

Martin Luther, Part 3 (Controversies and Doctrines)

Historical Theology

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INTRODUCTION:

“Martin Luther,” R. Stupperich, Eerdman’s Handbook to the History of Christianity, page 363

Luther’s teaching and personal experience are closely connected. He always proceeds in the same way: from Scripture to personal conviction to declaration and preaching. For Luther there was no ‘natural’ understanding of God. God’s only communication with mankind is through His Word. Christ is the essence of Scripture, and in Christ the Word becomes flesh. The Bible and God, speaks only to those who have faith. Faith is God’s gift, not man’s achievement.

- We left Luther preaching against Catholicism.
- Now we’ll look at what he preached in favor of, and what he did after his excommunication.
- For reference The Council of Trent is initial called in 1545, and Luther died in 1546.
- We won’t cover every possible topic or detail just some highlights to get a better view of Luther’s teachings as we see the Protestant Church develop and study some of the differing views held by other reformers going forward.

I. CHRISTIAN LIVING AND ECCLESIOLOGY

A) PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

1. “[Luther] taught a ‘spiritual’ doctrine of the church. He depicted it as a serving priesthood of believers, as against the medieval idea of the church as a hierarchical institution under the bishop of Rome, administering salvation through sacraments.” **“The Faith of the Protestants,” J.I Packer, Eerdman’s ..., page 374**
2. As part of the dissolution of the “Priesthood Class,” the demands of celibacy for all priests were also dissolved. While Luther wasn’t the first former priest to marry he was probably the most significant one of his day. His marriage to Katherine effectively created the practical approval to go along with the theoretical approval that had seemed to exist when the priests left Catholicism.

B) CHRISTIAN LITERACY OR SOLA SCRIPTURA "A Flood of Bibles," Tony Lane, Eerdman's ..., page 368

1. Translated New Testament in 1522 in two and a half months.
2. Finished translating Old Testament in 1532.
3. Published complete German translation, including Apocryphal books, in 1534.
4. Wrote an enormous amount of books, pamphlets, hymns and two catechisms in addition to preaching, pastoring his own congregation, mentoring leaders of other congregations and maintaining correspondence and debating topics of importance with other Protestant Movement leaders (e.g. Zwingli, Melancthon, etc.)

C) HOW MUCH OF THE CATHOLIC LITURGY TO KEEP

1. "For pastoral reasons Luther retained much medieval ceremony in worship, urging that when doctrine was sound ceremonies were 'things indifferent' (adiaphora), which the church was free to use or not as it thought best." "The Faith of the Protestants," J.I Packer, Eerdman's ..., page 374

D) IF NOT TRANSUBSTANTIATION THEN WHAT?

"The Faith of the Protestants," J.I Packer, Eerdman's ..., page 374

[Luther] also affirmed the 'real presence' of Christ's body 'in, with and under' the eucharistic bread. To buttress this idea he maintained the 'ubiquity,' or capacity for 'multipresence,' of Jesus' glorified flesh. Lutherans followed him, but Calvin and Reformed theologians generally rejected these ideas, holding that Christ's body is 'in Heaven, and not here,' and that Christ encounters his people at the communion table, not by bodily presence in the elements, but by the Spirit's presence and power in their hearts. Lutherans have always found this view irreverently 'low.'

1. Marburg Colloquy called by Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse in October 1529 to establish doctrinal unity in emerging Protestant states. Invited theologians included Zwingli, Melancthon, Martin Bucer, Johannes Oecolampadius and Luther. They came to discuss 15 items. They agreed on 14 of them. The nature of the presence of Christ at the Eucharist was what they couldn't agree on.
2. While the controversy of the Marburg Colloquy had the potential to dissolve the whole Protestant movement it instead made possible the creation of the Augsburg Confession, a statement of beliefs for the whole protestant movement. and the Schmalkald League.

E) WHAT SHOULD BE THE PRACTICE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM?

1. "Luther taught that infants were regenerated in baptism (through infant faith!)." "The Faith of the Protestants," J.I Packer, Eerdman's ..., page 374

II. JUDAISM “Martin Luther,” Wikipedia.com

- A) Although Luther was suspicious and negatively disposed to Jews early on he advised people to be kind and even to try to proselytize them.
- B) When his conversion efforts failed he became convinced that God had abandoned them and that they had become the, “devil’s people.”
- C) Luther wrote a significant number of articles and books, one, in particular, is titled, On the Jews and Their Lies. He even encouraged violence toward them, but not murder, in hopes of discouraging them from practicing Judaism and convincing them that they would convert to Christianity.
- D) Sadly 400 years later the Nazis would often cite Luther’s writings on Jews as good logic and justification for many of their policies and atrocities.

III. ISLAM “Martin Luther,” Wikipedia.com

- A) Suleiman the Magnificent was besieging Vienna, Austria while the Reformers were meeting for the Marburg Colloquy.
- B) Luther strongly opposed the idea of a Christian Crusader army going to war with the Muslims.
- C) Luther thought that the kings and princes should use their military power to resist or even attack any violent force which intended their overthrow. He also thought that it was appropriate for Christians to serve as part of such a military effort as good citizens of the country.

IV. SCHMALKALD LEAGUE, CONTROVERSY AND WAR

- A) The Diet of Augsburg was convened by Emperor Charles V in 1530 in part to try to settle the disputes within Christianity, namely to bring the Protestants and Catholics back under one roof. However, the Protestant Princes presented the Augsburg Confession which was soundly rejected by the Catholic bishops.
- B) When the Diet of Augsburg failed to guarantee freedom and safety for Protestant believers the Protestant Princes formed the Schmalkald League for their protection and defense from the Catholics and the Emperor.
- C) In 1537 Luther wrote The Schmalkald Articles which outlined the purpose and beliefs of the Schmalkald league.
- D) After repeated attempts to find some mode of peaceful coexistence between the Catholics and Protestants the Schmalkald War broke out in 1547 a few months after Luther’s death. After many defeats by Emperor Charles V, Protestant Maurice of Saxony was able to gain a strong enough position to negotiate the Treaty of Passau (1552) by which Protestantism was officially recognized by the Holy Roman Empire.