us his strength.

So, he says the righteousness of God is that by means of which he makes us righteous. God's wisdom is that by means of which he makes us wise. God's strength is that by means of which he makes us strong. God's omnipotence is that by means of which we don't have to fear anything in the world, and so on and so forth. So, all the attributes of God in Luther's account are communicative. So, what makes God, to put it very briefly, into the kind of God he is, is the fact that he can share out of his abundance without being impoverished by that, as opposed to the kind of God who is only God in protecting and not sharing any of his divinity. So, this was really the essence of the breakthrough, the good God over against the God who is primarily a judge.

### **How did Luther come to believe in justification by faith alone?**

#### **Dr. Chris Peters**

Well, Luther certainly had a lot of influences that directed him to know and understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But, as I think about it, certainly the perspective that he came from as part of medieval humanism and also an Augustinian monk, both of those informed the way that he studied and learned Scripture, particularly at the time those who were studying Scripture were rediscovering the original languages, Hebrew and Greek, and beginning to read the Scriptures afresh in those languages instead of just in the Latin version of the Bible that had been available to most. And so, Luther's exploration of that, he began to uncover what the Scripture's teaching was on the imputed righteousness of Christ that could be received through faith alone. So, I think that was part of the answer, was the academic side and the academic culture that he lived in, the theological culture that he came from. The second part of it, you might say, was personal, as I understand his story, that he struggled deeply with seeking to follow God and seeking to honor God and to follow the perspectives and parameters of the faith, the Christian faith as it was understood at the time. And because he knew that he fell short of what God would have him to do and to be in his life, he had a crisis of faith, a crisis of needing righteousness from some outside source. And so, the combination of those two — his study of Scripture and his personal recognition of his need for imputed righteousness through Christ — those two things came together to provide for that understanding of justification that we know today.

#### **Dr. R. Scott Clark**

Luther came to believe in justification by faith alone, not in one shattering experience in a tower — the so-called *Turmerlebnis* — but rather, over a period of time, really,

from 1513 to 1519. First, he was studying and lecturing through the Psalms, and there he sees what we call the doctrine of “total depravity,” the biblical doctrine, that we’re conceived and born in sin and dead in sins and trespasses by nature. Secondly, as he’s lecturing through the book of Romans, he begins to see, not only that doctrine of depravity that he’d seen in the Psalms, but he sees that the righteousness that we need is not something the Spirit works within us by grace and cooperation with grace, but rather, that righteousness is outside of us for justification, that Christ accomplished for us and is credited to us. And then finally, as he’s lecturing through Galatians, he sees, I think around 1519, that faith is not a virtue that’s formed in us, at least not for justification — again by grace and cooperation with grace — but rather, it’s an instrument, a gift that God gives us, and it becomes the sole instrument through which we lay hold of Christ and his righteousness. So, over a period of years, from 1513 to 1519, Luther gradually becomes a Protestant. And then I would add onto that, 1521 at Worms is really where we begin to see him clearly articulate the sole sufficiency of Scripture, so that Luther becomes theologically a Protestant over a period of time and not at one, sort of, shattering breakthrough experience.

### **Dr. James D. Smith III**

Well, the story of Martin Luther is a story of lifelong progress toward conversion, toward that affirmation of belief. Luther himself, an Augustinian monk, believed that the heart of salvation was faith animated by works of love. And so, depending on where you put the emphasis, whether on works or whether on love, in the preaching or in your own heart, it could be liberating, but also could appeal to some of the challenges he’d had as a child — dying trying to measure up to the requirements of his father. And so, as a result, works became a very important dimension to him: Can I perform? Can I earn God’s love for me? Can I come into that right relationship? So, that was his early point as an Augustinian monk, both as a person with a difficult childhood, and also, he had heard many times, preaching on the emphasis of works. So, as he says in his own collected corpus of works, 1545, done just before his own death, rehearsing how he came to this faith, the focus of that really becomes Romans 1:17 where it says, “In this the righteousness of God is revealed . . . ‘The just shall live by faith.’” And, as he tells the story, for a long time he hated that verse. He had hated it because that phrase, “the righteousness of God” reminded him of the unbending yardstick, the unbending perfection that he could never measure up to, and he used exactly those words. “I hated this verse . . . and I even hated the God behind it . . . It isn’t enough that us unrighteous sinners should be condemned, but we have to live with this kind of shame.” So, he kept in the Scriptures, however. What a wonderful lesson as he describes it. He kept in the Scriptures, kept exploring it, and he says, “At last I saw the context where the righteousness of God is revealed in this, that the just live by faith.” And he saw that faith, then, as a gift of God. That in itself was sufficient. “Abraham believed God; it was counted him for righteousness.” That was sufficient to bring one into the right relationship, and so Luther said, when he saw the context of it, that in fact, this was God, not standing motionless with a measuring stick, in a sense, but this was God actively offering the grace to those who were the objects of his love, that, in fact, he could feel the embrace of this God. He could feel at home. He could say, “Yes,” and he then said that, “When I understood this, it was

like I was born again.” In fact, he was. You know, most would date this time in his life — he doesn’t himself date that — but to the year 1519, which would suggest to us that when he posted those 95 Theses on the door of the cathedral church in Wittenberg in 1517, and thesis number one was essentially, “How can I know I’m forgiven? How can I know I’m in right relationship with God?” That motivated him to keep looking, and only perhaps two years later did he discover the core of this passage that would be life-giving for him: “The just shall live by faith.”

### **How did Luther come to believe that Romans 1:17 taught an imputation of grace instead of an infusion of grace?**

#### **Rev. George Shamblin**

Martin Luther at one point was teaching on the book of Romans in the university, and a verse that he came across during his lectures not only changed his life personally but really changed the face of Christianity as we know it. The verse that so impacted Martin Luther was Romans 1:17, and that verse simply says, "The just shall live by faith." At that time, the church was teaching that there were sacraments that one had to perform throughout life, where grace would be received over time, and you might get to a point of being right before God. But this verse taught, and Luther understood, that when we receive Christ through faith, immediately we become right before Almighty God. Of course, we want to continue doing good works and doing things to serve God, not that we might be made right, but because we have been made right through faith in Christ alone.

#### **Nicholas Perrin, Ph.D.**

So, Luther was a tender soul who really struggled with issues of conscience. History tells us that he wore out his confessors by trying to be justified through the confession. When he read Romans 1:17 in his earlier days and talked about God being the justifier and God’s righteous retribution, that’s what he focused in on, is retribution. So, he thought that he was going to stand for God who would pay him back for all his sins. And then he had the so-called “tower experience” when everything changed, and he began to see in Romans 1:17 that this righteousness is not a righteousness of God’s righteous judgment against the sinner, but actually God’s imputed righteousness on us, something we don’t deserve, but a kind of status that, through Christ, we’re given, so that we might be fully justified.

