

Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of
the Protestant Reformation

Sola Gratia
Sola Fide
Sola Scriptura

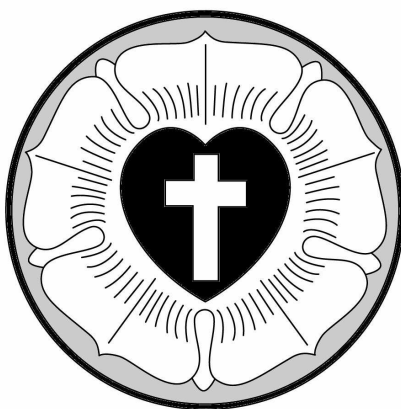
Grace Alone
Faith Alone
Scripture Alone



*Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses on the church door.
Wittenberg, Germany.
October 31, 1517*

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Main People

Earlier Reformers

John Wycliffe (died 1384) -- England, translated the Latin Bible to English

Jan (John) Hus (died 1415) -- Bohemia, executed (burned at the stake)

People with Luther

Johann Staupitz -- Luther's mentor, head of the Augustinian monastery

Duke Frederick the Wise of Saxony -- Luther's protector

Georg Spalatin -- Duke Frederick's assistant and problem solver in church matters

Andreas Karlstadt -- Dean of Theology at University of Wittenberg, Luther's supervisor

Philip Melanchthon -- Theologian, Wittenberg professor with Luther, wrote confessional documents which are now part of the Lutheran *Book of Concord*.

Augsburg Confession

Apology (Defense) of the Augsburg Confession

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

People against Luther

[Hans Luther -- Martin's father]

Church officials:

Pope Leo X (10th)

Aleander -- Leo's representative, later an archbishop

Cardinal Cajetan

Albert -- Archbishop of Mainz, Germany

Johann Tetzel -- Catholic monk, indulgence seller

Johann Eck -- Catholic theologian, debated Luther at Leipzig

Emperor Charles V (5th)

Erasmus -- Catholic theologian

Other reformers during Luther's time

Ulrich Zwingli -- Zurich, Switzerland

John Calvin -- Geneva, Switzerland

William Tyndale -- England

John Knox -- Scotland

Inventor of the movable-type printing press

Johannes Gutenberg

Important Words

Bull

A "bull" is an official doctrine, law, or command from the Pope. Pope Leo X wrote two bulls against Martin Luther: *Exsurge, Domine* (June 15, 1520) which denounced Luther - this is the bull that Luther Burned -- and *Decet Romanum Pontificem* (Jan. 3, 1521) which excommunicated Luther (kicked Luther out of the Catholic Church).

Diet

A political meeting of German princes, with the Emperor presiding. The diet set policies about taxes, laws, military activities. Three diets in Luther's time were important for the Reformation:

The Diet of Worms (1521) where Luther refused to recant his teachings and Emperor Charles V condemned him as a heretic.

The Diet of Speyer (1529) where the German princes refused to enforce the Emperor's Edict of Worms against Luther. They presented their own articles of protest, in favor of religious freedom in Germany (where we get the name "Protestant.")

The Diet of Augsburg (1530) where the German princes signed and presented Philip Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession to Emperor Charles V.

Elector

Noblemen (dukes, princes, etc.) who ruled over various parts of the Holy Roman Empire. They are called "electors" because together they elected (choose) the Emperor, who became their ruler.

Heresy

Religious teaching that is false.

Heretic

A person who teaches a false religion. The Catholic Church said that Jan Hus, Martin Luther, and all the Protestant reformers were heretics.

Indulgence

An indulgence is an offer from the Pope (in exchange for money) to either reduce a person's time in purgatory, or to fully forgive a person so they could go straight to heaven. Pope Leo X sold indulgences to raise money to build the new church building in Rome. This so upset Martin Luther that he wrote his 95 Theses to complain, which sparked the Reformation.

Purgatory

According to Catholic doctrine, a person who is baptized, but sins again must work off the impurity of his sin, both in this life (by "doing penance") and in the next life, by suffering in purgatory. After that, the Christian will be allowed to enter heaven. The Catholic catechism says: *"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The*

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Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned."

Protestant Christians reject this doctrine as unbiblical. Before Martin Luther fully trusted in God's grace, he believed in purgatory. He even mentioned purgatory in his "95 Theses." But when he finally began to understand what God's forgiveness means, that Christ's sacrifice for us is enough and we can add nothing to it, Luther saw the Bible's clear teaching that when we die, our souls go immediately to our eternal home -- heaven or hell. There is no temporary holding cell called "purgatory."

Even the Catholic Church's officially approved English version of the Bible accurately translates 1 John 1:7-9 *"... the blood of His Son Jesus cleanses us from ALL sin. ... If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from EVERY wrongdoing."* Our complete purification already was done on the cross.

Recant

When a person recants, he rejects the things that he previously said. The Emperor and the Catholic Church commanded Luther to recant his teachings. He refused.

Relic

Relics are objects that people honor (and worship!) as having some association with a famous person in the past. During Luther's time, the church told people that if they paid money to see a relic, that would reduce the time of their suffering in purgatory.

Important Cities (in chronological order of events)

Eisleben, Germany -- the city where Luther was born (Nov 1483) and died (Feb 1546)

Erfurt, Germany -- University town where Luther
began to study to become a lawyer (1501)
joined the Augustinian monastery (1505)
studied theology and became a Catholic priest (1507)

Rome, Italy -- headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, where Luther visited (1510) and became disgusted over relics, indulgences, and corruption of church leaders.

Wittenberg, Germany (1511) -- University & church where Luther taught theology and began the Reformation (1517).

Leipzig, Germany (1519) -- where Luther debated Johann Eck.

Worms, Germany (1521) -- where Emperor Charles V condemned Luther to death as a heretic.

Wartburg Castle -- where Luther hid for 10 months, translating the New Testament into the German language.

