

FACES OF THE REFORMATION

MARTIN LUTHER (LAST DAYS)

Born: Nov. 10, 1483 | Eisleben, Germany

Died: Feb. 18, 1546 | Eisleben, Germany



REFORMATION
2017 It's *Still* All About
Jesus

LutheranReformation.org

© 2017 LCMS

An Outlaw and International Hero Who Commended Himself and the Church of the Reformation to Christ's Mercy

IN LATER LIFE, MARTIN LUTHER HAD BECOME

INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN. Despite his return to Wittenberg from hiding at the Wartburg, Luther remained an outlaw due to his condemnation at Worms. However, Saxony was isolated enough that he was safe from the emperor so long as he remained there. Thus, his role became one of providing guidance to others.

Luther adopted a new role as leader of a new church body. He discovered that many of the laity were ignorant of his reforms. After translating the Bible into German, he wanted the laity to be able to engage with it. Therefore, he wrote his Small and Large Catechisms in order to provide good theology that the laity could understand, an entry point into the Scriptures, and right order and behavior.

In this period, Luther also had to address theological problems. In addition to his continued challenges with Rome's response to the Reformation, he also faced other reformers who transformed his ideas to their own ends.

First, Luther clarified the relationship of the church and the state. Due to the Peasants' Revolt, he was faced with a theological question of how "social" his Gospel needed to be. Luther responded by developing his two kingdoms theology. This theology holds that we must distinguish clearly between God's Kingdom of Power and His Kingdom of Grace. Christians should act in society according to their consciences — which are informed by their faith — but Luther did not believe that the church should dictate government policy.

Second, Luther had to address competing views of the Lord's Supper. Luther had successfully refuted the "transubstantiation" view of the Roman church, but the issue was confused by the view that the soul fed on Christ only spiritually, as Calvin later popularized. Others argued that the Sacrament only "represented" Jesus' body. This caused Luther to insist on the real presence, emphasizing that while transubstantiation was in error, it did not mean the solution to that error was to separate the Sacrament from Jesus altogether. Instead, he remained bound to the clear words of Christ, "This is my body."

Third, Luther addressed the problem of good works. Some reformers twisted Luther's doctrine of being justified by grace without works to mean that good works were, in fact, a hindrance to salvation. This caused Luther to argue continually that good works are the proper result of faith. We are justified by faith alone, nevertheless, Christians should lead a sanctified life.

Luther became an internationally important figure. Wittenberg was a destination for young thinkers, and Luther was a hero to many. Students began taking note of everything he said; his publications were spread widely, and princes asked him for advice. Luther was least comfortable with this last political role. He was not a skilled politician and would sometimes be too aggressive in his responses.

Luther's role later in life was to encourage and to instruct. He remained resolved and consistent in his thought, despite feeling pressure from all sides. He was simultaneously heroic in his faith and human in his failings.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
ConcordiaHistoricalInstitute.org