### **What were Luther’s objections to the sacramental system of the Catholic Church?**

#### **Dr. Timothy George**

In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had come to teach that there were seven sacraments, and these seven sacraments were really to cover a person “from the womb to the tomb,” through your whole life, beginning with baptism and ending with extreme unction. Luther brought that whole sacramental system under evangelical

critique as he studied the Scriptures and found so much of that lacking, missing in the Bible. And so basically, he reduced the seven sacraments to two. The two he kept were the two Jesus himself instituted, and so we sometimes call these the “dominical ordinances,” or the dominical sacraments. They come from the *Dominus* — Jesus, the Lord — and they were, of course, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Now, he also brought a special critique to the doctrine of transubstantiation. That was the Catholic way of talking about the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, that when the priest raises the host and says the words in Latin, “*Hoc est corpus meum*” — “This is my body” — in that moment that bread is transubstantiated into the very literal body of Jesus Christ. Luther felt that was highly scholasticized, it was not in the Scriptures, and so he does away with the doctrine of transubstantiation, largely because he felt it was detracting from the reality to which communion points, and that’s Jesus Christ, his grace, his blood, his cross, and putting it, rather, on something that was really earthly and bordering on even idolatry. And so, Luther had a severe critique of all seven sacraments including the two he kept, baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

### **Dr. Robbie Crouse**

Luther famously objected to the sacramental system of the Catholic Church, but sometimes it’s quite often misunderstood what exactly Luther was objecting to in this. Sometimes we read Luther in a kind of modern individualist sense in which Luther is simply objecting to authority generally, or institutionalized religion. And it’s certainly not the case. Luther himself had a high view of the sacraments and what the sacraments did — that they were means of grace; that they were offers of the gospel and promises. Rather, what Luther objected to in the medieval Catholic system was, first of all, the addition of sacraments, or the addition of rights to the sacrament, and then secondly, that the sacraments could be received apart from faith. So first of all, Luther objected to the adding of sacraments from the Roman Catholic Church, that other types of actions and rites were added. So, anointing of oil, holy orders was now considered a sacrament itself, but especially penance, indulgence, and pilgrimage Luther objected to. Luther used the example of a dead-end street. Sacraments, rightly used, are avenues of God’s grace, that they truly take us to Christ and the path to Christ. These other additions, though, were dead-end streets because they didn’t lead us to Christ. They became a human achievement and weren’t bringing us into contact with the gospel and the promises of the gospel. Secondly, Luther objected to the sacramental system of the Catholic Church because these sacraments were seen to be received apart from faith. The phrase *ex opere operato* — that the working of themselves, of the sacraments, that they had power in and of themselves — Luther objected to. God certainly used the sacraments as a means of grace, but they had to be received by faith. The importance of believing the promises that are attached to the sacraments was crucial for Luther, and the believer had to have an effectual faith in God that was placed through these sacraments.

### **Did Luther intend to start a reformation when he nailed the 95 Theses to the Wittenberg door?**

#### **Dr. Piotr J. Malysz**

What Luther intended to accomplish with the 95 Theses was certainly far more modest than what he actually did accomplish, and he probably did not even intend to be known by them beyond the academy. I mean, the 95 Theses were written in Latin, and they were theses for an academic disputation on the power of indulgences. When Luther asked, “What is the necessity of indulgences?” and, “Are perhaps indulgences not detracting from what should be the focus of the Christian life?” — namely Jesus Christ and his gospel — and “What should be the focus of Christian love?” — namely, the neighbor. So, in the 95 Theses, Luther asserted that — and he did that already in Thesis One, which is, in a sense, a summary of all of them, where he says, “When our Lord Jesus Christ says, ‘repent,’ he wills the entire life of believers to be a life of repentance.” He pointed out that it is not in the purchasing of indulgences that a Christian becomes a true Christian, but rather, in this fundamental orientation to God, in the change of mind and change of heart, that we become Christians. And this is so because, as he says in Thesis 62, the treasure of the church, the real treasure of the church is not indulgences, it’s not merits won by saints that anxious Christians can tap into, but it’s the gospel of Jesus Christ which orients us to God and truly transforms us beyond the need for indulgences, and then allows us to provide for our families, because Luther’s worry was not just that indulgences detracted from the gospel, or obscured the fullness of Christ’s merit, but also that people buying indulgences neglected their own families because they were so worried about their own salvation and their own standing with God. So, certainly the import of the theses was very far-reaching, and Luther probably did not quite realize just how far-reaching and all-embracing the theses were, but nonetheless, at least initially, they were a call to an academic debate.

#### **Dr. Chris Peters**

Well, it certainly seems from what we understand that when Luther posted the 95 Theses that his primary aim was to call the church to repentance, not necessarily to launch any massive movement like the Reformation would become. We can imagine from what he understood of the church politics and church diplomacy at the time that he would have anticipated some stir, some kind of resistance, and, in fact, was aiming to get some of that going to try to see the church seek some change, seek some reform. But when we think about the 95 Theses and how Luther viewed it, in my understanding he was really just calling the church to repentance — the statements are directed that way — and perhaps would have been surprised at the time to think that anything like the Reformation movement and its spread and its influence would have emerged from that act of calling the church to reform and to repentance.

#### **Rev. George Shamblin**

Martin Luther came up with 95 “beefs,” we could even say 95 “issues” or “theses” that he had against the Roman Catholic Church. When he nailed those theses to the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, I don’t think that he was trying to start a

complete reformation of the world. He thought this was going to be academic in nature. But a number of years earlier, a printing press was invented by Gutenberg, and Luther's 95 Theses were actually printed and copied, not only in the language of the academics, which was Latin, but also in German. So, you had people for the first time that were able to pick up a thesis that Martin Luther had written, and they could read and understand what he was trying to express. Well, this caught like a wildfire, and what began as an academic debate, or what was supposed to be an academic debate, flooded over into Germany and, really, through the four corners of the earth and started the Protestant Reformation.

### What is justification?

#### Nicholas Perrin, Ph.D.

Behind the word “justification” and verbs of “justifying,” we typically find a Greek verb *dikaioō*, which means “to justify.” *Dikaioō* is a verb that's used in different ways in the New Testament, but generally, when we meet *dikaioō*, it's used in the mouth of Paul who wants to talk about justification by faith. Justification at its heart is a legal term. It's a courtroom terminology. So, when Paul talks about us being justified by faith, what we imagine is being gathered in God's courtroom, and God bangs on the gavel and says, “You are declared innocent; you're vindicated in my sight.” So, justification is important because it actually looks forward to the final judgment. When Paul — or, I think, in the gospel writers, or the writer of Hebrews, or whatever New Testament writers there may be who use this verb — talks about justification, again, we're thinking eschatologically, and by that I mean thinking about the very end of time when we're all gathered together, and it's a legal term, and God says, hey, when you're justified that means that you are in this crowd of what let's call “the elect” who can expect to receive judgment in my favor. That's what I see as justification.