Speyer, Germany (1529) -- where German princes told Emperor Charles that they refused to enforce the Edict of Worms. They presented their own articles of protest, in favor of religious freedom in Germany (where we get the name "Protestant.")

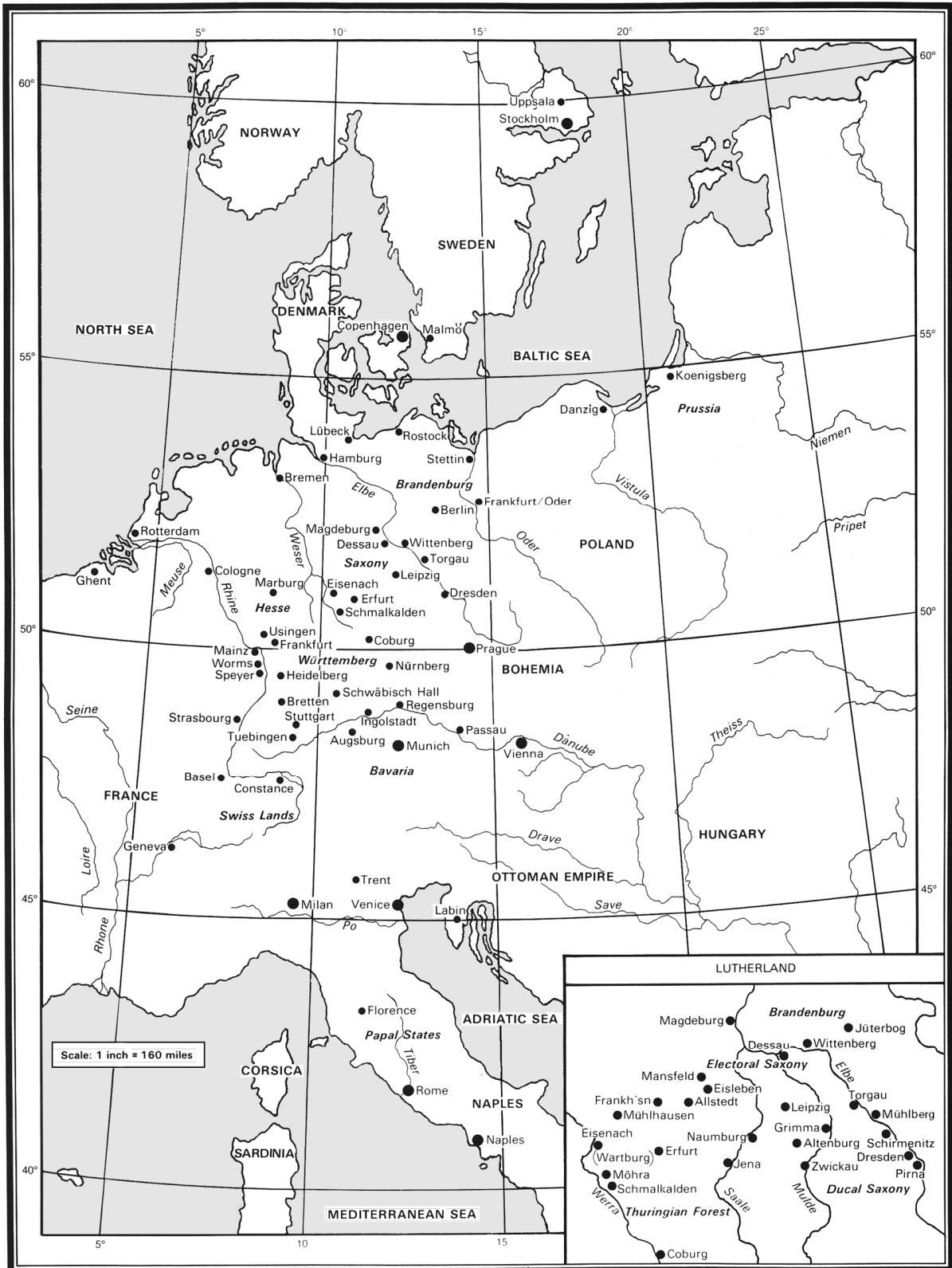
Marburg, Germany (1529) -- where Luther and Zwingli met to discuss their common purpose and their differences.

Augsburg, Germany (1530) -- where the German princes presented to Emperor Charles the Augsburg Confession.

Schmalkalden, Germany (1537) -- where German princes formed a military alliance (Schmalkald League) to defend Germany against possible attack from Emperor Charles. Duke John Frederick also asked Luther and the theologians to present a confession of faith on points of controversy with the Catholic Church. Luther wrote the *Smalcald Articles*. He became too sick to go to Schmalkalden. Melancthon wrote *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*. Both documents are now part of the *Book of Concord*. (One year after Luther's death, Emperor Charles' army defeated the Schmalkald League in the Battle of Mühlberg, 1547.)

Trent, Italy -- where Roman Catholic theologians and officials held an official council to clarify Catholic doctrine and policies against Protestantism. The Council of Trent began meeting in 1545, continuing for 25 sessions, until 1563.

