



# Goahead Theological Seminary & College

9 East Homestead Ave. Palisades Park, NJ 07650 in USA  
1-201-852-3600 / 1-917-530-1991 / [gtstheology@gmail.com](mailto:gtstheology@gmail.com)

## Martin Luther



## Martin Luther

**Born:** November 10, 1483, Eisleben, County of Mansfeld

**Died:** February 18, 1546 (age 62), Eisleben, County of Mansfeld

**Career:** Christian theologian / Professor at the University of Wittenberg, Germany

**Denomination:** Protestant

**Spouse:** Katharina von Bora (married: 1525)

**Children:** Hans (Johannes), Elisabeth, Magdalena, Martin, Paul, Margarethe

**Parents:** Father: Hans Luder / Mother: Margarethe Lindemann

**Signature:** *Martin Luther*

**Martin Luther** (German: Martin Luther, German pronunciation: [ˈmɑːtɪn ˈlʊtɐ], November 10, 1483 – February 18, 1546) was a German religious reformer. He



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**was a professor at the University of Wittenberg at the time and later initiated the Protestant Reformation. Luther, who was originally an Augustinian monk, criticized the Roman Catholic Church's sale of indulgences as forgiveness without repentance and false peace (quoting the teachings of the prophet Jeremiah), and argued for justification by faith alone (der Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben). He opened a new era of individual salvation through justification. Luther, who criticized the sale of indulgences, posted his 95 Theses in 1517 to confront the Dominican friar and preacher Johann Tetzel, who was selling indulgences in large quantities at the time. In 1520, Pope Leo X demanded that he recant all his teachings, but he continued to insist on the authority of Scripture and rejected teachings that contradicted it. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, he faced the same demand from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, but he refused, ultimately leading to his excommunication by the Pope. It is said that on October 31, 1517, Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the University Church in Wittenberg, marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Luther's Reformation had a profound impact on the religion and society of the time.**

## **Outline**

**Martin Luther protested against the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church and the erroneous authority of the Pope. He refuted its doctrines and emphasized the supreme authority of the Bible in Christian faith and salvation through faith alone in Christ and God's grace alone. Luther's argument can be summarized in the phrase "Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, glory to God alone" (Sola scriptura, Sola fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria). (Five Solas) Luther himself did not consider himself responsible for the "Reformation," saying it was something he was compelled to do, led by God. He desired to preach the gospel as an "evangelist," and he wanted to be called a preacher, doctor, and professor. However, the actions he took in his life had profound consequences. Not only did Protestantism emerge, but his translation of the Bible, numerous writings, compositions, and sermons significantly transformed society and history. In South Korea, the Korean Lutheran Church refers to Luther as Martin Luther.**



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**Life:**



**Martin Luther during his time as a monk**

**Become a Monk**

**Parants:**

Luther was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, to Hans Luder, a miner,[3] and Margarethe Lindemann. His father was known as a Christian who did not condone corruption in the church.



**Martin Luther's parents**

Luther reportedly grew up under the shadow of a strict father, so strict that he felt burdened by the phrase "Our Father in heaven" in the Lord's Prayer. Consequently, his career path had to be determined by his father's will, not his



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own aptitude and interests. Luther's father, intending for his son to become a lawyer and achieve social success, enrolled him at the University of Erfurt, a prestigious institution that attracted only the world's most accomplished lawyers. There's a scene where Luther's father embraces him and says, "Even if I have to suffer, I must make my son successful," giving us a glimpse into the extent of his father's ambition. Luther completed his trivium (Latin: trivium) and quadrivium (Latin: quadrivium) studies at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, earning a bachelor's degree in literature in September 1502 and a master's degree in literature in January 1505, passing the exams second out of 17 students. Luther began his law studies in earnest in May, after completing his preparatory school.

## **Conversion:**

While Luther was continuing his studies at the university, he was returning home to Erfurt. On July 2nd, near Stotterheim, a lightning strike struck, and as he fell to the ground, he called out loudly to the patron saint of miners: "Saint Anne (Mother of the Virgin Mary), help me! I will become a priest!"

Already ripe with the idea of entering a monastery, Luther had no hesitation in accepting the thunderstorm as God's voice. Despite his father's angry objections, frustrated by his son's change of direction, which defied his expectations, Luther entered the "Black Monastery" of the Augustinian Order in Erfurt on July 17, 1505, becoming a monk.

Luther agonized over whether sinful humans could have a right relationship with a holy God. The monastic order sent him to study at the University of Wittenberg. Professor Johann von Staupitz, believing Luther would find peace through a serious study of the Bible, appointed him as a biblical professor, which helped Luther resolve his religious concerns. Through his lectures on Romans, Psalms, and Galatians, Luther developed a new concept of righteousness. Justification is the doctrine that sinners are declared righteous solely through faith in Christ. God's righteousness is passive, bestowed by grace. The following passage is a prime example.

- "Denn Gottes Gerechtigkeit wird darin geoffenbart aus Glauben zu Glauben,

wie geschrieben steht: "Der Gerechte aber wird aus Glauben leben."





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• "δικαιοσύνη γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν,  
καθὼς γέγραπται Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται."

• "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:17).

