

Week 11: Monday April 19, 2021
THE REFORMATION CHURCH (1500–1648) (Cont'd)

Lecture 1

Topic: Luther and Lutheranism
Due: Gonzalez, 2.36–56, 161–184

Lecture 2

Topic: Zwingli and Zwinglianism
Due: Gonzalez, 2.57–65

Luther, Depression, the Devil, and the Mighty Fortress

NB **The “Weak” Man behind “A Mighty Fortress”**

In intense turmoil, Luther wrote his greatest hymn.

by MARK GALLI

It was the worst of times—1527—one of the most trying years of Luther’s life. It’s hard to imagine he had the energy or spirit to compose one of Christendom’s most memorable hymns.

On April 22, a dizzy spell forced Luther to stop preaching in the middle of his sermon. For ten years, since publishing his *95 Theses* against the abuse of indulgences, Luther had been buffeted by political and theological storms; at times his life had been in danger. Now he was battling other reformers over the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. To Luther, their errors were as great as those of Rome—the very gospel was at stake—and Luther was deeply disturbed and angry. He suffered severe depression.

Then, on July 6, as friends arrived for dinner, Luther **felt an intense buzzing in his left ear. He went to lie down, when suddenly he called, “Water ... or I’ll die!” He became cold, and he was convinced he had seen his last night. In a loud prayer, he surrendered himself to God’s will.**

With a doctor’s help, Luther partially regained his strength. But this depression and illness overcame him again in August, September and late December. Looking back on one of his bouts, he wrote his friend Melancthon, **“I spent more than a week in death and hell. My entire body was in pain, and I still tremble. Completely** abandoned by Christ, I labored under the vacillations and storms of desperation and blasphemy against God. But through the prayers of the saints [his friends], God began to have mercy on me and pulled my soul from the inferno below.”

Meanwhile, in August, the plague had erupted in Wittenberg. As fear spread, so did many of the townspeople. But Luther considered it his duty to remain and care for the sick. Even though his wife was pregnant, Luther’s house was transformed into a hospital, and he watched

many friends die. Then his son became ill. Not until late November did the epidemic abate and the ill begin to recover.

During that horrific year, Luther took time to remember the tenth anniversary of his publication against indulgences, noting the deeper meaning of his trials: “The only comfort against raging Satan is that we have God’s Word to save the souls of believers.” Sometime that year, Luther expanded that thought into the hymn he is most famous for: “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” This verse, translated by Frederick Hedge in 1853, comes from one of more than sixty English versions:

And though this world with devils filled
 should threaten to undo us,
 We will not fear, for God has willed
 his truth to triumph through us.
 The prince of darkness grim? We tremble not for him.
 His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure.
 One little Word shall fell him.¹

Throughout his years Luther struggled with depression. Something he called *Anfachung* This was variously translated as trials, temptations, doubt dread. For Luther this was marked before he was saved by fear of eternal punishment, and not meeting God’s demands. After his salvation he had frequent battles with depression and anxiety. He battled it with the Word of God. That did not make it go away, but that enabled him to face it and to deal with it through the Scriptures.

- g) The role of Philip Melancthon (1497–1560). Melancthon, as with many other Reformation leaders, was strongly influenced at first by humanism, but his focus on the Scripture led him to understand biblical truth. His personality contrasted with Luther’s, he was quiet, a cautious, a conciliator, and a genius in organization and systematization of theology. His gift enabled him to systematize and defend Luther’s theology.

—Melancthon had a crucial role in Luther’s understanding of grace after his coming to Wittenberg in 1518.

—Melancthon brought Luther to clarity on justification as a *forensic declaration*. Though Luther had understood that that *dikaioō* meant “to *declare* righteous (in contrast to Augustine’s mistranslation “to *make* righteous), it was not until later. *Forensic* justification means that God declares the sinner justified, while at the same time he is still a

¹ Mark Galli, “The ‘Weak’ Man behind ‘A Mighty Fortress,’” *Christian History Magazine-Issue 39: Martin Luther: The Later Years* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1993).

sinner. When Luther finally understood this he wrote the phrase: *simul iustus et peccator* (just and a sinner at the same time).²

—In 1521 he wrote *Loci Communes (Common Places)* which became the first systematic theology and defense of the Reformation.

—Melanchthon drew up the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), later a defense of it (*Apology*).

- h) The Bigamy of Philip of Hesse: On 10 December 1539. Luther advocated a second simultaneous marriage. Phillip claimed that Christina was sexually cold, smelly, and an alcoholic (she did have ten children to him, three after his second marriage).