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Map by Erwin Weber

REFERENCE MAP OF CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

The Lutheran Reformation

Chronology

1483, Nov 10	Luther born in Eisleben, Germany. Six months later, Luther family moves to Mansfield, Germany.
1501	Luther enrolls in the University of Erfurt. He earns a Bachelor of Arts degree (1502) and Master of Arts degree (1505)
1505, May	Luther begins studies in law.
1505, July	Luther quits the university and enters the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.
1507, May	Luther's ordination and first Mass.
1508, winter	Luther is a guest lecturer of "moral philosophy" at the University of Wittenberg.
1510, Nov	Fr. Staupitz sends Luther to Rome.
1511, April	Luther returns to Erfurt from Rome; Staupitz sends him to Wittenberg to teach.
1512, Oct	Luther is made a Doctor of Theology by the University.
1517, Oct 31	Luther writes and posts his <i>Ninety-five Theses</i> .
1518, April 26	Luther presents 28 Theses at the Augustinian <i>Heidelberg Disputation</i> , in which he contrasts "theology of the cross" vs "theology of glory."
1518, Oct 12-14	Luther meets with Cardinal Cajetan in Augsburg, Germany
1519, June 28	Charles V (Charles I of Spain) elected Holy Roman Emperor.
1519, July 4-14	Luther and Eck debate in Leipzig, Germany.
1520	Pope Leo X issues Papal Bull against Luther : <i>Exsurge, Domine</i> . Luther writes: <i>On the Papacy at Rome</i> <i>Address to the Christian Nobility</i> <i>The Babylonian Captivity of the Church</i> <i>On the Freedom of a Christian</i>
1521, April	Luther refuses to recant at the Diet of Worms .
1521, April – 1522, March	Luther hides in the Wartburg Castle; writes <i>On Confession: Whether the Pope Has the Authority to Require It</i> <i>On the Abolition of Private Mass: On Monastic Vows</i> <i>An Admonition to All Christians to Guard Themselves against Insurrection</i> <i>The New Testament</i> German translation December 1521: Luther makes a brief visit to Wittenberg in disguise as "Knight George." Pope Leo X dies.
1522	Luther returns to Wittenberg, expels Karlstadt as a radical insurrectionist, publishes the German <i>New Testament</i> .
1523-1524	Luther publishes <i>On Temporal Authority: the Extent to which It Should be obeyed</i> <i>To the Municipalities of Germany... on Founding Schools</i>
1525	Duke Frederick the Wise dies, succeeded by his brother Duke John. Luther marries Katharina von Bora. Luther write <i>On the Bondage of the Will</i> . The peasant war. (Luther writes opposing the peasant rebellion; the German princes put down the revolt with bloody brutality.)
1526	Luther writes the <i>German Mass and Order for Public Worship</i> .
1527	Luther suffers physical illness and serious depression. Luther composes hymn <i>A Mighty Fortress is Our God</i> .
1528	Luther and his team visit churches through Saxony. He is shocked by what he found.

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1529	<p>In response to his church visits in 1528, Luther writes <i>The Small Catechism</i> <i>The Large Catechism</i></p> <p>April – Diet of Speyer. German princes tell Emperor Charles that they refused to enforce the Edict of Worms. They present their own articles of protest, in favor of religious freedom in Germany (where we get the name "Protestant.")</p> <p>October – Luther meets with Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli at Marburg, Germany. Their most notable difference is their understanding of the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>English reformer William Tyndale publishes his English translation of the New Testament (printed in Germany; smuggled back into England).</p>
1530	<p>June 25 -- German princes sign and present Melanchthon's <i>Augsburg Confession</i> to Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg. Luther obeys Duke John's order to not attend and stay at Coburg.</p> <p>July 12 -- Catholic theologians present their <i>Confutation</i> against the Augsburg Confession.</p> <p>September – Melanchthon writes his <i>Apology [defense] of the Augsburg Confession</i>. Emperor Charles refuses to hear it.</p>
1531	<p>Melanchthon, with input of Luther and others, revises and publishes the <i>Apology of the Augsburg Confession</i>.</p> <p>Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli is killed in battle.</p>
1532	<p>Duke John dies; succeeded by his son John Frederick.</p> <p>King Henry VIII of England begins his break from the Catholic Church because the Pope refused Henry's request for an annulment from his marriage to Queen Catherine of Aragon (the aunt of Emperor Charles the V).</p>
1534	Luther's German translation of the complete Bible is published.
1535 - 1536	English reformer William Tyndale is arrested and executed for "treason and heresy" before he is able to complete his English translation of the Old Testament. His friend Myles Coverdale finishes and publishes Tyndale's English translation of the complete Bible.
1537	<p>Schmalkald League of German princes meets; Luther is too sick to attend, but offers his <i>Smalcald Articles</i>.</p> <p>Melanchthon writes <i>Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope</i>.</p>
1539	Catholic "Counter Reformation" – Ignatius Loyola establishes the Society of Jesus ("Jesuits") as a missionary and education ministry to counteract the Protestant Reformation. Pope Paul III recognizes the Jesuits in 1540.
1545, Dec	The Catholic Council of Trent begins, which continues for 25 sessions until 1563. Luther travels to Eisleben to help negotiate a family quarrel among the princes of Mansfield.
1546	<p>Feb 16 – Luther dies (age 62) in Eisleben.</p> <p>Feb 22 – Luther's body is interred in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.</p>
1547	<p>Emperor Charles' army defeated the Schmalkald League in the Battle of Mühlberg and enforces of the 1521 Edict of Worms.</p> <p>Melanchthon gives in to Catholic pressure to compromise his Evangelical faith.</p>
1555	Emperor Charles V resigns and retires to a monastery.
1560, April 19	Philip Melanchthon dies. Controversy continues between followers of Luther ("Genuine [Genuine] Lutherans"), followers of Melanchthon ("Philippists") and "Crypto-Calvinists."
1564, May 27	Swiss reformer John Calvin dies.