## The 95 Theses: The Starting Point of the Reformation



(All Saints' Church)

The door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. The original door was burned down but replaced in 1857 by Frederick William IV of Prussia.



95 Theses

### 95 Theses:

The compulsory sale of indulgences by the medieval Roman Catholic Church fundamentally shook Luther's faith. He could not conform to the Roman Catholic Church's teaching that "salvation can be purchased with money," and even more so, he could not remain silent. Out of a sense of pastoral conscience and responsibility for the many people he taught and cared for, Luther began



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**criticizing the sale of indulgences during his sermons. When no improvement was seen, he finally posted the "95 Theses" on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. He began a full-scale debate with the established church, marking the beginning of the Reformation. However, it is not confirmed whether Luther posted his theses on church walls. Luther wrote his rebuttals, printed them, and read them. There is no evidence that he posted them on church doors or nearby after publishing them. The first person to mention posting theses on church walls was Philipp Melanchthon, who, after Luther's death, mentioned Luther in his own writings and is the first to record the posting of theses on church walls.**

**In 1515, Luther oversaw ten Augustinian monasteries, putting him in a position to spread the seeds of his newly discovered gospel through correspondence and visits. Initially unaware of the radical nature of his enlightenment, he continued to study the Bible, but the controversy over indulgences brought it into the open.**

**Indulgences are associated with the Sacrament of Penance, one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. A priest would hear the confession of a penitent, grant absolution, and then perform acts of atonement, such as martyrdom, recitation of psalms, or special prayers. Indulgences were certificates that exempted the penitent from these acts of atonement. However, as indulgences became the Roman Catholic Church's main source of income, the church intensified its sales of them. Johann Tetzel, in fact, deceived believers by claiming, "The moment a gold coin clatters into the offering chest, the soul will escape purgatory and ascend to heaven." When Elector Frederick III refused to sell indulgences within Saxony, he placed a display of indulgences near the border. He also appropriately quoted scripture and appealed to the emotions of believers, claiming that their parents were suffering in purgatory, to deceive the naive believers. Church members themselves contributed to this corruption. Indeed, medieval church members preferred the easy life of seeking forgiveness from sin by purchasing indulgences, rather than a sincere life of faith in which they repented their sins to God. They did not consider whether the church's claim that salvation could be purchased truly aligned with the teachings of the Bible.**

**Driven by a pastoral responsibility for the souls of his parishioners, Luther had already criticized the sale of indulgences in previous sermons (October 31,**



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**1516, and February 1517). However, when his appeals for a reconsideration of the confessional question ultimately failed, Luther decided to call for a public debate, and on October 31, 1517, the eve of All Saints' Day, he posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Church of All Saints in Wittenberg.**

**Luther began his theses (Article 1) by stating, "When our Lord and Teacher Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He demanded that the whole life of the faithful be repented." Applying his rediscovery of the gospel to the issue of indulgences, he asserted that "the true treasure of the Church is the holy gospel of the glory and grace of God" (Article 62), while declaring that indulgences are incomparable to the mercy revealed on the cross of Christ (Article 68).**

**In the final thesis (Article 95), Luther concludes that Christians do not enter heaven through works such as indulgences, but rather through many sufferings.**

## **Reformation:**

**The Reformation movement advocated for church reform by addressing the problems of Roman Catholicism. To understand the theology of the cross, we must first understand what Luther meant by the theology of glory.**

## **Theology of Glory:**

**According to theologian Kim Young-han, Luther's theology of glory is a theology in which theologians perceive God's essence through His works and thus see His invisible essence. Like Moses in Exodus 33, the theology of glory seeks to see God's face. The theology of glory seeks to recognize God through His works and, through His visible essence, to destroy the wisdom of His invisible essence. Luther said, "It is neither sufficient nor necessary for anyone to know God in his glory and majesty, if he does not know God in the humiliation and shame of the cross." This is a direct knowledge of God, a path impossible for humans. The theology of glory corresponds to Philip's request, "Lord, show us the Father" (John 14:8). But Jesus said to those who, like Philip, seek God elsewhere, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8). Recognizing God through His work of creation—this is the recognition of God attempted through His work (Werke). This work refers to God's work revealed in creation, and it is also human action. Natural theology, speculative metaphysics, and moral human**



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**action—holiness—all seek to recognize God through His work of creation. The theology of glory leads humans to the pride of asserting their own merits. The theology of glory emphasizes "glory and power" (Glorie und Macht) as the standard for recognizing God. It emphasizes human actions. Luther criticized medieval scholasticism for emphasizing the theology of glory, which emphasized human actions, and proposed a theology of the cross, which emphasizes God's grace. Medieval scholasticism believed that human moral effort and rational reasoning could lead to the knowledge of God. This was a humanistic attempt to approach God directly through human religious contemplation or work-righteousness. This structure ascends from humanity to God. Therefore, it is a theology of glory. The theology of glory seeks to directly recognize God in His public divine power, wisdom, and glory. The theology of glory establishes humans as ethical performers, as enforcers of the law before God. Thus, it justifies moral agency. Originating from moralism and rationalism, the wisdom of the world refers to human morality and the capacity for reason, where humans seek to reach God through their own merits. This is the theology of glory. The theology of glory does not recognize the God crucified and hidden in the cross, for it seeks the glory and recognition of the world. Luther declared that such human methods cannot lead to God. The path for human approach to God depends entirely on God's grace. The world does not see God in Christ, the theologian said, because it sees Christ as weak and powerless, crucified.**