On March 4, 1540 Phillip married Margarethe von der Saale who had seven children to him. Christina was the daughter of Duke George of Saxony, brother of Frederick the Wise and a loyal Roman Catholic.

(9) *Of Jews and Their Lives* (1543).

One of the blackest marks against Luther is his attack on the Jews at the end of his life. His writings have been cited by numerous scholars as a primary source of the anti-Semitism in Germany's history, and cited as justification by the Nazi's of their murders of millions of Jews.

In his early writings Luther reached out to the Jews, hoping for their acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. He wrote *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* (1523)

If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian. They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings, they have done little else than deride them and seize their property.³

Luther advocated the burning of synagogues and Jewish books, expulsion also. In his last sermon (15 February 1546) he evidences

² David R. Anderson, "The Soteriological Impact of Augustine's Change from Premillennialism to Amillennialism: Part One," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 15* 15, no. 28 (2002): 32.

³ Metaxas, Eric. *Martin Luther* (416). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

a change of heart. He still held that they were enemies of Christ, but argued that we should demonstrate Christian love to them.

2. Luther's Thought.

a) Law and gospel.

“I have often heard before that there is no better way to hand down and to maintain true doctrine than by following this method, that is, of dividing Christian doctrine into two parts, the law and the gospel.”

“Anyone who can properly distinguish the gospel from the law may thank God and know that he is a theologian.”

“Virtually the whole of the Scriptures and the understanding of the whole of theology depends upon the true understanding of the law and the gospel.”

“Paul desires that in Christianity both of these, the law and the gospel, should be clearly distinguished...don't confuse them! When that happens, you list one of the two, or even both; just as under the papacy no one knew what was the gospel as opposed to the law; or what was the law as opposed to the gospel; for they had a faith which was only in the law...”

“The Law and the Gospel are two doctrines that are absolutely contrary. To place righteousness in the Law is, therefore, simply fighting against the Gospel. For the Law is an exactor, requiring of us that we should work and give; in a word, it wants to have (something) from us. But the Gospel exacts nothing of us; rather it gives freely and enjoins us to hold out our hands and to give, to take and to offer are opposites and cannot go on at the same time. For that which is given I take; but that which I give, I do not take; I offer it to another. If, then, the Gospel is a gift and offers a gift, it exacts nothing. Again, the Law gives nothing but exacts of us, indeed (it exacts) impossible things.”

b) Reason vs. the gospel.

“The human heart does not understand, nor does it believe, that so great a treasure as the Holy Spirit is given simply for the hearing of faith, but it argues like this: ‘It is a weighty matter—forgiveness of sins, deliverance from sin and death, the giving of the Holy Spirit, of righteousness and eternal life; therefore you must offer something of weight, if you would obtain those unutterable gifts.’ This opinion the Devil approves and fosters in the heart. And so

when reason hears: ‘You can do nothing to obtain the remission of sins, but ought only to hear the Word of God’, it immediately cries out: ‘No! you make the forgiveness of sins too mean and contemptible.’ So, it is the very magnitude of the gift which prevents our accepting it; and because so great a treasure is offered for nothing, it is despised.”

“Here we are in a completely different world, outside of reason, where there is no arguing about what we ought to do, or by what kind of works we should earn grace and the forgiveness of sins. Here we are in divine theology, where we hear this Gospel, that Christ died for us, and that believing this we are accounted righteous, though sins nevertheless remain in us—and big ones at that” (cited in *Grace and Reason*, B. A. Gerrish, 90, 94.).

c) Scripture and gospel.

(1) Canon.

“All the genuine sacred books agree in this that all of them preach Christ and deal with Him. That is the true test by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ, and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ. What does not teach Christ is not apostolic even though St. Peter or Paul taught it; again, what preaches Christ would be apostolic even though Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod did it.”

(2) Inspiration.

“But everyone, indeed knows that at times they (the Fathers) have erred as men will; therefore I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred.”

“The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, written and lettered and formed in letters.”

“When you read the words of Holy Scripture, you must realize that God is speaking them.”

“Consequently, we must remain content with them and cling to them as the perfectly clear, certain, sure words of God, which can never deceive us or allow us to err.”

“The Bible is God’s Word written—presented in letters, as Christ is the eternal Word presented in human nature.”

d) Bondage of the Will.

“Next: when Christ says in John 6: ‘No man can come to me, except My Father which hath sent me draw him’ (v. 44), what does he leave to ‘free-will’? He says man needs to hear and learn of the Father Himself, and that all must be taught of God. Here, indeed, he declares, not only that the works and efforts of ‘free-will’ are unavailing, but that even the very word of the gospel (of which He is here speaking) is heard in vain, unless the Father Himself speaks within, and teaches, and draws. ‘No man, no man can come,’ he says, and what he is talking about is your ‘power whereby man can make some endeavor towards Christ’. In things that pertain to salvation, He asserts that power to be null.