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1573 – 1580	Theologians Jakob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus, and others work together to reunite German Christians in their commitment to the <i>Augsburg Confession</i> and Lutheran doctrine. The result of their work is the <i>Formula of Concord</i> (1577). They compile Reformation confessions of faith into the <i>Book of Concord</i> (1580).
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Contents of the Book of Concord

The Ecumenical Creeds

 The Apostles' Creed

 The Nicene Creed

 The Athanasian Creed

The Augsburg Confession

The Apology [Defense] of the Augsburg Confession

The Smalcald Articles

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Luther's Small Catechism

Luther's Large Catechism

The Formula of Concord

 Epitome [Summary]

 Solid Declaration

Ninety-five Theses

Dr. Martin Luther

October 31, 1517

University of Wittenberg, Germany

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” [Mt 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
3. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortification of the flesh.
4. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self (that is, true inner repentance), namely till our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.
6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God; or, to be sure, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in these cases were disregarded, the guilt would certainly remain unforgiven.
7. God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time he humbles him in all things and makes him submissive to his vicar, the priest.
8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to the canons themselves, nothing should be imposed on the dying.
9. Therefore the Holy Spirit through the pope is kind to us insofar as the pope in his decrees always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.
10. Those priests act ignorantly and wickedly who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penalties for purgatory.
11. Those tares of changing the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory were evidently sown while the bishops slept [Mt 13:25].
12. In former times canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.
13. The dying are freed by death from all penalties, are already dead as far as the canon laws are concerned, and have a right to be released from them.
14. Imperfect piety or love on the part of the dying person necessarily brings with it great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater the fear.
15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, to say nothing of other things, to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near the horror of despair.
16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation.
17. It seems as though for the souls in purgatory fear should necessarily decrease and love increase.
18. Furthermore, it does not seem proved, either by reason of Scripture, that souls in purgatory are outside the state of merit, that is, unable to grow in love.
19. Nor does it seem proved that souls in purgatory, at least not all of them, are certain and assured of their own salvation, even if we ourselves may be entirely certain of it.

20. Therefore the pope, when he uses the words “plenary remission of all penalties,” does not actually mean “all penalties,” but only those imposed by himself.
21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.
22. As a matter of fact, the pope remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to canon law, they should have paid in this life.
23. If remission of all penalties whatsoever could be granted to anyone at all, certainly it would be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to very few.
24. For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.
25. That power which the pope has in general over purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese or parish.
26. The pope does very well when he grants remission to souls in purgatory, not by the power of the keys, which he does not have, but by way of intercession for them.
27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.
28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.
29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed, since we have exceptions in St. Severinus and St. Paschal, as related in a legend.
30. No one is sure of the integrity of his own contrition, much less of having received plenary remission.
31. The man who actually buys indulgences is as rare as he who is really penitent; indeed, he is exceedingly rare.
32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
33. Men must especially be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to him.
34. For the graces of indulgences are concerned only with the penalties of sacramental satisfaction established by man.
35. They who teach that contrition is not necessary on the part of those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessional privileges preach unchristian doctrine.
36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.
37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.
38. Nevertheless, papal remission and blessing are by no means to be disregarded, for they are, as I have said [Thesis 6], the proclamation of the divine remission.
39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the bounty of indulgences and the need of true contrition.

40. A Christian who is truly contrite seeks and loves to pay penalties for his sins; the bounty of indulgences, however, relaxes penalties and causes men to hate them—at least it furnishes occasion for hating them.
41. Papal indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.
42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend that the buying of indulgences should in any way be compared with works of mercy.
43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.
44. Because love grows by works of love, man thereby becomes better. Man does not, however, become better by means of indulgences but is merely freed from penalties.
45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.
46. Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences.
47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of indulgences is a matter of free choice, not commanded.
48. Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting indulgences, needs and thus desires their devout prayer more than their money.
49. Christians are to be taught that papal indulgences are useful only if they do not put their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.
50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.
51. Christians are to be taught that the pope would and should wish to give of his own money, even though he had to sell the basilica of St. Peter, to many of those from whom certain hawkers of indulgences cajole money.
52. It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters, even though the indulgence commissary, or even the pope, were to offer his soul as security.
53. They are enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.
54. Injury is done the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.
55. It is certainly the pope's sentiment that if indulgences, which are a very insignificant thing, are celebrated with one bell, one procession, and one ceremony, then the gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.
56. The true treasures of the church, out of which the pope distributes indulgences, are not sufficiently discussed or known among the people of Christ.
57. That indulgences are not temporal treasures is certainly clear, for many indulgence sellers do not distribute them freely but only gather them.
58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, for, even without the pope, the latter always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outer man.

59. St. Lawrence said that the poor of the church were the treasures of the church, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.
60. Without want of consideration we say that the keys of the church, given by the merits of Christ, are that treasure.
61. For it is clear that the pope's power is of itself sufficient for the remission of penalties and cases reserved by himself.
62. The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.
63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last [Mt 20:16].
64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.
65. Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth.
66. The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men.
67. The indulgences which the demagogues acclaim as the greatest graces are actually understood to be such only insofar as they promote gain.
68. They are nevertheless in truth the most insignificant graces when compared with the grace of God and the piety of the cross.
69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of papal indulgences with all reverence.
70. But they are much more bound to strain their eyes and ears lest these men preach their own dreams instead of what the pope has commissioned.
71. Let him who speaks against the truth concerning papal indulgences be anathema and accursed.
72. But let him who guards against the lust and license of the indulgence preachers be blessed.
73. Just as the pope justly thunders against those who by any means whatever contrive harm to the sale of indulgences,
74. Much more does he intend to thunder against those who use indulgences as a pretext to contrive harm to holy love and truth.
75. To consider papal indulgences so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God is madness.
76. We say on the contrary that papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins as far as guilt is concerned.
77. To say that even St. Peter if he were now pope, could not grant greater graces is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.
78. We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written 1 Co 12[:28].
79. To say that the cross emblazoned with the papal coat of arms, and set up by the indulgence preachers, is equal in worth to the cross of Christ is blasphemy.
80. The bishops, curates, and theologians who permit such talk to be spread among the people will have to answer for this.
81. This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander or from the shrewd questions of the laity,

82. Such as: "Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church? The former reason would be most just; the latter is most trivial."
83. Again, "Why are funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continued and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded for them, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?"
84. Again, "What is this new piety of God and the pope that for a consideration of money they permit a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God and do not rather, because of the need of that pious and beloved soul, free it for pure love's sake?"
85. Again, "Why are the penitential canons, long since abrogated and dead in actual fact and through disuse, now satisfied by the granting of indulgences as though they were still alive and in force?"
86. Again, "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"
87. Again, "What does the pope remit or grant to those who by perfect contrition already have a right to full remission and blessings?"
88. Again, "What greater blessing could come to the church than if the pope were to bestow these remissions and blessings on every believer a hundred times a day, as he now does but once?"
89. "Since the pope seeks the salvation of souls rather than money by his indulgences, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons previously granted when they have equal efficacy?"
90. To repress these very sharp arguments of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies and to make Christians unhappy.
91. If, therefore, indulgences were preached according to the spirit and intention of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved. Indeed, they would not exist.
92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace! [Jer 6:14]
93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!
94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell,
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace [Acts 14:22].