## **Theology of the Cross:**

**Originally intended for scholarly debate, the Ninety-Five Theses were printed in large quantities and spread "like angels as messengers" throughout Germany, eventually reaching all of Europe. In April 1518, five months after the publication of the Ninety-Five Theses, the Roman Catholic Church, seeking to quell the growing explosiveness within the unnamed monk's arguments, invited him to present his theology at the German chapter of the Augustinian Order in Heidelberg. However, this gathering could never suppress Luther's arguments. Rather, his righteous and powerful arguments resonated far beyond the walls of the Augustinian monastery, reverberating throughout the world and further intensifying the controversy over the sale of indulgences. At the Heidelberg Dispute, Luther presented his "theology of the cross," which argued that God could be known through suffering and the cross. He criticized the theology of**





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**glory in Scholasticism, that is, the theology of the Roman Catholic Church at the time, which pursued power and conquest. His theology of the cross was also a theology of grace that emphasized God's mercy and grace by denying the theology of glory, which claimed that humans have the moral capacity to be saved, and insisting on salvation by God's grace.**

**In contrast to the theology of glory, theologian Kim Young-han explains Luther's theology of the cross as follows:**

**"The visible side of God, his backside, is seen and perceived through suffering and the cross." Luther develops the theology of the cross through his commentary on Exodus 33. Moses prays to see God. God says to Moses, "You cannot see my face, for whoever sees my face shall not live" (Exodus 33:20). God places Moses in a cleft of the rock and covers him with his hand until his glory passes by. Moses sees only the backside of God, not the face of his glory. The theology of the cross is the theology of seeing the backside of God.**

**The theology of the cross presents the cross of Christ and the cross of the believer as the standard for knowing God. The theology of the cross seeks to indirectly recognize God in His hidden place—in weakness and foolishness. The theology of the cross understands humanity as called to suffering and tribulation. Thus, the cross disempowers humanity before God. Instead of humanity acting on its own, it allows God to work everything within humanity. Humans become pure recipients of God's merit and grace. According to the theology of glory, the theology of the cross recognizes God in suffering, that is, in evil and foolishness.**

**Luther says, "Because humans have misused the knowledge of God through His works, God wants to be known again through suffering, and the wisdom of the invisible nature is to be abolished through the wisdom of the visible nature." According to Luther, God's revelation and His hiding in the cross are in opposition. For Luther, true theology and true knowledge of God are found in Christ crucified. The cross shatters the self-consciousness of natural theology and natural ethos. The cross shatters human notions of success and prosperity. God meets us in the death of Christ, and so humanity experiences Christ's death as their own. Worldly wisdom cannot know God; only the cross of Christ is the wisdom of God. Conversely, the crucified Christ is hidden from worldly wisdom. Herein lies the weakness and foolishness of God.**



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**The theology of the cross testifies to the God hidden in the cross. This is possible only through a humble and humble heart. The cross is God's grace (die Verhehlung Gottes), for it reveals not God's power but God's impotence (die Ohnmacht Gottes). God's power is not directly revealed, but paradoxically revealed in his impotence and humiliation.**

**Luther argued that God's grace is hidden in His wrath, and His gifts and blessings are hidden beneath the cross, so to speak, beneath "misfortune and calamity." God's truth appears to the world as a lie, and the world's lies as truth. Luther argued that God approaches the world as a devil. According to the theology of the cross, God is not present in a pulpit where thousands or tens of thousands gather to cheer and the preacher, like a star, elicits cheers from the audience, but rather in a pulpit where a small group of people, humanly very poor, listen earnestly with poor hearts. God is present not in the pulpit where the preacher, like an emperor, drives the audience into religious fervor and distributes prosperity and success, but in the true pulpit where a small audience with pure hearts is led to look to God in the midst of disaster, hardship, and illness.**

**Luther explained the theology of the cross as follows:**

**The theology of glory is neither insightful nor adequate. Indeed, theologians who believe they can know God from nature do not know Christ, preferring deeds over suffering, wisdom over foolishness, and thus never know the God (Absconditus Deus) hidden in the suffering of the cross. According to Paul, such people are enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18). In fact, they loathe the suffering of the cross, relishing its achievements and glory, and thus calling the good of the cross evil and the works of evil good. Because people have abused the knowledge of God derived from their own works, God, on the contrary, desired to be known through His suffering, thereby reaffirming the knowledge of what is visible. This is so that those who do not worship God as the One who reveals Himself in His own actions will worship Him as the One who hides Himself in suffering. Therefore, it is not enough for anyone to recognize God's self-abasement and the cross, and it is of no help whatsoever. Thus, God rejects the wisdom of the wise, as the prophet Isaiah said: "Truly, Yahweh, you are a God who hides yourself" (Isaiah 45:15).**



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## **Theological Debate with Roman Catholics**