“But the ungodly does not come, even when he hears the word, unless the Father draws and teaches him inwardly; which He does by shedding abroad His Spirit. When that happens, there follows a ‘drawing’ other than that which is outward; Christ is then displayed by the enlightening of the Spirit, and by it man is rapt to Christ with the sweetest rapture, he being passive while God speaks, teaches and draws, rather than seeking or running himself.”

Says J. I. Packer of the centrality of this doctrine (J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, Introduction to *The Bondage of the Will*, by Martin Luther):

“Historically, it is a simple matter of fact that Martin Luther and John Calvin, and, for that matter, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them, these doctrines were the very life-blood of the Christian faith. A modern editor of Luther’s great work underscores this fact: ‘Whoever puts this book down without having realized that evangelical theology stands or falls with the doctrine of the bondage of the will has read it in vain.’ The doctrine of free justification by faith only, which became the storm-centre of so much controversy during the Reformation period, is often regarded as the heart of the Reformer’s theology, but this is hardly accurate. The truth is that their thinking was really centered upon the contention of Paul, echoed with varying degrees of adequacy by Augustine, and Gottschalk, and Bradwardine, and Wycliffe, that the sinner’s entire salvation is by free and sovereign grace only.

‘Justification by faith only’ is a truth that needs interpretation. The principle of *sola fide* is not rightly understood till it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *sola gratia*. What is the source and statue of faith? Is it the God-given means whereby the God-given justification is received, or is it a condition of justification which is left to man’s own contribution to salvation? Is our salvation wholly of God, or does it ultimately depend on something that we do for ourselves?

These things need to be pondered by Protestants today. With what right may we call ourselves children of the Reformation? Much modern Protestantism would be neither owned nor even recognized by the pioneer Reformers. *The Bondage of the Will* fairly sets before us what they believed about the salvation of the lost mankind. In the light of it, we are forced to ask whether Protestant Christendom has not tragically sold its birthright between Luther’s day and our own.”

e) The Sacraments and the gospel.

“The sacraments are not only signs among men, but signs of God’s will towards us, so it is correct to define the New Testament sacraments as signs of grace. There are two parts to a sacrament, the sign and the Word. In the New Testament, the Word is the added promise of grace. The promise of the New Testament is the promise of the forgiveness of sins, as the text says. ‘This is my body, which is given for you; this is the cup of the New Testament with my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ Therefore the Word offers forgiveness of sins, while the ceremony is a sort of picture or “seal,” as Paul calls it (Rom. 4:11), showing forth the promise. As the promise is useless unless faith accepts it, so the ceremony is useless without the faith which really believes that the forgiveness of sins is being offered here. Such a faith encourages the contrite mind. As the Word was given to arouse this faith, so the sacrament was instituted to move the heart to believe through what it presents to the eyes. For the Holy Spirit works through the Word and the sacraments” (Melanchthon, *Apology for the Augsburg Confession*).

(1) Baptism (Quotations from “Luther’s Large Catechism”, *Book of Concord*.)

*The purpose of baptism:

“The power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism is to save” (439).

“To be saved. . . is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil and to enter the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever” (439).

*Why such an external ordinance is important:

“Whatever God effects in us he does through external ordinances such as baptism and the Gospel (which is an external, oral proclamation)” (440).

*Baptism - a work of God:

“Baptism is the work of God, not men” (437).

*Why baptism is effective:

“It is effective because God’s Word and commandment are added to the water” (438).

“It receives power through the Word” (440).

“The Word and the water must not be separated” (439).

(2) Baptism and faith:

“Baptism is not our work but God’s.... God’s works, however, are salutary and necessary for salvation, and they do not exclude but rather demand faith, for without faith they could not be grasped” (441).

“Baptism is not a work which we do but is a treasure which God gives us and faith grasps” (441).

“Without faith baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure” (440).

