

**I. MARTIN LUTHER<sup>1</sup>**

- A. Luther was born in Saxony (a State in Germany) on November 10, 1483 as the second son of a miner.
- B. He was sent to Latin school in 1497 and prepared to be a lawyer as was his father's desire for his life.
- C. On July 17, 1505 at the age of 22 he quit law school and entered the cloister of the Augustinian hermits of Erfurt.
  - 1. It was said that he had been traveling on foot two weeks earlier and was surprised by a sudden thunderstorm.
  - 2. When lightning struck near him, he called out, "Help, St. Anne! I will become a monk."
  - 3. Luther later said that he became a monk in order to obtain a merciful relationship with God
- D. He was ordained a priest in April of 1507
- E. Luther settled in Wittenburg, Germany in the summer of 1511
- F. Luther obtained a doctorate in theology and offered courses on New Testament epistles such as Romans and Galatians.
- G. Luther was struggling with eternal security and his salvation at this time in his life.
  - 1. He became desperate when he realized he could not attain the righteousness necessary for eternal life.
  - 2. Sometime between November 1512 and July 1513 he arrived at the conclusion that our righteousness must be obtained by faith rather than by works.
- H. Luther felt that the Roman Catholic church needed to be reformed, and that he had discovered the true faith of that church.
  - 1. He supported this view by reading Augustine's similar conclusions on righteousness and the works of German mystics like Tauler
  - 2. He believed he could reform the Catholic church from within
- I. The door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg served as a sort of bulletin board, and Martin Luther used it in that way when he placed his 95 *Thesis* on that door on October 31, 1517
  - 1. This was done on the day before "all saints day"
  - 2. His hope was to obtain a debate on the subject of penance
  - 3. His point was that the "sale of indulgences" could not release a person for penalty from sin in the life to come
- J. Luther did not get the response he expected
  - 1. He became the center of public controversy
  - 2. He was denounced at Rome
  - 3. He was charged with heretical hostility towards the Pope
  - 4. He held a discussion (by command) on April 26, 1518 which resulted in the Papal Curia opening a church trial against him
  - 5. Luther called for reformation in the Catholic church in 1520; a papal bull was issued against him and on Dec 10, 1520 he burned it in public under a tree in Wittenburg



Martin Luther

Ro 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.



Door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany where Martin Luther placed his 95 Theses

<http://www.a1.com/advocate/>

<sup>1</sup> see Encyclopedia Americana, 1966 ed. Vol 17, pp. 856-858.

6. On May 25, 1521, Luther and his cause were banned
- K. Luther wrote against Erasmus and proclaimed himself a believer that God controlled everything including the Devil himself and that men were predestined to salvation or damnation.
  1. He states that God's foreknowledge proves that free will is "non-existent."
  2. He further claims that since free will is dependent on God's grace, that it is of no value.
  3. In his conclusion he states that there can be no free will in man or any other creature.
- L. Luther considered the Anabaptists to be heretics and never regarded them to be of worth.
- M. In his later years Luther was plagued with sickness including kidney and gall stones.
- N. He died of a heart attack on February 18, 1546 at the age of 63.

*Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.  
(Luther's response at the Diet of Worms)*

## II. THE FOUNDATION AND GROWTH OF THE LUTHERAN "CHURCH"

- A. Evangelical Lutheranism is considered one of the two branches of Protestantism. The other is the Reformed church under Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, etc.
- B. On June 25, 1530 the Augsburg confession was presented to Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman empire
  1. It was drafted by Philip Melancthon
  2. It was presented in both Latin and German
- C. The Augsburg Confession is the doctrinal statement of the Lutheran Church of 1530.
- D. The Augsburg Confession deals with many topics including God, Original Sin, The Son of God, Justification, The Ministry of the Church, Baptism, The Holy Supper of Our Lord, Confession, Repentance, The Use of the Sacraments, Free Will, Of the Marriage of Priests, Of the Mass, Confession, and Monastic Vows
- E. Interesting statements in the Augsburg Confession
  1. "Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God, and that children are to be baptized who, being offered to God through Baptism are received into God's grace. They condemn the **Anabaptists**, who reject the baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism."
  2. "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise"
  3. "Of Repentance they teach that for those who have fallen after Baptism there is remission of sins whenever they are converted and that the Church ought to impart absolution to those thus returning to repentance. Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance. They condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that those once justified can lose the Holy Ghost. Also those who contend that some may attain to such perfection in this life that they cannot sin."
  4. "Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there was profound silence."
  5. "Also they teach that at the Consummation of the World Christ will appear for judgment and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life

- and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end. They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.”
6. “Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained among us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people.”
- F. The Lutheran church spread throughout Europe in the 1500's and arrived in America in the early 1600's.
  - G. History records that the spread of Lutheranism was somewhat homogeneous except in those areas where the Lutherans lost out to the Calvinists (i.e. France and England).
  - H. The Lutheran churches in America saw phenomenal growth such that, when the Missouri Synod and ELCA are combined, the Lutherans are the fourth largest group behind the Catholics, Southern Baptists, and United Methodists.
  - I. Other works are prominent statements of Lutheran Doctrine
    1. Luther's large and small catechism
    2. The Smalcald Articles
    3. The Formula of Concord