#### Dr. Daniel Treier

The old saying in English that justification is “just as if I had never sinned” has a real ring of truth to it. On a Protestant account, justification is an event, not a process. It's an event in which God declares sinners righteous. Forgiven through the imputation of their sins to Christ, they are counted to him, and he bears them on the cross, and righteous in him — his righteousness is imputed to them or counted to them — by virtue of a spiritual union with him. In that union with Christ it's kind of like a marriage with joint property. Christ gets our sin, and we have his righteousness. That righteousness remains *extra nos*, “outside of us.” Because we are connected to him in a covenantal union, a marriage, our identities remain distinct, as well as, we have this sharing in this rich covenantal union.

By contrast, the medieval Catholic view treated justification as a process of the *infusion* of Christ's righteousness into the believer, collapsing that distinction of identity between the believer and Christ. The infusion of Christ's righteousness into the believer came through the sacramental system, and it ontologically renewed the person so that they would be qualified to have the *viseo Dei* — “the vision of God,”

or “the beatific vision” — when they were fully ontologically renewed, fully infused with the righteousness of Christ. Until that point, the medieval Catholic person could not have full assurance that they would see God, that they would indeed enjoy eternal life, because they did not yet have full righteousness. The Protestant view says that yes, there is an “already and a not yet” dimension to this declaration of forgiveness, this declaration of righteousness. Even though justification is a verdict that God will finally fully ratify at the final judgment, that verdict is brought forward in the here and now as a speech-act in which God says, “I declare that person to be righteous, and it is so,” kind of like, again, the words of declaration at a marriage in which an event happens that changes a person’s covenantal status by virtue of God’s speech. God’s speech makes this new reality by bringing us into union with Christ.

### **Does the Bible use the word “justify” in the same way that Protestants do?**

#### **Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart**

The Bible definitely uses the term “justify” in the sense that modern Protestants understand it. I can illustrate this by several New Testament examples. My favorite example is found in the 18th chapter of Luke where Jesus is telling the story of two men who went up to the temple to pray. This story concludes by the poor man who beat his breast and called out to God, “Have mercy on me, a sinner!” Jesus concludes this story by saying, verse 14, “This man went home justified.” He went home in a changed state with a different standing before God than he had arrived at the temple with. So, I take great confidence in the fact that Jesus himself would speak of justification in the sense in which we understand it. It not only means pardon, but it means acceptance. It means reception by God with approval, but not on the basis of one’s own righteousness. In this simple story, mercy has been extended to this man and his status is changed. Our more commonly-known examples, though, come from the writings of Paul. And my favorite statement from the apostle Paul illustrating that we use the term “justify” as Paul did is Romans 5:1 where he says, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Paul there is speaking of the justification of the sinner as something which has already occurred, and because it has already occurred, its consequence is already the possession of the Christian believer. This is ultimately a legal term from the law courts and it means, more or less, a verdict or a finding. The sinner is found to be not only not guilty, but innocent, but on the basis of the righteousness of another. And we know this righteousness comes to us from Jesus Christ.

### **How did Luther's understanding of justification differ from the Roman Catholic view?**

#### **Dr. Carl L. Beckwith**

The understanding of justification in the medieval period and then into the Reformation is complicated. The easiest way to get a handle on it is to look at the language that they use to talk about justification. The medieval theologians used the

phrase “the process of justification,” and when they talk of the process of justification, they are talking about not only what faith believes and lays hold of, but also how faith is at work in the Christian life, loving and serving the neighbor. To use Pauline language, we would say that when they talk of the process of justification they’re speaking of justification and sanctification; the life of holiness is part of this process of justification and being right with God. Luther and the other Reformers make a distinction here that my justification is *by grace through faith*, laying hold of Christ’s perfect righteousness for me, so what makes me just in the eyes of God isn’t anything that I do, but it’s what Christ has perfectly accomplished for me. So, justification, you might say, narrows biblically during the Reformation to focus exclusively on the work of Christ for me.

### What were Johann Eck’s main objections to Luther’s teachings?

#### Dr. Ryan Reeves

Johann Eck is Luther’s nemesis, hands down. Luther always talked about Eck that’s, you know, “conniving, weasely Eck.” He has all his little ways of describing him. The reason why is Eck is pivot. Up until the showdown between Luther and Eck, the question was always about justification. It was what was being debated. And specifically, indulgences were being debated. But Luther always had the upper hand. He had history on his side, he had theology on his side; he couldn’t be backed down. When Eck come in, though, Eck’s concern, the thing he brings up, is that Luther is challenging the authority of the pope, and he actually pivots and starts attacking Luther for his descriptions of the pope being wrong or Scripture alone as being the thing that ought to judge the pope and this type of stuff, and he does back Luther into a corner to finally admit that the he thinks that the pope can be wrong. And it’s a pivot because, at that point, Luther has said something that will get him in trouble, will get him excommunicated, and eventually will get him put on trial. But Eck’s main concern is, “Are you saying the pope can be wrong?” And it’s Eck’s attack that leads Luther to say, “Yes, I’m saying he can be wrong if he’s challenging Scripture, and Scripture is over the pope.” And so, Eck is more concerned about the question of authority than anything else.

#### Dr. Timothy George

You know, there are two great events that almost everybody who’s ever studied the Reformation knows about Martin Luther. One is 1517, that’s Reformation Day when he posted the 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg. The other is 1521 when he stood at the Diet of Worms and said, “Here I stand, so help me God. I can do no other.” Those were great events. But squeezed in between those two was another event. It was a debate which Luther had with a Roman Catholic theologian, a very good Catholic theologian, named Johann Eck. Eck actually means in German, “corner,” and it was said at Leipzig, where this debate took place, Luther was “ecked,” he was “cornered” by John Eck. What was that debate about? Well, Luther was claiming that he wanted to follow the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. It was the one first clear affirmation that he made of what we call the “formal principle” of

the Reformation, that means the Bible, God's Holy Written Word, is the norm by which all other norms are to be judged — the primacy of Holy Scripture. Eck, on the other hand, wanted to bring in a different understanding of tradition, and he said tradition has to be held alongside Scripture in more or less a kind of equilibrium. Luther rejected that. Now, he didn't just throw out all of tradition. I mean, Luther was himself a scholastic theologian. He had a Th.D. from the University of Wittenberg. But he said all tradition — church councils, the statements of popes, of theologians like himself — all of these had to be judged by the pure standard of God's written Word. That was the key difference between John Eck and Martin Luther at the debate at Leipzig in 1519. And we ought to think about that as just as important as what happened at the Wittenberg door in 1517 or what happened later at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

### **Why did Luther marry? What significance did his marriage have for the Protestant Church?**

#### **Dr. Gordon L. Isaac**

In 1525 Luther got married. You have to understand how crazy a thing this was. Luther was an Augustinian friar. He had made a vow of chastity, poverty and obedience, and he got married to an ex-nun who also had made a vow of chastity, so this was really an incredible moment. There were many of his friends who said, "You shouldn't do this! What are you doing? This is endangering all the progress we've made in the Reformation." But Luther said, "Well, I know that by getting married I'm doing God's will." So, by getting married, Luther was actually seeing himself as fulfilling many of the ideals of the Reformation, even though it went against the grain. When Luther married, it also meant this: he was telling the entire world it's possible to be a pastor and to be married. For a long period of time the Roman Catholic Church had established rules that didn't allow priests to be married, and there were huge problems that resulted from that. And so, when Luther took to himself a wife and enjoyed the wonderful benefits of marriage including children, companionship and all that that means, he set down a pattern for the Protestant church, which allowed Protestants to hold the ministry in high regard while allowing ministers to be married.