### **Debate with Cardinal Cajetan and arguments for justification:**

**When Luther refused to renounce his teachings, the Pope summoned him to Rome to be tried by the Inquisition. However, Elector Frederick III and the University opposed this, and instead arranged for Cardinal Thomas Cajetan to interrogate him in Augsburg. During his summons from October 12 to 15, 1518, Cajetan pointed Luther to the papal decree on indulgences (Unigenitus, 1343) and threatened him with obedience to the authority of the Pope who had granted them. Luther countered that the council was superior to the pope, and that because all humans are fallible, the final authority for Christian faith rested with the Bible, not the church. He also held to what Luther called passive justification by faith alone, which held that while sinners' status does not change, God recognizes Christians as righteous through their faith in Christ. When Cajetan was ultimately unable to get Luther to say, "I repent" (revoco), he wrote a letter to Elector Frederick III, threatening and demanding that Luther be "handed over to Rome or expelled from his lands," but the Elector protected Luther.**

**(January 1519) Karl von Miltitz, bearing a golden rose, a special token of the papal favor, appeared before the Elector. Unaware that the Elector had already rejected Cajetan's demand to banish Luther, he proclaimed the benefits to the Elector of banishing Luther or sending him to Rome. He then requested permission to meet with Luther, which was granted. The two men agreed to remain silent publicly from then on.**

### **Leipzig controversy**

**However, when Johann Eck, a professor at the University of Ingolstadt, broke his silence and attacked Luther, Luther, along with his colleague Andreas Karlstadt, followed him to Leipzig to debate him (July 4–14, 1519). Johann Eck cleverly positioned Leipzig, rather than his own university, as a challenger to Wittenberg, the two universities representing Saxony, which had long been rivals. In this debate, Luther argued that acknowledging the pope was not necessary for salvation. Furthermore, he argued that even church councils could err, citing the Council of Constance (1414–1418)'s erroneous**



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**condemnation of the Czechoslovakian reformer John Huss. He also argued, based on Ephesians, that Christ alone, not the pope, is the head of the church on earth.**

**The debate between Luther and Eck can be summarized in four points:**

- First, regarding the origin and authority of the Pope. Eck argued that papal authority came from God and therefore obedience to the Pope was necessary. However, Luther countered that the Pope's authority was based on a forged document, the Isidorean Decreta (de), and was therefore false.**
- Second, regarding the authority of Scripture. Luther argued that the Bible alone is the doctrine of faith and the norm for life, and called for the church to be reformed according to its teachings. Eck, on the other hand, accused Luther of heresy, pointing out that the "Scripture alone" ideology was a heretical claim drawn from late medieval modernist thought.**
- Third, regarding purgatory. Eck argued that the idea of purgatory is biblical because it appears in 2 Maccabees 12:45, but Luther argued that Maccabees was not biblical but merely apocryphal, lacking divine authority and therefore the doctrine of purgatory was erroneous.**

**Fourth, indulgences and the sacrament of confession. Eck argued that indulgences and confession were based on church tradition and therefore should be followed by the church. Luther countered that church traditions were of human origin and therefore fallible, that only the Bible was infallible, and that indulgences and confession contradicted the teachings of Scripture.**

**This controversy brought Luther into conflict with George, Duke of Saxony, but his firm stance also won him allies such as Melancthon.**

**The Leipzig Dispute both heightened expectations for Luther and intensified attacks on him. Eck's report on the Leipzig Dispute led to a papal bull excommunicating Luther. In the bull Exurge Domine (Arise, Lord!), issued on June 24, 1520, Pope Leo gave Luther 60 days to repent and threatened to excommunicate him and all his followers if he did not recant within this period. The bull condemned 41 statements from Luther's works as "heretic, unlawful, and false," and ordered the burning of all of Luther's writings. After the burning of his books in Löwen and before the bull containing the threat of**





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**excommunication had yet to reach Wittenberg, Luther, along with his students, burned not only the papal bull but also the Roman canon law at the Elster Gate in Wittenberg on December 10th. This burned down every bridge between Luther and Rome.**

**The Pope's warrant for burning at the stake infuriated Luther.**

**“ These words of mine are words of truth, words of soundness, and they are meant to promote God's truth on earth as faithfully as humanly possible, and to save human souls. Yet, you, God's representative in this world, respond with executioners and fire? For trying to convey God's word to you, will you condemn me and my words of truth to be burned at the stake? "I feel that you are not God's agent, but the devil's agent. Your bull is a lie, a dirty piece of paper. Burn it. You will do as you please. This is what I will do," he said, burning the Pope's warrant. ”**

**The papal bull Decet Romanum Pontificem (Thus Says the Pope of Rome), which finally excommunicated Luther, was promulgated in Rome on January 3, 1521. The excommunication deeply wounded Luther's soul. In fact, even during the height of the indulgence controversy, Luther remained completely loyal to the Pope. He believed that protecting the Roman Pontiff from abuses of indulgences was precisely what strengthened his authority. However, it was only when he became convinced that the Papacy had handed the Roman Church over to the Antichrist that Luther finally decided to strike back against the Papacy. Therefore, Luther's severance of ties with the past was not a sudden act. He claimed that he was not the one who turned away from this relationship. Rather, he claimed that he had been thoroughly shunned and excommunicated three times.**

**In 1518, Staupitz released me from my vow of obedience to the monastery and left me alone in Augsburg. Then the Pope excommunicated me from his church, and finally the Emperor excommunicated me from his empire. But the Lord welcomed me.**