Martin Luther's 95 Theses with the Pertinent Documents from the History of the Reformation, ed. K. Aland, various translators (St. Louis, 1967).

<http://cyclopedia.lcms.org>

Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works (1545) by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

Dear Reader,

I have steadfastly resisted those who wanted my books published, or perhaps I had better call them the confused products of my nighttime study. First, I did not want the labors of the ancient authors to be buried under my new works and the reader to be hindered from reading them. Second, there now exists, thanks to the grace of God, a good number of systematically arranged books, especially the "Loci communes" of Philip, [Philip Melancthon, scholar of Greek and associate of Luther at Wittenberg.] from which a theologian or bishop can get a thorough foundation [cf Titus 1:9], so that he might be strong in preaching the doctrine of virtue. Third, and most importantly, the Bible itself is now available in almost every language. The disordered train of events, however, has seen to it that my works resemble a wild, disorganized chaos, which now even I cannot easily put into order.

For these reasons I wanted all my books to be buried in perpetual oblivion, that thus there might be room for better books. But other people, by their bold and unrelenting arguments, badgered me into publishing mine. They maintained that, if I did not permit them to be published while I was alive, people would publish them after I was dead anyway, people ignorant of the sequence of events and of the causes behind them. Thus instead of one confusion, there would be many. I also had to take into account the wish and command of our most illustrious Prince Elector Johann Frederick, who ordered or rather forced the printers not only to print this edition but also to get it done quickly.

Above all I beg the reader, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to read these works with discernment, or perhaps I should say with compassion. The reader should know that I was once a monk, the most rabid of papists, when I took up this whole affair. I was so drunk, so submerged in the pope's doctrines, that I was ready, if I could, to kill or help kill those who would have advocated by so much as a single syllable withdrawing obedience to the pope. That's how much of a Saul I was [i.e., St. Paul, who, before his conversion, was called Saul and who was zealous in his persecution of Christians], as many still are. I wasn't so icy cold in defending the papacy as was Eck and those like him, who seemed to me to defend the pope more for the sake of their bellies than through serious commitment. To this day they seem to me to be laughing at the pope like Epicureans. I took the matter seriously because I had a horrible fear of the Last Day, yet still wished from the depths of my heart to be saved.

Consequently you will find that, in my earlier writings, I most humbly conceded many important things to the pope, things which I later detested and now detest as being the greatest blasphemy and abomination. Therefore, dear reader, kindly ascribe this error or, as my calumniators call it, this contradiction to the time and to my inexperience. At first I was alone and surely much too inept and unlearned to be dealing with such matters. For, as God is my witness, it was by accident and not by my own will or desire that I got involved in all this turmoil.

When in 1517 indulgences were sold (I wanted to say promulgated) in these regions for disgraceful profit, I was a preacher, a young Doctor of Theology, as they say. I began to dissuade the people from lending an ear to the shouts of the indulgence-sellers. I told them that they had better things to do and that I was sure that in these matters I had the pope on my side. I was relying greatly on his trustworthiness, since in his decrees he had very clearly condemned the excesses of the quaestors [name of a treasury official in ancient Rome] as he called the indulgence preachers.

Shortly thereafter I wrote two letters, one to Albert, the archbishop of Mainz, who was getting half the money from the indulgences (the other half was going to the pope, a fact of which I was at the time ignorant), the other to the ordinary of the place, Jerome, bishop of Brandenburg. I begged them to put a stop to the shameless blasphemy of the quaestors, but they despised this poor little brother. Therefore, finding myself despised, I published a list of theses and, at the same time, a sermon in German on

indulgences. A little later I published the "Explanations," in which, in deference to the pope, I maintained that indulgences should not be condemned but that the works of charity should be preferred to them.

What I did toppled heaven and consumed earth by fire. I am denounced to the pope, commanded to go to Rome, and the entire papacy rises up against me alone. These things happened in 1518 when Maximilian was holding the Diet at Augsburg, at which Cardinal Cajetan was the legate of the pope. The most illustrious Duke Frederick of Saxony, Prince Elector, took up my cause with the Cardinal and asked that I not be forced to go to Rome but that he, Cajetan, should summon me to a hearing and take care of the matter. Shortly thereafter the Diet was adjourned.

Meanwhile the Germans were getting tired of putting up with the plunderings, the buying and selling, and the endless frauds of the Roman rascals. They were waiting with bated breath for the outcome of so important a matter, which neither bishop nor theologian had ever before dared to touch. This mood of the populace encouraged me, because those crafty "Romanations" with which they had filled and fatigued the whole world were now hateful to everyone.

Poor and on foot I came to Augsburg, my expenses paid by Prince Frederick. I had from him letters commending me to the senate and to certain good men. I was there for three days before I approached the Cardinal, because those good men strongly advised me not to go to the Cardinal until I had a safe conduct pass from the Emperor. The Cardinal had been summoning me every day through a certain spokesman. This latter pestered me greatly, saying that if I'd only recant, then everything would be all right. But long the injury, long the detour back.