#### **Dr. James D. Smith III**

Well, Martin Luther, of course, was an Augustinian monk. He'd undergone those vows, and so part of that, among the threefold vows — poverty, chastity and obedience — so, he was not to marry as a Catholic priest and monk. And he wanted to stay within the Catholic Church, as we know. Even with the posting of the 95 Theses, these were for discussion within the church that he hoped for. But as time went on, years passed, and he went through situations like the Diet of Worms in 1521 where he saw that there was this incessant accusation from different parties. And finally he said, "Here I stand, I can do no other," still looking for a place to stand within the Catholic Church, but as the years, several years, went by, realized that that kind of reconciliation would not be welcomed by Catholic authority. And so, he then

renounced his vow to the Augustinian order, took off the monk's garments, became a civilian, if you will, and for the first time, really, became receptive to marriage. Katharina von Bora was a remarkable woman, very practical, had a warmth to her, and in her, he met someone who he both loved and respected and found that for this portion of his life — he's approaching, or just passing now, 40 years of age — he's saying, "I really would like to — because I believe in the home; I believe that marriage can be a gift — I'd like to experience that." And so, it was Katie that was the woman that he asked to become his wife. And one of the beautiful pictures, and powerful pictures, portraits if you will, are those done by Lucas Cranach, their wedding portrait, and with Martin and Katharina there with each other, the Lutheran Church, and then the larger church, discovered side-by-side, here is a husband and a wife that, in some sense for the first time since Mary and Joseph, could be said to be living a full-on Christian life. And that was compelling. That was powerful. One of my teachers, Steve Ozmont at Harvard, has done a work on the friendship between Martin Luther and Katie Luther and Cranach, and that in itself is an illustration of the power of friendship, but also how these various things, the proclamation of justification by faith, the proclamation of the family as a little church, a place in which the husband and wife would lead this little congregation, and also, the power of art, of Christian art, those combined, along with the printed words, to become powerful in spreading the word of Reformation gospel.

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## LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

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### What is consubstantiation?

#### Dr. Piotr J. Malysz

Consubstantiation is a certain doctrine, a certain view of the Lord's Supper, that is ordinarily ascribed to Lutherans, and it basically holds that, in the Lord's Supper, in its use and in its celebration, the elements of bread and wine remain — the substances of bread and wine remain, to put it technically — while the substance of Christ's body and blood are also present. So, you might say that "in, with and under" the communion bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ are objectively given to believers. Now, whether or not Luther actually taught consubstantiation is a different story, because Luther's fundamental emphasis in his rejection of transubstantiation was that the bread is the body of Christ and that the wine is the blood of Christ, but Luther was not interested in explaining how that was the case. And just as transubstantiation asserted that the essences of bread and wine were, sort of, removed while the appearances remained, and did so without any sort of biblical warrant, Luther rejected transubstantiation because he said it was a theory for which there was no warrant. I mean, in a sense, he said, or came very close to saying, it might very well be true; we just don't know. All that Christ tells us in the words of institution is "this is my body; this is my blood." But, for the same reason, Luther would also be very skeptical of asserting something like consubstantiation because it is also an

attempt to explain the “how” of the Lord’s Supper, that somehow the two have to remain. And for Luther that simply does not follow. When we say “The bread is the body, and the wine is the blood,” we cannot answer how that is possible, whether one is transmuted, whether the elements are transmuted or whether they are conjoined, we don’t know. Now, Luther does say — but he says that in a kind of apologetic way in his treatise on *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* — that transubstantiation is not necessary because, just as in Christ, humanity does not displace the divinity or the divinity does not displace the humanity in Christ, it’s certainly possible to believe that, in the Lord’s Supper, the body of Christ does not displace the bread, and the blood of Christ does not displace the wine for it to be there. But that is an argument that has a kind of an apologetic for it; it’s an argument based on the incarnation. But Luther, like I said, his fundamental emphasis was simply on the words of institution without attempting to explain them. So, to put it very briefly, he emphasized “that” Christ’s body and blood are present in communion rather than the “how,” how they may be present, whether by transubstantiation or consubstantiation or in some other way.

#### **Dr. Scott Manor**

One of the main ideas that came out of a Reformed perspective of the Eucharist is the notion of consubstantiation. And if you look at the word itself, “con,” meaning “with,” and “substantiation” — “the substance of the thing” — really reflects Luther’s idea of the fact that when we participate in the Eucharist, he is with the elements in the Eucharist. The bread and the wine do not become Christ. Christ joins the bread and the wine. His body and his blood are consubstantial with the bread and the wine. And so, he uses the example of an iron in the fire. It’s the classical example. He says you can put an iron in a fire and after a while it, you know, it heats up to some incredible temperature, and you can look and see the heat, the very, very hot end of the iron there. And you see these two things happening at the same time. It’s a union of both the heat of the fire and the iron itself. And yet the iron remains the iron. It doesn’t take on the form of the fire. And the fire remains the fire. It doesn’t take on the form of the iron. Each possess their own distinct unique aspects and qualities, and yet they are joined together in this sense of consubstantiation in the Eucharist whereby Christ is “in, with and under” the elements of the bread and the wine.