**Worms controversy:**



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**Despite the Pope's excommunication, the German princes, led by Elector Frederick III, succeeded in securing Luther's opportunity to defend himself at the Diet of Worms. Consequently, Emperor Charles V extended an invitation to Luther on March 6, 1521, promising his personal safety. The emperor's assurances of safety were unreliable. Even in the Elector's court, opinions were divided. Ultimately, the decision to go was Luther's. He resolutely set out for Worms, ignoring the concerns and admonitions of those around him.**

**“ We will enter Worms, though all the gates of hell and all the powers of heaven will try to block them... Our mission there will be to drive out the devil. ”**

**Schpalatin (de) also sensed his determined appearance.**

**“ He intends to go to Worms, where there are as many devils as there are tiles on the roofs. ”**

**Luther arrived in Worms on April 16, 1521, and attended his first hearing the following day. The Archbishop of Trier's counselor asked Luther to answer two questions.**

- “**
- 1. Do you acknowledge these books published under your name as your own?**
  - 2. Are you prepared to retract what you have written in these books? ”**

**To the first question, Luther admitted that these were his own books and that he had written more. To the second question, Luther asked for a day's rest.**

**On the evening of April 17, Luther wrote a letter to Johannes Cuspinianus (de) in Vienna about the events of that day and the next.**

**“ ...At this moment, I stood before the emperor and the legates and was asked whether I would recant... Tomorrow I will answer my retraction. My request for time to consider was granted, but I will not be granted more than this one day. However, as long as Christ grants me grace, I will never recant a single word... ”**



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**The next day (April 18), Luther answered boldly before the emperor.**

**“ I will not recognize the authority of popes and synods unless I am proven guilty by the testimony of Scripture and clear reason. Indeed, both have erred and have held contradictory views. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against conscience is neither safe nor wise. God help me. Amen. ”**

**British historian Thomas Carlyle called Luther's impending death before the Diet of Worms the greatest event in European history, and his declaration that he would not recant his views at the Diet of Worms the greatest moment in modern human history. He also said that Luther's act of confronting hell itself demonstrated the ultimate act of fearless courage.**

## **Protection for Luther:**

### **Hiding at Wartburg Castle:**

**Emperor Charles V was determined to keep his promise to Luther's safety, so he ordered him to return to Wittenberg within three weeks and to refrain from preaching or writing during the journey.**

**Luther left Worms with his companions in secret. Along the way, Luther was kidnapped in a pre-arranged manner by Frederick III and taken to Wartburg Castle. There, he remained for ten months, posing as the knight George. Meanwhile, after Luther's departure, the emperor issued the Edict of Worms, declaring him an outlaw. Legally, anyone who murdered him would not be punished for it. Furthermore, his teachings were condemned by the theological faculties of the universities of Paris, Leuven, and Cologne.**

## **German Bible Translation**

**Luther knew how to spend his "enforced vacation" at Wartburg Castle. He used it for biblical commentary, written debates with Roman Catholic scholars, and writing treatises, as well as for his translation of the New Testament. Luther's German translation of the Bible, published in September 1522, came to be known as the "September Bible." Luther's translation of the Bible into German**



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**was a significant theological and linguistic event, liberating German Christians from the authority of the Church and contributing to the development of the German language. Before the German Reformation, the Bible used was in Latin, accessible only to a select few nobles and clergy. The clergy exploited this to manipulate Christians for their own pastoral needs. However, Luther's translation of the Bible into High German made it accessible to everyone, freeing German Christians from the clergy's control and allowing them to read and understand the Bible freely with their own reason. Moreover, since the High German that Luther used in his Bible translation became modern Standard German, Luther's Bible translation was also an event that unified the German language and grammar.**

**Luther aimed to demonstrate to the world that "German nightingales can sing as beautifully as Roman harpies" by successfully translating the Bible. To this end, he devoted considerable attention to using the language of the common people. His principles for translating the Bible can be seen in his letters to Spalatin (de).**

**“ We will sometimes ask you for appropriate words. But please teach us simple language. We will not tolerate courtly or castle-like language. This book must be renowned for its simplicity. ”**

**The rapid distribution of Luther's German Bible, thanks to Gutenberg's printing press, allowed Christians to understand the Bible with their own reason, without the need for clerical interpretation. This history laid the foundation for biblical criticism, which sought to move beyond canonical interpretations like verbal inspiration and instead utilize academic methods like sociology, rhetoric, comparison with manuscripts, and history to understand the Bible objectively.**

## **Against the use of violence:**

**While Luther was staying at Wartburg Castle, Andreas Karlstadt attempted to reform the church in Wittenberg by force. He was joined by three "Zwickau Prophets," who claimed to have received special revelations from God. Wine, previously denied to laymen, was offered at the Eucharist, innovative liturgical practices and vestments were introduced, monks celebrating Roman Catholic Mass were stoned, icons were removed from churches and burned, and riots erupted. Feeling that his work, begun as a work of faith, was being**





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**misunderstood and threatened, Luther secretly visited Wittenberg in December, staying there for five days before returning. In a letter to Spalatin, expressing his feelings at the time, Luther criticized them for making the freedom granted by the Gospel into a mandatory clause.**