Finally, on the third day, the spokesman came and demanded to know why I hadn't yet approached the Cardinal, who was waiting to receive me most kindly. I answered that I was complying with the advice of good men to whom I had been commended by Prince Frederick and that they had advised me not to go to see the Cardinal unless I had a safe conduct pass from the Emperor. I said that they were requesting one from the imperial senate and that I would come as soon as it had been obtained. He got very angry and said: "Do you think Prince Frederick is going to take up arms for your sake?" I said, "I don't want him to." He asked, "Where will you stay?" I replied, "Under heaven." He then asked, "If you had the pope and the cardinals in your power, what would you do?" I said, "I'd show them every reverence and honor." Then He moved his finger in an Italian gesture and said, "Hem." Then he went away and never came back.

The same day the imperial senate informed the Cardinal that I had been given a safe conduct; they warned him that he should not plan to have anything too severe in store for me. It is said that he answered, "Fine, but I shall act according to my duty." These events were the beginning of this whole commotion; the rest can be learned from what follows.

That same year, 1518, Prince Frederick had called Philip Melanchthon here to Wittenberg to teach Greek, doubtless so that I might have a colleague in my labors of teaching theology. His works testify to what the Lord has accomplished through Melanchthon, his instrument, not only in literature but also in theology, despite the fact that Satan and all his brood are infuriated.

The following year, in February of 1519, Emperor Maximilian died, and by the law of the Empire Duke Frederick became vicar. Then the fury of the tempest abated a little, and gradually excommunication, the papal thunderbolt, came to be held in contempt. Eck and Caraccioli brought from Rome a bull [a papal decree] condemning me. The former conveyed it to Wittenberg, the latter to Duke Frederick, who was at the time in Cologne, where he and the other princes were to receive Charles, the newly elected Emperor. Duke Frederick got very indignant at that papal rascal and courageously told him off in no uncertain terms because in his absence he and Eck had disturbed his dominions and those of his brother. He gave them such a magnificent tongue lashing that they went away from him shamed and disgraced. The prince, endowed as he was with unbelievable natural ability, knew all about the crafty ways of the Roman curia [the administrative apparatus of the Roman Church]; he knew exactly how to

treat them. He was a man with a good clear nose, and he could smell more and farther than the Romanists could either hope or fear.

Thereafter they stopped testing Frederick. Furthermore, he paid no honor to the rose that they call "golden" [a special mark of papal esteem] which Leo X sent him that same year; on the contrary, he ridiculed it. Thus the Romanists were forced to give up any hope of duping such a prince. The Gospel advanced successfully under the protection of this prince and was propagated far and wide. His authority influenced many; since he was a most wise and keen-sighted prince, he could incur no suspicion, except among the hateful, that he was out to encourage and support heresy. This did the papacy great harm.

In the same year, 1519, there was held at Leipzig the debate to which Eck had challenged Karlstadt and me. But by no letter of mine could I secure a safe conduct from Duke George, and so I entered Leipzig not as a debater but as a spectator under the safe conduct which had been given to Karlstadt. I don't know who was blocking my way, since I was sure that, up to that time, Duke George had not been hostile to me.

In Leipzig Eck came to me in my lodgings. He said he had learned that I had refused to debate. I answered, "How can I debate if I can't secure a safe conduct from Duke George?" He answered, "I came here to debate with you, and if I can't, then I don't want to debate with Karlstadt either. What if I get a safe conduct for you? Will you debate with me then?" I said, "Get it and I will." He left, and shortly thereafter I too got a safe conduct and so had the opportunity of debating.

Eck did this because he thought he would cover himself with glory in debating my proposition in which I denied that the pope was the head of the church by divine right. In this proposition Eck had a golden opportunity of flattering the pope and of meriting his thanks and of overwhelming me with hatred and ill-will. That is exactly what he did throughout the whole debate, but he neither proved his position nor refuted mine. Even Duke George said to Eck and me at breakfast, "Whether it's by divine right or by human right, still he's the pope." If he hadn't been influenced by the arguments, he would never have said such a thing but would have approved of Eck alone.

From my case you can see how hard it is to struggle free from errors which become fixed by universal standard and changed by time-honored custom into nature. How true the proverb is: "It's hard to abandon customs" and "Custom is a second nature." How right Augustine was when he said, "Custom, if it is not resisted, becomes necessity." I had been reading and teaching the Sacred Scriptures diligently in private and in public now for seven years, so that I knew almost all of them by heart. Then too, I had imbibed the beginnings of the knowledge of Christ and of faith in him, i.e., that it is faith in Christ and not works that justifies and saves us. Finally, I was now defending publicly that proposition of which I'm speaking, namely, that the pope was not the head of the church by divine right. But I still didn't see the necessary conclusion, i.e., that the pope must be from the devil, for what is not from God must be from the devil.

I was so absorbed, as I have said, by the example and title of the Holy Church as well as by my own customary way of thinking, that I conceded that the pope was head of the church by human right. However, if that right is not supported by divine authority, then it is a lie and comes from the devil. After all, we obey our parents and the civil authorities, not because they themselves command it, but because God wants us to (cf. 1 Peter). That is why I can, with a little less hatred, put up with those who cling so tenaciously to the papacy, especially those who haven't read the sacred Scriptures or even the secular writings, since I myself had read the sacred Scriptures diligently for so many years and still clung tenaciously to the papacy.

In 1519, as I've already said, Leo X sent the Golden Rose through Karl von Miltitz; with many arguments he urged me to be reconciled to the pope. Miltitz had seventy apostolic briefs, and if Prince Frederick would hand me over, as the pope was asking by sending the Rose, he would post one of the briefs in each town and so conduct me safely to Rome. But Miltitz betrayed to me what was really in his heart when he said, "Martin, I thought you were some aged theologian who used to sit next to the stove

and debate with himself, but now I see that you're still a strong young man. If I had twenty-five thousand armed men, I don't think I could convey you to Rome. I've been sounding out the opinions of people along the way to see what they thought of you. For every one for the pope there are three for you against the pope." That's ridiculous! He had asked the women and serving girls in the inns what they thought of the Roman See [the Latin "sedes" = "seat"]. They didn't know what the word meant and, thinking of a household chair, they answered, "How are we supposed to know what kind of chairs you have at Rome? We don't know whether they're made out of wood or stone.