### **How did Luther criticize Ockham’s *via moderna*?**

#### **Dr. Ryan Reeves**

The *via moderna* is one of these two different styles of what we would call “methodologies” when it comes to answering theological questions. And what had happened in the late Middle Ages is these two methodologies got into a fight. One was the older way, the *via antiqua*, which tended to pile on explanations on top of explanations, and all these, maybe, suggestions or at least speculations became concrete beliefs now because they could be worked into the system. Ockham and the *via moderna* come along, as we see with Ockham’s razor, it made fun of the adding to the system the way that you would add on explanations. Luther is very interesting in

this because what he notices is that, in both systems, they start as methodologies but what begins to happen is they carry in theology as well, so they come up with conclusions, repeatedly. And so, by the 95 Theses and other documents around the early days of the Reformation, Luther is not just attacking one side or the other or some subset. He is actually attacking all of it at once, and he says scholasticism has gone off the rails, it's now injecting and adding to theology all of these issues. And so, Luther, it's very interesting, late in life, in the *Table Talk*, he'll say that he's still okay with some of the Ockham methodology, the kind of paring away of speculation, but for the remainder of his life he says Scripture alone, not these theological methodologies become the thing that tell us how to get to truth. And he was very suspicious for the rest of his life after the Reformation of people like Ockham and others just simply talking methodology because what he realized is methodology isn't a stand-alone subject. It usually has a purpose or an axe to grind, and it has a theological set of answers it wants to give. And so, from that point he says look, just methodology is not good enough. You actually have to have a biblical-centric idea of how you're going to get to your answer because the methodology will lead you astray, no matter if it's very old school or new school, in this way.

### **Dr. Timothy George**

William of Ockham was a philosopher in the late Middle Ages. He was a Franciscan, well trained in logic and things like that. And out of his school came a tradition we call "nominalism" that focused, in particular, on the names of things rather than the essences of things. In some ways, Luther himself belonged to that tradition. He was a theological voluntarist — I mean by that that he put the emphasis on the *will* of God more than the *being* or the essence of God, as you would find, say, in a Thomist philosophy. Essentially, the big difference with the Ockhamist tradition, as it developed with relation to salvation and grace, is that it came to put more and more of the burden of salvation on the individual pilgrim, the Christian, so that it becomes, in a way, a backdoor into a kind of works-righteousness. And Luther came to believe that this was an absolute contradiction of the gospel, that nobody can save themselves, nobody can even get to first base by themselves. And so, it's entirely by grace. And so, he began to challenge that part of Okham's philosophy, still retaining, though, a very high doctrine of God's will, of God's sovereignty, that was very much a part of the tradition that Okham belonged to, though the way his doctrine of salvation turned in the late Middle Ages was to emphasize human free will rather than God's will.

### **How did Luther contrast a "theology of glory" with the "theology of the cross?"**

### **Dr. Carl L. Beckwith**

Luther argues that everyone is a theologian. In other words, everybody has something to say about God. Even the atheist has something to say in his own denial of God. And when Luther looks, then, at everyone as a theologian, he says there are two types of these theologians. One is a theologian of the cross and another is a theologian of

glory. Now, let me add a brief footnote here, because this is often confused when people see this language from Luther. He's not talking about the theology of glory that Scripture is discussing and that we confess. He's rather contrasting two types of theologians. Well, what are these types of theologians? A theologian of the cross looks to the scandal of the cross, looks to Christ crucified and there sees that the very Son of God who has become man has gone to the cross for *me* and for my sins — not sins in theory or sins in general, but very much for *my* sins. "When I see that," Luther says, "I am brought to my knees, and I'm brought to faith. I can't get my mind wrapped around that, that God's love for me is such that he overcomes my great offence and my sin by going to the cross, suffering and dying for me." Reason can't sort that out. St. Paul uses remarkable language to describe this. He says that when Christ goes to the cross that they've "crucified the Lord of glory." He doesn't say, "Well, they crucified the man Jesus, because you can't really crucify God." No, he says, they "crucified the Lord of glory." Or St. John says in his first epistle that it's the Son of God who shed his blood for my redemption. For Luther, these are remarkable things to say. Reason cannot sort that out. That's merely faith opening its hands to what God has made known and revealing that, you know, Christ has come to me. He's there to be found in the manger; he's there to be found upon the cross. The most unexpected places, there is God for me. God comes to me in a remarkable way through baptism and the Lord's Supper. The theologian of the cross has a lot of questions but can't sort those questions out, but rather receives what God has declared to him. Yes indeed, my salvation is accomplished in Christ; I freely have this by faith.

The theologian of the glory is one who has a lot of questions and who wants to say, "But wait a minute, maybe I can offer a fitting or reasonable explanation for all of the things that Christ has done." And the theologian of glory slowly shifts, then, the attention from Scripture to philosophy, from faith and the vulnerability of faith to the confidence and certainty of reason that attempts to say, "I understand why this happened," or "I understand what is going on here." And for Luther, that slowly moves me away from the posture of receiving the remarkable and marvelous work of God by faith and trying to cling to something that I can do.

A great way to illustrate these two theologians for Luther is the place of good works in the life of the Christian. The theologian of glory sees those good works as evidence of a genuine faith that he has. Now, while that is true, the problem is I begin to turn the gaze back to myself, and I begin to look, then, at the works that I do and take confidence in them — "See, I really am a genuine Christian and I really believe, and I can demonstrate this by pointing to my works." For Luther, that points away from Christ. It looks back to me. Rather, the theologian of the cross is a busy, active individual who's always doing before he even thinks about the things he's doing. Loving and serving his neighbor because he's been freed by the Holy Spirit, freed from my own desire to save myself or to point to something, freed to go forth and lavish the abundance of what God has bestowed upon me upon those around me. The theologian of the cross lives, though, in the contraries of life, lives through trial, temptation, lives in a world surrounded by disappointment and anguish and death, all the while holding firm to the promise of life in what God has given to us.

**Pastor Robert W. St. John, Jr.**

You have to remember that Luther — in 1515, 1516, 1517 and into 1518 — he has been studying and teaching the Bible. He has taught through the book of Romans. Even earlier he taught through Psalms, but he's taught through the book of Romans. He has taught through Galatians, and he has taught through Hebrews. He's actually teaching through Hebrews the latter part of 1517 when he nails his 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg, and into 1518 he's still teaching in the book of Hebrews. And so, he is being saturated by Pauline theology, New Testament theology, which is where he gets his theology of the cross. Luther has been — in fact, the hallmark of his theology — he is profoundly the theologian of the cross. The cross of Christ is central to his thinking. No matter where he's teaching in the Bible, he comes back to that. He sees that as being the seminal test for a person's teaching. And so, that's, you know, it's because of the influence exegetically from the Scriptures that Luther is this theologian of the cross and he sees it as so important. But historically — historically is the other side of it — historically, Luther is drawing a distinction between scholastic theologians and Reformation theology, or those theologians that are actually promoting a Christ-centered redemption and salvation, a biblical view of salvation.

Scholastic theologians like Peter Abelard, especially him, but others like Thomas Aquinas, even Anselm, and others, they developed a theology that was based on Aristotelian categories, philosophical categories. And they actually sought to provide some sort of synthesis between philosophy and Scripture. But what they ended up doing — and particularly with Peter Abelard, I would say he is the principal person in this — is that they end up subordinating Scripture to philosophy, so that now they define, they categorize, they look at Scripture, not through an exegetical lens of “What was Paul saying? What was James saying? Peter saying?” but look through a lens of “What did Aristotle say?” and then try to categorize and to understand and interpret the Bible through those Greek philosophical ideas. And consequently, one of those ideas was the principle of habituation, that a person becomes virtuous — Aristotle taught that if a person performs a virtuous act over and over again, by doing virtuous acts, that that person would actually become virtuous. This was totally brought into the salvation system of the Roman Catholic Church by scholastic theologians. And so, consequently, they were teaching that by doing these works you would become righteous. By doing meritorious works, by doing virtuous works, then you would become righteous. And of course, Luther is reading his Bible and he's finding out that we have no righteous of our own. So, just thinking of the theology of glory versus the theology of the cross, you have to think of it in terms of Luther's experience exegetically and his experience historically.