**“ I do not want anyone to fight for the gospel with violence and bloodshed. Through the Word, the world is conquered, through the Word, the church is saved, and through the Word, the church is revived. ”**

**As the unrest continued, Luther left his exile and returned to Wittenberg on March 6, 1522, where he preached for eight consecutive days in the church. His principle that only the word can do the work was proven right. Peace and order were restored.**

**“ In short, I will preach the Word. I will speak the Word. I will write the Word. But I will not force or coerce anyone. Faith desires to be free, not forced or coerced. ”**

## **The Principle of Reform: The Word of God:**

**Luther's Reformation, which took place between 1517 and 1520, marked a break with the Roman Catholic Church, but also marked a period of differentiation from within the reform movement. First, there was differentiation from the radical reform movement centered around Andreas Karlstadt, Thomas Müntzer, and the peasants (1521–1525), and then from Erasmus and the humanists (1524–1525). These processes hindered the rapid development of the Reformation by alienating Luther from the peasants, Thomas Müntzer, and humanists, but on the other hand, they prevented the gospel of God's grace from being misunderstood as fanatic mysticism, humanistic enlightenment, and sociopolitical radicalism.**

**What these processes have in common is that Luther relied solely on the Word of God. Luther argued for “Scripture alone” against the Roman Catholic Church, which placed the authority of the church and tradition above the Bible based on the understanding that the church existed before the Bible appeared through canonization. He argued for the objective words of the Bible against the**



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**subjective understanding of revelation by the enthusiasts who emphasized human religious experience. He argued for the certainty of the Bible against Erasmus' humanism. He also argued for the peasant revolution, which interpreted the gospel politically, saying that the gospel deals only with conscience.**

**Luther was convinced that if the Word of God were preached fully, the results would come naturally.**

**“ I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote the Word of God, and did nothing else. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friend Nikolaus von Amsdorf, the Word utterly neutralized the Pope—to the extent that no monarch or emperor could have done such harm. I did nothing. The Word did it all. ”**

## **Marriage:**

**Luther married on June 13, 1525, at the age of 42. His bride was Katharina von Bora, a former Roman Catholic nun 16 years his junior. Luther stated that his purpose in marrying was to provide his aging father with children and to set an example for those hesitant about marriage by practicing his preaching.**

**I wanted to put into practice what I had taught, because I see so many people who are timid despite the great light from the Gospel. God intended and brought about this action. For I am not "in love" or burning with lust. But I love my wife.**

**However, when Luther announced his intention to marry, everyone opposed him. His colleagues worried that if he married, the world and the devil would laugh at him and that all his accomplishments would be in vain. Especially in the midst of the Peasants' War, his announcement of marriage was met with surprise. However, Luther believed that the Reformation and the spread of the Gospel represented a final attack by Satan.**



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## **German Peasant Revolution:**

**The German Peasants' Rebellion, in which German peasants rose up against the exploitation of their lords, initially received sympathetic responses. However, Luther later claimed it was a satanic attack aimed at distorting the Gospel into a dictatorial system, demanding a harsh suppression from the lords. Luther believed that while the Pope had previously asserted supremacy over secular power, the peasants now took up the sword in the name of the Gospel, seeking to seize political power.**

## **Death:**

**He died in Eisleben, his birthplace, at the age of 63. He was on his way to mediate a legal dispute between the counts of Mansfeld (de). On the night of his death, his doctor and friends attended his deathbed. Luther was repeatedly reciting the following Bible verse:**

**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. — John 3:16**

**Nearing three in the morning, Dr. Jonas, knowing his end was near, asked him, "Will you die firmly standing on Christ and on the doctrines you taught?"**

**Luther's body stirred and he answered loudly,**

**"Yes."**

**Luther's remains were taken to Wittenberg and laid to rest in the Church of All Saints.**

## **Music:**

**Luther said that music, next to theology, is God's greatest gift. He said music shares many similarities with theology, particularly in its ability to heal the soul and revive spirits. Without music, humans are like wood and stone, but with music, the devil can be driven away. Luther experienced this firsthand in the midst of spiritual suffering.**

**"Music often revives me and frees me from heavy burdens."**



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**However, the "enthusiasts" who despised music were unaware of this benefit. They dismissed the organ as a legacy of the devil. However, Luther said,**

**"Music is a gift and blessing from God. Music also drives away the devil and makes people happy. Music makes people forget all anger, obscenity, pride, and all evil. I consider music second only to theology in importance and cherish it infinitely."**

**Meanwhile, Luther restored the sacred music, previously reserved for a select few in the Roman Catholic Church, to the common good. Previously, in Gregorian chant, the congregation remained silent during Mass, while only expert choir members took turns singing the Doxology. However, Luther reformed the liturgy, or worship style, to allow the general congregation to sing hymns. He also wrote and composed numerous hymns, including "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." His compositions were established in the genre known as "choral." Although he complained about his "small, ugly voice," he was a skilled musician who played the flute and lute.**

**Luther believed in the power of hymns to move people. He believed that hymns were like scripture to both the common people and the learned, and that fathers should diligently teach hymns to their families.**