Miltitz begged me, therefore, to do everything I could to make peace, and he would do his best to see that the pope did the same. I promised that I would most promptly do anything that I could in good conscience do. I said that I too wanted peace and that I had been drawn by force into these squabbles and had been forced by circumstances to do everything I did; I was not to blame. Miltitz had summoned the Dominican friar, Johann Tetzel, the originator of this tragedy. With threatening words from the pope he so broke the man, who up to that time had been the terror of all and a fearless crier of indulgences, that he wasted away and was finally consumed by a mental illness. When I found this out, I wrote him, before he died, a kindly letter in which I comforted him and told him to take heart and not to fear my memory. But perhaps his conscience and the wrath of the pope sent him to the grave.

People thought Miltitz and his line of action were useless, but it seems to me that if the man at Mainz [i.e., Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz] had followed Miltitz's course from the beginning when I had reprimanded him, and if the pope had followed it before he condemned me without a hearing and raged with his bulls, and if they had suppressed Tetzel's fury, the affair wouldn't have resulted in such an uproar. It's all the fault of the man at Mainz, who was tricked by his own cleverness with which he wanted to suppress my doctrine and to save his money which he'd sought through indulgences. Now they seek counsel in vain; now they make efforts in vain. The Lord has awakened and stands to judge the peoples [cf. Psalm 76:9 and Daniel 9:14]. Even if they were able to kill us, they still wouldn't have what they want; in fact, they'd have even less than they have now while we are alive and well. Some among them, whose nose is not completely inactive, can smell this well enough.

Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise

itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, "the justice of God," with as much love as before I had hated it with hate. This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which I found what I had not dared hope for. I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified.

Better armed now with these thoughts, I began for the second time to interpret the Psalms. The work would have grown into a large commentary, but I was summoned the following year to Worms for the Diet convened by Emperor Charles V and so had once again to leave the work I had begun.

I am telling you all this, dear reader, so that, if you are going to read my little works, you should remember that I am one of those, as I said above, who, as Augustine writes of himself, makes progress by writing and teaching. I am not one of those who out of nothing suddenly become perfect (although in fact they are nothing), who don't work, who aren't tempted, who have no experience, but who, with one look into the Scriptures, exhaust their whole spirit.

Up to that point, 1520-21, the indulgence affair was still going on. There followed the affairs dealing with the sacraments and with the Anabaptists, about which I will write prefaces in other volumes, if I live to do so.

Good-bye in the Lord, dear reader, and pray that the word may increase against Satan, because he is powerful and evil. And now he has become extremely vicious and savage because he knows that he has only a short time and that the kingdom of his pope is endangered. May God strengthen in us what he has accomplished. May he prosper his work which he has begun in us for his glory [cf. Phillipians 1:6 and Psalm 68:29]. Amen.

Translated by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB from the "Vorrede zu Band I der Opera Latina der Wittenberger Ausgabe. 1545" in vol. 4 of Luthers Werke in Auswahl, ed. Otto Clemen, 6th ed., (Berlin: de Gruyter. 1967). pp. 421-428.

Translator's Note: The material between square brackets is explanatory in nature and is not part of Luther's preface. The terms "just, justice, justify" in the following reading are synonymous with the terms "righteous, righteousness, make righteous." Both sets of English words are common translations of the Latin "justus" and related words. A similar situation exists with the word "faith"; it is synonymous with "belief." Both words can be used to translate Latin "fides." Thus, "We are justified by faith" translates the same original Latin sentence as does "We are made righteous by belief."

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Who are Lutherans?

Lutherans are Christians

Lutherans share a common understanding with all Christians regarding:

- ☐ who God is
- ☐ how we have a right relationship with God ("salvation")
- ☐ who Jesus Christ is
- ☐ what Christ has done for us

We believe that there is only one God, the holy and perfect creator of the universe, to whom we are all accountable.

We believe that God is three Persons whom the Bible call: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. We understand that these three Persons do not constitute three Gods, but individually they are fully God and together they are One God, which we called "the **Trinity**." We admit that this doctrine defies human logic, but we also admit that a mere human mind cannot fully understand God. So we simply take our stand on what God has said about Himself.

We believe that Jesus Christ, is fully God and truly human. He is not a man who became God, but He was eternally God and at a specific time in history, He became human.

We believe as the Bible teaches that Jesus was born from a virgin woman named Mary, conceived by the direct working of God's Spirit in Mary's womb, not through any kind of sexual activity.

We believe that Jesus lived a sinless perfect life, and that the purpose of His life was to offer Himself in death as a substitute for sinful humanity. We understand that while God hates sin, He loves sinners. So it was through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, God's justice against sin was satisfied, and through Jesus' sacrifice God is able to forgive sinners. *(See illustration on page 3)*

We believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead, that He physically showed Himself to eye witnesses who spoke with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him.

We believe that 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven, where He reigns as God over creation.

We believe that one day this physical world in which we live will cease to exist, and God will make a new perfect world for us.

Lutherans are Protestants

Protestantism began in the mid-1500s in northern Europe as a reaction to certain practices and teachings of the organized Christian church in Europe, which we now refer to as the Roman Catholic Church. As Christians throughout northern Europe began studying the Bible, they saw what they felt were contradictions between the Bible's clear teaching about Christ, faith, and forgiveness, vs. what the church taught and practiced. This religious movement became known as the Protestant Reformation. The word "Protestant" comes from the word "protest."

Protestant Christians believe...

- ☐ **The Bible alone** is our only source and authority for faith and doctrine -- not church tradition, not church councils, not any individual church leader. Our teaching and practices must always be evaluated by the clear teaching of the Bible.
- ☐ **Salvation is in Christ alone**, not in an organization or church denomination.
- ☐ **Salvation is a free gift of God** which we receive by faith alone, not by doing good works to earn God's favor.