Now, when Luther was called to explain his theology, to explain himself by the Augustinian order at the disputation, his *Heidelberg Disputations*, that when he published those theses in his Heidelberg disputation, then it was there that he brought together those seminal thoughts about what the theology of the cross is and the

theology of glory. So, a theologian of glory, he looks at the things of God through the lens of philosophy, as it were, through the lens of human wisdom. I would say principally passages like 1 Corinthians 1 were very important to Luther in comparing the wisdom of this world — those means by which men subjugate the thoughts of God, the revelation of God, to their own thoughts, that's "the wisdom of this world" — and the wisdom of God that destroys the wisdom of the wise because it is Christ crucified, which is foolishness to this world. And so, these passages were in his mind as he was thinking about the battle he was fighting with the scholastic theologians that were dominating the salvation understanding of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **How did Luther's view of the Eucharist differ from the Catholic and Zwinglian views?**

#### **Dr. Sam Pascoe**

The Roman Catholic view was what was — fancy word — "transubstantiation," and you have to understand Aristotelian metaphysics to really get it. And so ... basically, it means that the substance, the actual Aristotelian substance, what's underlying what you see, changes into the body and blood of Christ as the faithful person takes it, or as it is consecrated, actually. The Zwinglian view was the other end of that. It has often been called "memorialism." In other words, you only get out of it what you bring to it. It's an act of remembering, the bread and the wine are only pneumatic devices that help you remember what Christ did for you on the cross. "Christ is not here; he is risen." And so, you've got these, sort of, two extremes in a sense... Luther's view was, you're both wrong. There is a real "presence" — and that's the term that we Anglicans use. There is a real presence there, but it's undefined. There is more there than what you bring. God actually does promise to meet us there in a powerful, supernatural way. On the other hand, Christ's body is in heaven. He is risen. And so, what the priest does, what the minister does there, is ask God to come and be present in a real way through the Holy Spirit.

#### **Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.**

For Luther who was a Roman Catholic — I mean, Roman Catholic was all that there was — he maintained a sacramental view where you are talking about the fact that, yes, this bread and this wine isn't merely a symbol. It is a symbol that has power. It is a symbol where God is doing something, a symbol, I like to say, that is bringing grace to you; it is not just pointing to the reality of grace. So, he does that, though, in a way where he's not engaged in a kind of metaphysical explanation where you have to talk about how something completely changes into another thing. Instead, he comes up with an explanation, it's called "consubstantiation" where he talks about the presence of Jesus being something that is added to the bread and the wine.

**What was the historical significance of the Reformational disagreement over Jesus' words, "this is my body" during the Lord's Supper?**

**Andrew Tooley, Ph.D.**

The historical significance of Matthew 26:26 in relation to the Reformation disagreements, was really over between Zwingli and Luther. And Zwingli, as a, you know, what historians have traditionally called him, a "radical Reformer" — radical in many ways because he disagreed with Luther. So, Luther was, kind of, this magisterial Reformer who, along with Calvin and others, who had a relationship with the magistrates. And he had this idea in Matthew 26:26 that said, when Christ says "this is my body," it's just that, it is my body. There's a real presence there. There's something going on where there's an infusion of the bread and wine with Christ... So one of the differences for Zwingli was that he said, "How can we interpret this literally? How can we say that Christ is present in the elements, in the bread and the wine, when he is, as Scripture says in other places, that he is sitting at the right hand of the Father? How can he be two places at once?" And so, Zwingli really said that this cannot be taken literally, it must be taken metaphorically, and Christ is really, he's not wanting us to literally eat his flesh, right? This is symbolic, and we do this in remembrance of what Christ did for us on the cross.

**Dr. Dan Lacich**

Zwingli and Luther had some serious disagreements about the nature of the Lord's Supper. Zwingli took a position that when Jesus said "this is my body" and "this is my blood" that he was speaking symbolically and that the Lord's Supper was to be taken as a memorial of sorts to look back and remember, recall what Jesus has done for us. Luther, on the other hand, was much more adamant about the whole idea of it *being* the body and the blood of Christ, of pointing to Jesus saying "*this is my body*" and taking it very literally. But Luther didn't want to go to the point of the Roman Catholic Church saying that somehow the bread and wine was transformed into something else, but he did say that the body of Christ, the blood of Christ, was somehow present with the bread and with the wine. And this was a serious disagreement. Zwingli and Luther and their two "camps," if you will, worked hard to try to bring about unity in the Reformation and eventually agreed on 13 different points of doctrine. But when it came to the 14th, when it came to the Lord's Supper there was no getting the two of them together, and it became a very harsh divide. And it was really a lost moment for unity in the church because it got to the point, actually, that when Zwingli died, Luther rejoiced that God finally took Zwingli out and that we were free of that person. So, it was a harsh disagreement that I think affected the church very, very deeply.

**What is the significance for the Reformation of Luther's work *The Bondage of the Will* (1525)?**

**Dr. Piotr J. Malysz**

The Bondage of the Will was one of the two works that Luther considered to be the most important among his writings which go into volumes upon volumes. It was

originally written as a diatribe, kind of a medieval form of disputation against another writing penned by Erasmus of Rotterdam on the freedom of the will, the *De libero arbitrio ... The Bondage of the Will*, as Luther says to Erasmus, is significant because, Luther says here, Erasmus finally goes for the jugular. He touches on what the issue really is about, namely, “What is Christian freedom, and how are Christians related to God, especially as agents? Do Christians have any sort of natural powers to initiate or even to will any sort of turning to God in their own being?” And Luther’s argument is pretty complicated and it must be seen, to a degree, in light of a long medieval trajectory that goes back to Augustine himself.

So what Luther tries to do in *The Bondage of the Will*, through a very complicated argument that both reviews Erasmus’ arguments and the scriptural passages that are in question, Luther tries to collapse this, what he considers, philosophical account of how divine and human agencies are not competitive, and therefore, it remains for humans to, kind of, initiate things because we don’t know how to wait for God and what that would even mean. Luther says we cannot think of God in philosophical terms. We must, sort of, think of him as the triune God that he is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who acts, not just above time or outside of time or in some sort of ineffable way, but who, in a sense, both is outside and dips into time and restructures human agency in such a way that grace always stands at the very center of human action.