## **Luther's Reformation Empowers the Clergy:**

**In Luther's time, the standard of Protestant pastors was low. They were corrupt, immoral, drunkards, and some even ran their own taverns. Some clergy struggled to make ends meet because their parishioners refused to contribute. Melanchthon, a fellow Lutheran reformer, published the "Instructions for the Inspectors of the Parish Priests of the Electorate of Saxony" in March 1528, aiming to educate parish priests. In Protestant churches affiliated with the British Empire, pastors assumed the same status as state officials, and there was a need for clergy equipped to teach the Bible and faith. Passing the priesthood examination administered by theologians at the University of Wittenberg and receiving university education were mandatory, raising the standard of Protestant clergy. The most important bishopric in the British Empire was responsible for social welfare, marriage, worship, and religious education.**





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## **Theology:**

**Martin Luther's core theological ideas can be broadly explained in three slogans.**

**“ By faith alone (sola fide)! By grace alone (sola gratia)! By Scripture alone (sola scriptura)! ”**

## **Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone:**

**Luther's Reformation ideology was thoroughly God-centered. The core of his Reformation was to establish God as God, opposing the Roman Catholic Church, which sought to judge God through human eyes and build its own religion upon it. In fact, the medieval Roman Catholic Church was not ignorant of the authority of the Bible and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Nor did it fail to teach the prevenient grace of God. Moreover, he was not ignorant of the importance of faith. However, for Luther, what was radical was the small word preceding these words: "sola." Luther believed that while the Roman Catholic Church spoke these words, it was actually, at bottom, a religion obsessed with humanism. So, at the time, the Roman Catholic Church, while talking about the authority of the Bible, placed the authority of the Pope, who interprets the Bible, on top of it. While saying that God gives grace, they understood it only as a 'power' that helps humans build up the righteousness of the law. They started out by saying that faith was important, but soon they began emphasizing 'faith formed through good deeds.'**

**However, Luther said that the Bible is a book that anyone can understand because its letters are self-evident and simple, and that no other interpreter is important except for himself (Scripture alone!), and he understood grace as God's 'favor' (in theological terms, this is called 'justification') that God does not change sinners from sinners to righteous people in Christ, but recognizes them as righteous after seeing their faith in Christ (grace alone!), and that faith in God's promise fulfills all the laws at once and makes humans righteous (faith alone!).**



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**"Sola Scriptura" (Scripture alone) was also a resistance to clericalism. By asserting that Scripture is the ultimate authority for theology and doctrine, it demonstrated that the papacy's authority was not absolute.**

## **Christ alone:**

**These three slogans of the Reformation, which emerged under the principle of God-centeredness, are closely related to each other, and the principle of "Christ alone" is the bond that connects them. Luther understood the theme of the Bible, encompassing both the Old and New Testaments, to be Christ. He said, "Take Christ out of the Bible, and what more can you find in it?"**

**"Grace alone" asserted the absolute importance and sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross for our salvation in atonement. "Faith alone" presupposes a confession of Christ, the God-man who comes as the end of the law and "empties" its demands, that is, the true God and true man.**

**The teaching that "one is justified by faith" applies comprehensively not only to doctrine but also to ethics, culture, and politics. Luther emphasized its importance, saying that the church stands or falls on this principle. Those who are justified by God through faith no longer need to offer their own works to God to be recognized as righteous. Instead, they give to their neighbors who need their works. When we are faithful to the calling God has given us, we live a holier life than anyone else and practice love for our neighbors, which is the fulfillment of the law.**

**In his article, "For a New Reformation of the Korean Church," published in the December 2008 issue of Christian Thought, evangelical theologian Dr. Kim Se-yoon argues that the Christ-only doctrine advocated by the religious reformer Martin Luther means that the gospel the church should proclaim must be the gospel of the cross, proclaiming Jesus as Christ through his death and resurrection. Dr. Kim, with his theological intellect, argues that this interpretation is an appropriate critique of the Korean church, which is dominated by the gospel of wealth and success in the world, rather than the gospel of the cross.**



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## Autobiographical short story:

Luther wrote what scholars call an "autobiographical fragment" in 1545, before his death. Meanwhile, during that year (1519), I had already returned to a new interpretation of the Psalms. <Omitted> I was certainly seized with a special passion to understand Paul in Romans. However, what had blocked my way until then was not the cold blood around my heart, but a single word in chapter 1 (verse 17): "In him the righteousness of God is revealed."

— *Luther, Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings, LW 34:336*

## Theology of Service:

Martin Luther was a theologian who took action on social issues. He opposed the practice of begging instead of working, arguing that begging violates God's commandments, is unethical, and violates human dignity. However, regarding helping the poor due to bereavement, illness, and the structural evil of the strong exploiting the weak for their own survival, he agreed, saying, "The love that Christ spoke of is to help and serve brothers in trouble, and putting this into practice is the greatest worship." He participated in writing the preface to the Leisnig Treasury Regulations (1523), which required that the citizens of Leisnig contribute to the common collection box every Sunday during the Sunday service to help citizens who could not work due to illness, old age, etc. This tradition spread to Northern Europe as well.