"You are saved by grace through faith, not by your own doing. Salvation is a gift from God, not by our own works. So no one can brag." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- ☐ The true Church is the invisible fellowship all true believers in Christ, not limited to any single denomination.
- ☐ All Christian believers have full access to God through Christ without any need for mediation by church or clergy. (Protestants refer to this as "the priesthood of all believers.")

During the time of the Reformation, Protestants summarized these teachings in this simple slogan: *Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, Christ Alone*

Protestants reject as unbiblical specific teachings and practices which have been prevalent in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Among these are:

Doctrines about purgatory

Praying to "Saints" (Christians who have died)

Traditions about Mary

Seven sacraments (Most Protestants recognize only two: Baptism & the Lord's Supper.

However, Protestants disagree among themselves about the purpose and meaning of those two sacraments or ordinances.)

Lutheran Distinctives

- ☐ Emphasis on a proper understanding of Law and Gospel (*see page 3 illustration*)
- ☐ Saving Faith is a gift of God. We are not capable of trusting Him on our own.
- ☐ Sacramental

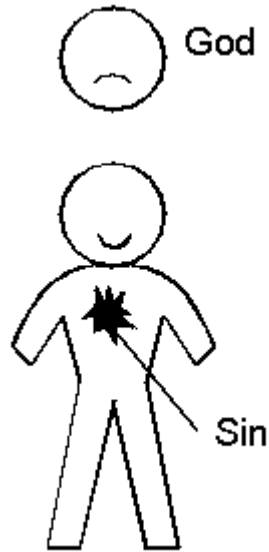
BAPTISM: In baptism we die with Christ and His new life emerges in us (see Romans 6). Lutherans baptize babies because (1) babies are born with a sin-nature and need salvation as all people do, and (2) babies can have a faith relationship with God through Christ (see Mark 10:13-16).

LORD'S SUPPER: Lutherans believe Jesus' promise that He offers us His true body and blood with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper (see Matthew 26:26-28).

- ☐ Comfortable with theological paradox (logical contradiction).
- ☐ End-Times -- Christ will come again *only once*. This will happen at the end of time when the physical world will cease. Lutherans reject as unbiblical recent popular teachings about multiple returns of Christ.
- ☐ Liturgical worship style.

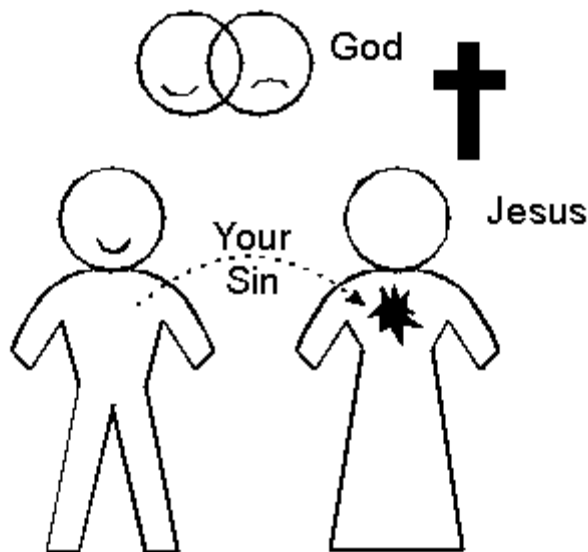
Why Jesus

The Law: Bad News



The Law is like a mirror that show us our sin.
The Law tells us what we should do
and what we have failed to do.

The Gospel: Good News



The Gospel shows us our Savior.
The Gospel tells us what Christ has done for us.

"He personally carried away our sins in His own body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by His wounds!" (1 Peter 2:24 NLT)

Explanation of Lutheran Distinctives

Law & Gospel

Many Protestants view the Gospel -- the message of forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross on our behalf -- as useful only for converting the lost from unbelief to faith. After that, the convert "moves on" to the Law again in order to fix his life. The problem is, this doesn't work. Scripture teaches and experience confirms that the Law has no power to make us better people. The Law is always a mirror that continually shows us our sins. So Lutherans set up camp permanently on the Gospel's sweet message of God's grace and forgiveness that answers the Law's condemnation. (*See Galatians 3.*)

Saving faith is a gift of God...

Lutherans are very careful to avoid Arminian "decision theology," which assumes people have inherent power to accept or reject the Gospel. (Some Protestant theologians label this doctrine "Semi-Pelagianism" or "synergism.") Scripture teaches that our sinful nature has power only to reject God's gift. Faith is not a good work which God rewards with salvation. Faith is created by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Faith itself is part of the salvation package which is totally God's gift.

Sacraments

See christdeaf.org/bible for in-depth studies on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Also browse *Luther's Small Catechism for Deaf Christians* at that same web address.

Theological paradox

Christians have always been at home with illogical doctrines, such as the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. However, most Christians are very uncomfortable with the Bible's answer to the question: *Why are some people saved and others are lost?* Both Calvinists and Arminians have perfectly logical answers.

- Calvinists teach that God predestines (chooses in advance) specific people who He forces to believe and be saved. All others (also by God's choice) will be damned.
- Arminians on the other hand teach that people have a free will with which they can choose to believe or not believe.
- Lutherans teach that they are both wrong. If we are saved, God receives 100% of the credit; it is entirely His doing, as Calvinists teach. If we are lost, that is 100% our own fault, as Arminians teach.

Is the Lutheran position illogical? Yes. But it is perfectly consistent with the Bible's teaching that God wants all people to be saved and that He offers the merits of Christ's sacrifice to all, while we have no power within our nature to receive that gift.

End-Times

Eschatology occupies little space in Lutheran teaching. But because Evangelicals in our generation seem to be preoccupied with End-Time prophecies and time-tables, we mention the Lutheran position here. See our study titled "Left Behind" on christdeaf.org/bible.