So, instead of this philosophical notion that God acts always in a noncompetitive way with human agency, through this articulation of divine hiddenness, Luther wants people to pay attention to how God *actually acts* and how he is known through his own acts, and that means the call of the gospel, that means the celebration of the church’s sacraments, especially baptism and the Lord’s Supper, that means the proclamation of forgiveness. And he says it is precisely when the Christian pays attention to that, to those actions of God where, Luther says, in baptism, God with his own hands plunges the sinner under the water, where he gives his own body and blood, and so on and so forth, that that is sort of what our human agency is structured by, that is where its own beginning... And to give you a concrete example of that, so if what makes the world go around is always scarcity and competition — that there is never enough, that you always have to, sort of, qualify for things, that in the world we are judged on the basis of our own works — by virtue of giving us his word of forgiveness free of charge, we don’t have to qualify for it; by virtue of presenting us with a table where food never runs out; by virtue of offering us a washing of regeneration where the past no longer has to burden us, God restructures how we can act in the world, but in such a way that we are now always, sort of, focused on what he does rather than, again, either looking for some grace within and trying to figure out, you know, what grace feels like, or simply assuming that God and humans are in a noncompetitive relation, and therefore, I must initiate my relationship with God, hoping for the best.

**Dr. Sean Lucas**

Luther's work, *The Bondage of the Will*, was extremely significant particularly because of its date — 1525 is a hugely significant year in the Lutheran Reformation. Luther has just come out of translating the Scriptures a few years before, the Peasants' Revolt has occurred, a hundred thousand people have died. Luther is trying to conserve the Reformation in many ways, and not the least of which, perhaps most significantly that year, he marries his "little Katie," Katharina von Bora. But it's with *Bondage of the Will* that perhaps he makes one his most significant and lasting contributions. He writes in opposition to Erasmus, his erstwhile humanist hero, who has not joined with Luther in seeking to reform the church in a Protestant fashion. And Erasmus has raised significant questions about Luther's stance about our wills being truly bound and the sovereignty of God in freeing them. And so, in response to "Erasmus' diatribe" as it was called, Luther writes *Bondage of the Will*, and in doing so stands strongly, not just for the fact that our wills are bound and ridden even by the Devil until God frees us, but he also stands for God's predestinating decree. This early Luther stands strongly for the sovereignty of God in salvation. As such, he pushes the Lutheran Reformation in a way that — in its founding documents found in the *Book of Concord* — will stand for the sovereignty of God and for the bondage of men. The necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, of course, is put forward in *The Bondage of the Will*, but always a faith that's given to us, not one that we gin up ourselves. And so, the great Protestant doctrines of *sola fide*, *sola Christus*, *sola gratia*, all are found in *The Bondage of the Will*. It's perhaps one of the most significant contributions that Luther makes to the Protestant Reformation, writing *Bondage of the Will* in 1525.

**Why does Luther say that we shouldn't preach on  
the doctrine of predestination?**

**Dr. Robbie Crouse**

Some Christians, Protestant Christians especially in the Reformed tradition, might be surprised to hear that, although Luther believed in the doctrine of predestination, he often counseled that we shouldn't make it a central point or preach on it regularly. Luther argued this because, although he believed in predestination, he thought that Christians could peer too deeply into these secret things of God, always questioning whether they were of the elect, trying to see predestination as worked out in their own life. Luther, rather, counseled his own students and those around him to preach more clearly simply on Christ, on the promises of Christ, and that predestination, the eternal outworking of God, would then be seen as people came to Christ. Predestination was really a doctrine about assurance that God had been the one who called you and who had initiated the work in your life. But it shouldn't be preached primarily as a gospel presentation, that you can't do this; therefore, rely on God. It was an assurance that when you had come to Christ and trusted him, it was indeed God who had been calling you all along.

**What is the significance of the *Treaty of Passau* (1552) and the *Peace of Augsburg* (1555) for the ending of religious violence in Europe?**

**Dr. Ryan Reeves**

The *Treaty of Passau* and the *Augsburg* at the end of the war between Charles V and the Lutherans is more or less the first step to peace between Europe's religions. When Luther was alive, Charles V, who was the man who had sat with Luther on trial and who had heard the "Here I stand" that was said back to him, he would not attack Luther. He knew if he killed Luther he would be a permanent martyr and that the situation would be worse. So, as soon as Luther dies, he attacks with a pretty serious vengeance, and he conquers a lot of the Protestant lands and re-imposes Catholicism for a short period of time. The Lutheran armies fought back and, eventually, it was a stalemate, and it's at this point that they realize they're really only going to have total war and the total annihilation of so many of their countrymen in order to achieve what they wanted, or they were going to have to find a way to live together. And what they end up deciding is that whatever region you're in, whatever geography you happen to be living in, that the prince or the ruler of that region can determine, are you Catholic or are you Lutheran. And this is a situation we're so used to in the 20th and 21st century, this idea that you're going to live side by side with not just different versions of Christianity but different faiths even. And you might say this is Europe's coming of age. They have to realize now that they're going to have neighbors that are different with them in church life and that some of this is going to be split geographically. Even if you're the same country, you're going to have differences. And so, you see cities and regions and other things split where one side remains Catholic and the other side will go Protestant.

**How did the theology of Phillip Melanchthon differ from the theology of Martin Luther?**

**Dr. Ryan Reeves**

Philip Melanchthon is the man that Lutherans love to hate, and a lot of people challenge him. And rightfully so in a lot of ways. Luther had a couple of issues that he stood doggedly on. One was sacraments. He believed till the day that he died — and Lutheran confessions say this as well, down until today — he believed that you physically take the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Of course, Reformed folks, and frankly most non-Lutheran denominations, differ on that issue. On the issue of things like regeneration or the Spirit's work towards the law, Luther also very doggedly said we're not going to talk about sanctification. In fact, one of the famous Lutheran confessions says that sanctification happens spontaneously, and you do not bring it up. That's basically a cease and desist with talking about Christian living or sanctification. Melanchthon was a bridge-maker, though. He always looked to the Reformed worlds down in the Swiss regions with a little bit of chagrin that there wasn't a bridge between the two of them. Calvin did the same looking back the other way, but Luther himself did not. And what happens is, as Luther gets very late in life, and certainly after he dies, Melanchthon starts to take on a few pieces that look

more or less Reformed, and as a result, there is a split in the Lutheran church. There are what are called the Philipists, the folks that actually follow Philip Melanchthon in terms of changing and updating or adapting some of Luther's ideas to the Reformed perspective. Then there were others who doubled down on Luther and said, "No, Luther was right, and we don't need to adapt or accommodate to the Reformed faith at all." And, in the end, at the confessional level, and in Lutheran churches all the way until today, Luther himself, his perspective has been the dominant one. And so, Melanchthon is the Lutheran who got shunned by the Lutherans and a guy who was not Reformed, who is not seen as a founder or a leading voice in the Reformed world. He's sort of a man in between because he tried to bridge them back together theologically. And there's a lot of his own convictions there as well, but what he sees is that Luther's perspective on the sacraments and on the law were too straight-jacketed, he thought, for actual biblical faith.