### III. LUTHERAN DOCTRINE

- A. The Lutheran Church places more importance on Baptism than any other Protestant denomination <sup>2</sup>
  1. “Baptism is not simply water . . . it is water connected with God's word”
  2. “Baptism is a divinely appointed means of grace.”
  3. “Baptism worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and confers everlasting life.”
  4. Grace can operate without baptism, and baptism is not *absolutely* essential to the salvation of the lost (i.e. to children).
  5. Infants are baptized to enter into a covenant with God
- B. The Lutheran church practices a “rite” called confirmation
  1. In the presence of the congregation, the catechumen confesses his faith
  2. He is admonished by the pastor to adhere to that faith
  3. The church prays for him and lays hands upon him
- C. The Lord's supper is a “means of grace” to the Lutheran “church”
  1. “The Bible doctrine of the Lord's supper is *transubstantiation*”
    - a. The belief that the elements are the body and blood of Christ in a figurative way although no physical change takes place
    - b. Augustine is quoted as the authority for this statement
  2. This retains the heretical notion that the Lord's supper is a sacrifice
- D. Lutherans believe in a universal invisible church
  1. “I say, I believe in the church because there is only one church.” (Luther's Small Cat.)
  2. “The church is invisible”
- E. The Lutheran church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds
- F. The Lutheran church rejects the literal millennial reign of Christ
- G. The Lutheran church holds a “Calvinistic” view of salvation
  1. “By the election of grace we mean this truth, that all those who by the grace of God alone, for Christ's sake, through the means of grace, are brought to faith, are justified, sanctified, and preserved in faith here in time, that all these have already from eternity

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<sup>2</sup> G. H. Gerberding, *The Way of Salvation in the Lutheran Church*, 1887, p. 31.

been endowed by God with faith, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith, and this for the same reason, namely, by grace alone, for Christ's sake, and by way of the means of grace”

2. “But as earnestly as we maintain that there is an election of grace, or a predestination to salvation, so decidedly do we teach, on the other hand, that there is no election of wrath, or predestination to damnation.”

#### **IV. THE ELCA AND MISSOURI SYNOD (LCMS)**

- A. A. The three main areas of difference between the LCMS and the ELCA are the following: <sup>3</sup>
  1. The doctrine and authority of Scripture. The LCMS believes that the Bible is without error in all that it says. The ELCA avoids making such statements, holding that Scripture is not necessarily always accurate on such matters as history and science. Differences between the LCMS and the ELCA on the authority of Scripture also help to explain why the ELCA ordains women to the pastoral office, while the LCMS does not, and why the LCMS unequivocally rejects homosexual behavior as contrary to God's will, while the ELCA has yet to take an official stand on this issue.
  2. Subscription to the Lutheran confessions. The LCMS binds itself to all the doctrinal content of the Lutheran confessional writings of the 16th century. The ELCA binds itself only to the central teachings of the confessions and not to their entire doctrinal content.
  3. The level of agreement necessary to join together in one church body. While the LCMS believes that the Bible requires agreement in all that the Bible teaches, the ELCA holds that disagreement in some matters of doctrine, such as the mode of Christ's presence in Holy Communion, do not prohibit church fellowship.
- B. The ELCA is approximately twice as large as the LCMS with 5.1 million members in the US in the year 2000.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

- A. As we saw with the Anglican church, the Lutheran movement has incredibly strong ties to the Roman Catholic church
  1. Infant baptism
  2. Confession
  3. Universal church which replaces Israel
  4. The Lord's Supper containing the body and blood
- B. As with the Methodist movement, the Lutherans were founded by a man who realized that the teachings of the Catholic (or Anglican) church regarding salvation were in error
- C. As with the Methodists, Luther was forced out of his former theological “nest”
- D. The Lutheran church places much importance on Baptism and tends to mystically intertwine the water with the word of God
- E. The Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper also uses a mystical element when they say the body and blood are present, but not in reality (i.e. not physically)
- F. The Lutheran movement retains the Calvinistic theology of the other stream of the reformation
- G. The Lutheran finds himself in a no man's land between the Roman Catholic position and the Anabaptist (Baptist) position with no absolute connection to either group. His salvation is easily confused with Baptismal regeneration and his reliance on mystic connections between water and word, bread and body, and wine and blood are impossible to explain without resorting to interpretational slight of hand.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lcms.org>