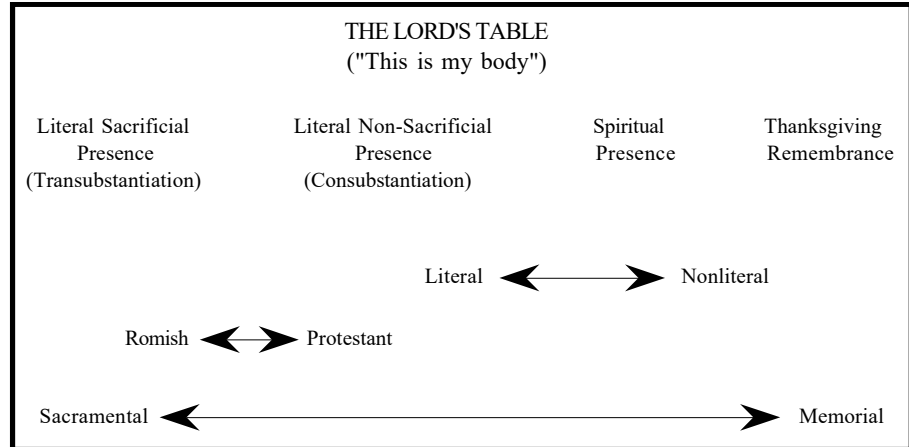
“To appreciate and use baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, ‘But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life’” (442).

(3) Infant baptism:

“We bring the child with the purpose and hope that he may believe, and we pray God to grant him faith. But we do not baptize him on that account, but solely on the command of God” (444).

(4) Lord’s supper

I will say more about his view when we come to Zwingli



“It is the true body and blood of the Lord (Jesus) Christ in and under the bread and wine” (447).

“The sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine” (447).

“It is bread and wine comprehended in God’s Word and connected with it” (447).

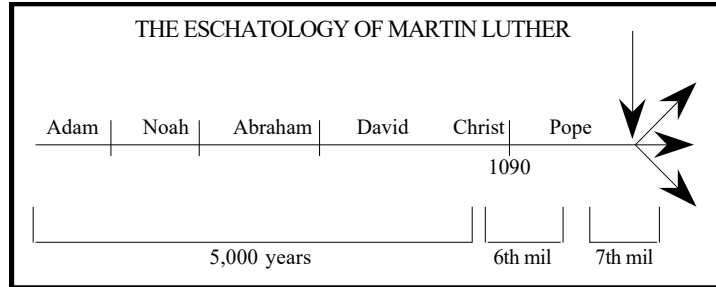
“It is the Word...which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine” (448).

“We go to the sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because the words are there through which this is imparted!” (449)

“It is called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man.... The Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself” (449).

“What is given in and with the sacrament cannot be grasped and appropriated by the body. This is done by the faith of the heart which discerns and desires this treasure” (451).

(5) Eschatology



(6) Relationship of Church and State

3. The Development of Later Lutheran Orthodoxy.

a) Luther's death (1546), Melanchthon's conciliatory spirit.

Luther died in Eisleben, 18 February 1546, in the presence of Justus Jonas, then pastor at Halle. He had said, "When I get home to Wittenberg again, I will lie down in my coffin and give the worms a fat doctor to feast on".

b) The controversies within Lutheran orthodoxy.

(1) *the Antinomian controversy* (the use of the law)

The first phase of the controversy concerned whether we should preach the law at all. Melanchthon said yes. Agricola said no, because the gospel produces repentance.

The second phase concerned whether the law has any role in the life of the Christian. Some Lutheran teachers said "the best art of the Christian is to know nothing of the law."

(2) *the Osiandrian controversy*

A controversy over the teachings of Andreas Osiander who taught that justification is something more than the imputation of Christ's righteousness, something more than a declarative righteousness. It is the process of becoming righteous through our union with Christ. The emphasis is on Christ in us rather than Christ *for* us.

(3) *the Adiaphoristic controversy* (things indifferent).

A controversy concerning whether Roman ceremonies are to be regarded as indifferent things (*adiaphora*). Is it acceptable for a pastor to conform to Roman Catholic ceremonial rites if he continues to preach sound Christian doctrine?

(4) *the Majoristic controversy*

A controversy between Nicholas von Amsdorf and George Major over the role of good works in salvation.

Major wrote that “good works are necessary for salvation, since no one is saved by wicked works and no one without good works.”

Amsdorf responded that such a statement could only be defended by a “Pelagian, a Mameluke (Turk), and a denier of Christ.” He continued, “Good works are injurious to salvation.”

(5) *the Synergistic controversy*

A controversy concerning the issue of human cooperation in salvation. Is the will of man weakened by sin but still able to cooperate with grace? Is the will passive?

c) The settlement of the controversies.

(1) *The Formula of Concord* (1577) - a statement drawn up in 1577 by a number of Lutheran theologians which became the definitive statement of Lutheran orthodoxy.

(2) *The Book of Concord* (1580) - a work assembled in 1580 that contains the confessions recognized in the Lutheran churches. It includes the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Formula of Concord, and a number of other specifically Lutheran statements.