### **Dr. Robbie Crouse**

Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon were very good friends, but in some ways their theology, or the emphasis in their theology, did have different paths. Luther, famous for justification by faith alone and the priority of grace; Melanchthon took these same views but also wanted to emphasize how Protestants did believe in good works. As Roman Catholics attacked Luther and questioned whether he was antinomian — that is, whether he believed that Christians no longer have any moral obligation — it was Philip, Luther's friend and student, who answered these attacks by emphasizing the good works that Christians would naturally do once they were justified and the importance of moral living. It's also the case that Luther's personality and his fire was a little bit different from Philip's irenic spirit, where he sought to unify the church and emphasize the unity of the church, even church government. Where Luther himself hadn't answered questions like that, Philip wrote to a number of the Reformers, John Calvin and the Swiss Reformed. Where Luther sometimes would neglect those, Philip was seeking to unify the Protestant Reformation and also to make sure it was connected to the wider Christian tradition of history.

### **How did the *Formula of Concord* (1577) set the course for later Lutheranism?**

### **Dr. Jim Maples**

The *Formula of Concord* in 1577 was the reconciliation of a 15- to 20-year dispute between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philipists, the followers of Philip Melanchthon. And after Luther's death there were many who felt that Melanchthon sort of turned on Luther, and this ended up with a long-running dispute between the two groups. I think Luther would have been pleased with the result, all except article number 11, probably, on predestination. Luther was a very strict predestinationist, and I think Melanchthon was more synergistic in his approach, and I think that would have probably displeased Luther. But the Gnesio-Lutherans won out, and that actually set the course for Lutheranism for the next considerable period of time.

### Why does Luther seem so angry, especially in his later years?

#### Dr. Jim Maples

Quite a bit has been made of Luther in his later years. He said some and wrote some quite unkind things to and about many people, and he seemed to be an angry person. But I think we have to remember that Luther lived the last 25 years of his life with a price on his head. He was a wanted man. Any person in the realm could have killed him and collected a reward. Plus, he bore the burden, as he saw it, of the Reformation and carrying forth this work that had begun, and I think as the progress of the Reformation kind of ebbed and flowed, he became discouraged and frustrated with the lack of dedication on the part of some people. And he kind of turned inward and became a little bitter toward the end, but I think most of it was just the pressure, the fatigue, and the tremendous workload that he carried all his life.

### Was Luther an anti-Semite?

#### Pastor Robert W. St. John, Jr.

Luther had no racial theory. He did not have a view that Jews were ethnically inferior to him. In fact, he spoke of the fact that Jesus was a Jew, and he said we as Gentiles, he said we're just in-laws; we're just relatives in that sense, not as close as Jews are. He had no racial theory; that's, I think, important to understand. It's also important to understand that Luther was a man of his times. And we all live in our context and cannot help but be influenced by the culture in which we live. This is a very important thing to remember about ourselves, but also about Luther. During the Peasants' Revolt, he wrote during that time — and the carnage was tremendous — but he wrote to the princes and said to them, when these violent people come at you, you can stab them, destroy them. He wrote about doing this kind of violence. Now, he also wrote rebuking the princes for their oppression and the nobles for all of their selfishness and greed that created the situation of unrest among the peasants. He wrote about those things, but here he is calling for violence against them as well. So, he was a man of his times. I mean, this was the time when people were being burned at the stake, and so, we have to remember that he did not live in our time, so we want to be gracious, perhaps, in our judgments.

Nevertheless, if we define anti-Semitism as hostility toward the Jews, by the end of his life, Luther does demonstrate anti-Semitism. He calls for friendliness toward the Jews a number of times in his writings. He sees this friendliness as an occasion to want to introduce them to the Messiah and see them saved. And apparently, he thought that once the trappings of Roman Catholicism were pulled away, and the gospel of Christ was preached, that it would produce that predicted revival, he saw in Scripture, among the Jewish people, that many would come to Christ. But when that didn't happen, he saw his own life as, eschatologically, a part of the last days, and the last few years of his life is when he wrote *Against the Jews and Their Lies*, and then just a few days before his death, he wrote something on the abomination of the Jews,

something like that. And so, during that last part of his life, there was a bitterness and an ugliness, a sinful attitude that called for, not the public in general, but called for the government, in protection of Christendom, as it were, to destroy synagogues and schools because, in his understanding, he despised the Jews for the same reason he despised the Turks, or the Muslims, and the same reason he despised the pope. He would categorize them, in fact, those three he lists all the time, you know, Turks, pope and Jews. And he despised them for the same reason — because they rejected the gospel. And so, I think what we have to remember is that we can never be idealistic when we look at people in history. We'd like to think that they were better than they were, but he was a man of his times, and he was a sinner. And this sinful perspective prevailed in his mind, especially in his latter years.

### **Dr. Gordon L. Isaac**

You know, when I talk with people who know something about Luther, they usually know two things. First of all, he posted the 95 Theses, and thus started a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church. The other thing is, they know that he said some pretty nasty things about the Jews. So, it often comes up, “Was Luther an anti-Semite?” To that question I would say, no. In order to be an anti-Semite, you would have to establish the fact that he had a racial theory, and Luther never had a racial theory. The Jews for him were fully human. No problem there. But Luther was concerned that the Jews had rejected Christ, and that was the reason why they were in the diaspora — they had been forced out of their home country — and they were experiencing a lot of pressure. Luther thought that it was divine wrath against the fact that they had turned their back on Christ.

The second thing is this ... we wouldn't even be asking this question of whether or not Luther was an anti-Semite had it not been for the Second World War, the Hitler regime, the holocaust, because during that time period, Hitler had taken certain of Luther's anti-Jewish writings, had turned them into propaganda, even movies against the Jews, saying the Jews are the real threat. They are subhuman, and thus, we need to have a pan-European Arian nation. So, it's really a matter of historical anachronism that we're even asking this question.

The third thing is this: Luther was a man of his time. He did have negative feelings about the Jews, and that was simply a part of the European setting. It's not a happy or a good thing, but that's the way it was. As a matter of fact, Erasmus — supposedly one of the most enlightened men of the Renaissance period — said, “France is the best country because it has the fewest Jews.” Now, that's a horrible thing for someone to say, but that was simply a part of the mindset of the 16th century, and Luther was a man of his time. So, unfortunately, he did say some difficult things against the Jews. He wanted the magistrates to move against them because he had heard that they were actually desecrating the sacrament, and so he had some very sharp things to say. But, in that he was wrong, and we don't have to follow Luther in those particular regards. We can take up Luther where he's really better than that.

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