## Publication:

- Lectures on Romans, 1516
- On Christian Freedom, 1520
- Table Talks
- On the Bondage of the Will



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- **Martin Luther's Prayer**
- **The Large Catechism**
- **Address to the German Christian Nobility**
- **The Babylonian Captivity of the Church**
- **To Bishop Jerome Scurtetus**
- **Does Man Have Free Will?**
- **Doctrine of the Trinity**

## **Criticism:**

### **Anti-Semitism:**

**In his 1543 work, "The Jews and Their Lies" (Die Juden und ihre Lügen), Luther suddenly incited the persecution of Jews, calling for "burning their synagogues, killing them, burying them, tearing down their synagogues, and taking away the Talmud." Luther's argument was widely propagated by Adolf Stoecker, leader of the Christian Social Workers' Party in Germany in the early 19th century, when anti-Semitism was rampant, and was subsequently disseminated to the Nazis. Luther also argued against providing humanitarian aid to Jews, even threatening them with hell. (Hands and Hospitality, Christine Paul, translated by Jeong Ok-bae, Blessed People, p. 123)**

### **Collusion with the powers that be:**

**Furthermore, since Luther's Reformation was carried out through collusion with the ruling classes, when the German peasants staged a popular uprising against the exploitation of the princes (the German Peasants' War), he sent letters to the princes, inciting their suppression. To justify his suppression of the peasant uprising, Luther denigrated the peasants waging class struggle against the princes' exploitation as a rabble rousing society. However, in reality, he advocated for the suppression of the peasant uprising, citing the practical reason that the Reformation could not proceed without maintaining collusion with the princes. In other words, for Luther, advancing the Reformation through**





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**collusion with the powerful princes was more important than the biblical God who saved the people from an oppressive and exploitative ruling order. This signifies that Protestantism, like the existing Roman Catholic Church, was not free from the collusion between religion and politics. To overcome this, the Anabaptists advocated for the separation of religion and politics. However, the idea of separating politics and religion is not meant to prevent collusion or wasteful conflict between religion and politics after the civil revolution, but rather to keep the church silent about the ruling order that oppresses and exploits the people, saying that it should not interfere in politics, or to maintain it with conservative or sometimes reactionary theology rooted in Christian fundamentalism.**

## **Typical character with an authoritarian personality:**

**In his book, "Escape from Freedom," Erich Fromm analyzed Luther psychologically and characterized him as a typical authoritarian figure. He described him as "suffering from extreme loneliness, helplessness, and a sense of guilt, yet possessing an intense inner desire for dominance." Luther's portrayal of humanity reflects a paradoxical situation: for him, humans are free from any relationship that subordinates them to spiritual authority, yet this freedom creates loneliness and anxiety, overwhelming them with a sense of futility and helplessness.**

## **Meaning as a religious reformer:**

**Luther is a significant theologian for his advocacy of religious reform, that is, for presenting a theological model for church reform. Yang Hee-song, the organizer of the Evangelical Club, praised Luther in his cover story for issue 171 of "Gospel and Situation"—"Immortal Luther, Says a Word"—as a theologian who possessed both the intellect to criticize the established Roman Catholic Church and the passion to translate his ideas into the writing of the Ninety-Five Theses.**

**“ When I look at Korean Christians, they live as if they’re okay with this or that. I really hope they stop being like that. What I find most disappointing about the Korean church is the lack of study. Whenever I ”**



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**talk about church reform, people always ask, "Did you pray?" Prayer is essential, and the reform movement needs to be studied. The Reformation wasn't a movement that just suddenly emerged one day. Medieval monasteries were monastic communities that held prayer meetings at least three times a day, but they were also libraries and laboratories for theologians. I, too, had the opportunity to meticulously study theology and the Bible for years in the Augustinian Order, which allowed me to later articulate my position in theological debates. My colleagues were also experts in theology. Think about it. The papacy itself is a vast ensemble of doctrine and history. What can those who seek to overcome it achieve with their woefully inadequate studies? The blind cannot lead the blind, can they?**

**I've dedicated my life to reform movements, and I've seen countless people go astray, or followers lose their lives due to the leaders' derailment. Reform movements aren't something you can do casually. They require a genuine commitment. Therefore, finding the right content and direction must be a relentless pursuit.**

**Luther himself argues that the Reformation came from theology, not a sense of justice, by writing:**

**" "I was angry with a bitter and tormented conscience. Nevertheless, I clung tenaciously to Paul's words and desperately sought to understand what he wanted. Finally, by God's mercy, I meditated on them day and night, paying close attention to the context in which the words appeared. 'For the righteousness of God is revealed...as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith' (Romans 1)' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is the righteousness by which the righteous live by God's gift, that is, by faith. ... Here I felt that I had been completely reborn and had entered paradise through open doors. ... And I now praised the words 'righteousness of God' as my sweetest word, with as much love as I had previously hated them. In this way, that very verse of Paul became for me a true gateway to paradise."** "

**Moreover, his theology of the cross provides a good alternative to conservative evangelical churches in the United States and Korea, which are steeped in the**



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**theology of glory, which is contrary to the Christian tradition of poverty and self-sufficiency.**

- “ In terms of lifestyle, while the theology of glory emphasizes prosperity, blessing, and victory through God's triumph in Christ, the theology of the cross asserts that a life of love, self-sacrifice, total devotion, and obedience is the right path for Christians to walk. Thus, the theology of the cross asserts that only through participation in suffering can we truly know God. By doing so, it rejects vain triumphalism and seeks to transcend the darkness of the age and participate in the resurrection of Jesus with the cross.**