**SOME OF LUTHER'S "95 THESIS" (Translated)**

1. When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. The word cannot be properly understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, i.e. confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
3. Yet its meaning is not restricted to repentance in one's heart; for such repentance is null unless it produces outward signs in various mortifications of the flesh.
4. As long as hatred of self abides (i.e. true inward repentance) the penalty of sin abides, viz., until we enter the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope has neither the will nor the power to remit any penalties beyond those imposed either at his own discretion or by canon law.
6. The pope himself cannot remit guilt, but only declare and confirm that it has been remitted by God; or, at most, he can remit it in cases reserved to his discretion. Except for these cases, the guilt remains untouched.
7. God never remits guilt to anyone without, at the same time, making him humbly submissive to the priest, His representative.
8. The penitential canons apply only to men who are still alive, and, according to the canons themselves, none applies to the dead.
9. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit, acting in the person of the pope, manifests grace to us, by the fact that the papal regulations always cease to apply at death, or in any hard case.
10. It is a wrongful act, due to ignorance, when priests retain the canonical penalties on the dead in purgatory.
11. When canonical penalties were changed and made to apply to purgatory, surely it would seem that tares were sown while the bishops were asleep.
12. In former days, the canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution was pronounced; and were intended to be tests of true contrition.
13. Death puts an end to all the claims of the Church; even the dying are already dead to the canon laws, and are no longer bound by them.
14. Defective piety or love in a dying person is necessarily accompanied by great fear, which is greatest where the piety or love is least.
15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, whatever else might be said, to constitute the pain of purgatory, since it approaches very closely to the horror of despair.
16. There seems to be the same difference between hell, purgatory, and heaven as between despair, uncertainty, and assurance.
17. Of a truth, the pains of souls in purgatory ought to be abated, and charity ought to be proportionately increased.
18. Moreover, it does not seem proved, on any grounds of reason or Scripture, that these souls are outside the state of merit, or unable to grow in grace.
19. Nor does it seem proved to be always the case that they are certain and assured of salvation, even if we are very certain ourselves.
20. Therefore the pope, in speaking of the plenary remission of all penalties, does not mean "all" in the strict sense, but only those imposed by himself.
21. Hence those who preach indulgences are in error when they say that a man is absolved and saved from every penalty by the pope's indulgences.
22. Indeed, he cannot remit to souls in purgatory any penalty which canon law declares should be suffered in the present life.
23. If plenary remission could be granted to anyone at all, it would be only in the cases of the most perfect, i.e. to very few.
24. It must therefore be the case that the major part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of relief from penalty.
25. The same power as the pope exercises in general over purgatory is exercised in particular by every

- single bishop in his bishopric and priest in his parish.
26. The pope does excellently when he grants remission to the souls in purgatory on account of intercessions made on their behalf, and not by the power of the keys (which he cannot exercise for them).
  27. There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of the purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.
  28. It is certainly possible that when the money clinks in the bottom of the chest avarice and greed increase; but when the church offers intercession, all depends in the will of God.
  29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed in view of what is said of St. Severinus and St. Pascal? (Note: Paschal I, pope 817-24. The legend is that he and Severinus were willing to endure the pains of purgatory for the benefit of the faithful).
  30. No one is sure of the reality of his own contrition, much less of receiving plenary forgiveness.
  31. One who bona fide buys indulgence is a rare as a bona fide penitent man, i.e. very rare indeed.
  32. All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgence, will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
  33. We should be most carefully on our guard against those who say that the papal indulgences are an inestimable divine gift, and that a man is reconciled to God by them.
  34. For the grace conveyed by these indulgences relates simply to the penalties of the sacramental "satisfactions" decreed merely by man.
  35. It is not in accordance with Christian doctrines to preach and teach that those who buy off souls, or purchase confessional licenses, have no need to repent of their own sins.
  36. Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys plenary remission from penalty and guilt, and this is given him without letters of indulgence.
  37. Any true Christian whatsoever, living or dead, participates in all the benefits of Christ and the Church; and this participation is granted to him by God without letters of indulgence.
  38. Yet the pope's remission and dispensation are in no way to be despised, for, as already said, they proclaim the divine remission.
  39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, to extol to the people the great bounty contained in the indulgences, while, at the same time, praising contrition as a virtue.
  40. A truly contrite sinner seeks out, and loves to pay, the penalties of his sins; whereas the very multitude of indulgences dulls men's consciences, and tends to make them hate the penalties.
  41. Papal indulgences should only be preached with caution, lest people gain a wrong understanding, and think that they are preferable to other good works: those of love.
  42. Christians should be taught that the pope does not at all intend that the purchase of indulgences should be understood as at all comparable with the works of mercy.
  43. Christians should be taught that one who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does a better action than if he purchases indulgences.
  44. Because, by works of love, love grows and a man becomes a better man; whereas, by indulgences, he does not become a better man, but only escapes certain penalties.
  45. Christians should be taught that he who sees a needy person, but passes him by although he gives money for indulgences, gains no benefit from the pope's pardon, but only incurs the wrath of God.
  46. Christians should be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they are bound to retain what is only necessary for the upkeep of their home, and should in no way squander it on indulgences.
  47. Christians should be taught that they purchase indulgences voluntarily, and are not under obligation to do so.
  48. Christians should be taught that, in granting indulgences, the pope has more need, and more desire, for devout prayer on his own behalf than for ready money.
  49. Christians should be taught that the pope's indulgences are useful only if one does not rely on them, but most harmful if one loses the fear of God through them.