

THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER
The Reformation and the Life of Martin Luther
Part Two
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The Bible in German

After Luther's bold stand for the Word of God at Worms, he would continue to be influential in the translation of the Scriptures into the common German tongue. In 1521, Luther wore a coat of mail, disguising himself as a knight named "Knight George", and lived peacefully and constructively as a professor at the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach Germany as part of the beautiful Thuringian forest. On Luther's return to Saxony from Worms, he was suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelmed by a group of horsemen, who took Luther safely to the Castle Wartburg. Elector Frederick had sent his men to apprehend Luther and place him in hiding, fearing that the Pope would find him first and put him to death. Frederick did not want to lose the great Reformer and professor of Theology at his Wittenberg University. At Wartburg, Luther struggled with his own flesh, the very devil of hell, and through great anguish of spirit and weakness in ability translated the Bible into the common German tongue so that all could read it for themselves and find the hope of salvation in Christ. Luther's reformation was not merely theoretically a stand for scripture alone, but he believed that the people needed the scriptures to read for themselves and so be saved. Later in his life, Luther remembered the year 1521 as the most useful year of his life.

Dr. Luther, although weak intellectually and theologically in his own estimate and threatened by great fleshly and diabolical temptations and threats, succeeded by God's

grace in translating the first German New Testament. Luther's translation was eventually followed by translations into other languages, such as French, Dutch, and English. From this point on, the Reformation would be characterized by the people fulfilling the doctrine of priesthood of all believers, as they sought to know and understand the word of God for themselves. The people were radically changed through reading scripture, and the most commonly educated person who could read but a little studied and put the Scriptures to memorization for the first time in their lives. The Reformation continued strongly throughout the world not because of the Sword of the State, but because of the Sword of the Spirit. Dr. Luther was not the first person in history to attempt a translation in the common tongue (in defiance to the Roman Catholic Vulgate Translation of Jerome), but he was arguable the greatest translator of the German Bible. Dr. Luther's translation would not only change the thinking of people who could now read the Bible, his translation would affect the speech and writing of Germans up to the present. God in his sovereignty and providence continued to be good and gracious to his Church allowing the printing press of the Gutenberg's to be invented in the mid 15th century, and now a translator such as Luther gave the people a Bible in their own tongue that could be printed to the masses through the press. In order to proceed with his translation, Luther needed a few things. He found a copy of the Latin Bible in the University Library at Erfurt that was extremely helpful in his studies and translation efforts. He had a translation committee of other scholars, especially Philip Melancthon's help as an able and better scholar of Greek. Luther used Erasmus' Greek text (published 1516, revised 1519) for the New Testament; Luther used and depended on the publication of the Masoretic Old Testament text from the 1400s, and the Greek Septuagint, and even

consulted Jewish Rabbis on his translation of the Old Testament for accuracy. Dr. Luther began his translation in November or December of 1521, and the translation was rushed to press and printed on September 21st, 1522. Throughout Luther's life, he never ceased to rework his translation, and through the help of scholars make it more faithful to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Philip Schaff calls Luther's translation "the most powerful help to the Reformation" (Schaff, Vol. VII, 350). In God's providence, Luther produced a great labor of love that changed the entire world. Whereas before Luther, the people of God relied on the priesthood to teach and interpret the Bible for them; the people had only heard the Bible taught and preached in Latin. From now on, the people of God could hear and read the Word of God, and know the love of God in Christ for those who believe.

First Reformed Systematic Theology

While Dr. Luther worked on a translation of the Bible with the scholarly aid of Melancthon, Melancthon worked on the first systematic theology of the Reformation with the pastoral aid of Luther. Melancthon's *Loci Communes*, or "Theological Common-Places" (meaning theological foundations or grounds) was the first system of Protestant theology. It was written at Wittenberg and published in April 1521 when Melancthon was at the young age of twenty-four. In the first edition of the work that would go through many editions until 1559, Melancthon focused primarily on the Bible's teaching on anthropology and soteriology, or on the doctrines of sin and grace, repentance and salvation in the Christian life; the doctrine of justification by faith alone was articulated biblically and Melancthon relied primarily on the Apostle Paul's

Theology in his Epistle to the Romans. Melanchthon's systematic theology was purposely anti-Roman Catholic theology in substance and tone, but it laid the foundation for the later Augsburg Confession (1530), and would be the first theology of the Lutheran Church. Melanchthon agreed theologically with much of Luther's theology in interpretation, but later in his life it would be obvious that he disagreed with Augustine and Luther's teaching about God's work of Monergism upon the sinner; Melanchthon would articulate a synergistic, Semi-Pelagian system of salvation later that would teach that man cooperated with God in order to achieve his right standing before God. Melanchthon would also deny the Biblical teaching of eternal predestination, and this would cause Calvin later to ponder how such a brilliant and godly man could deny such an important doctrine of the Christian faith.

Radicalism and the German Revolution

For many, the beginning of the Reformation was liberating and freeing in the realization of our righteousness and peace before God because of Christ; the work of the reformation was done humbly through translation of the Word of God, and through preaching. For others, the Reformation was an opportunity at radicalism and pride. This was one of the unfortunate consequences of the German Reformation. Rather than understanding that God builds up his Kingdom and overthrows the devil's kingdom through preaching, some took it upon themselves to turn the reformation into revolution. In one incident during this time, twelve hundred students, workmen, and other common people attacked and demolished in a few days sixty houses belonging to Roman Catholic priests, and the priests only escaped the violence by fleeing for their lives. Dr. Luther

rightly was angry at this uproarious anarchy, and knew that this would bring great shame to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and reflect poorly on the Reformation. Luther sought the permission of Elector Frederick through a letter to return immediately to Wittenberg because the Church at Wittenberg needed him, his flock that he loved like a father was confused, and he wanted to prevent a radical outbreak or revolution of the people. When Luther returned he preached to his congregation in Wittenberg from the Word of God for eight days on the importance of the Reformation being sought from within; first the reformation that must take place within a man's heart by God's sovereign Spirit, and then the reformation that must take place outwardly with peace and power through the Word, as unbiblical practices are discarded and the Scriptural teaching upheld. Dr. Luther preached on the importance of understanding Christian liberty not as license for revolution, anarchy, or sin, but as a freedom to live as a Christian in Christ, seeking to uphold and obey the law of the state, as long as it does not disagree with God's Word. Pastor Luther was described at this time by a contemporary: "...His mild, kindly countenance, his pleasant sonorous voice, his charming address, the piety of his words and acts, the power of his eloquence which moved every hearer not made of stone, and created a desire to hear him again and again." (Quoted in Schaff, Vol. VII, 387). Pastor Dr. Luther counseled the people of his congregation to know wisely things that were indifferent teachings that did not necessarily need to be changed immediately, and false doctrines like the mass, that needed to be abolished immediately because it was clear from Scripture that they were wrong. Many obeyed Luther's instruction that the gospel would change and reform as it is preached and as God gave the expansion and growth of

the work of humility, but some such as Carlstadt remained radical and this zealous thinking ended climactically and abruptly in the Peasants Revolt of 1525.

Andreas Carlstadt, while originally someone who had helped Luther realize that salvation was found in Christ alone, and one who was once a friend of Luther's, became powerfully influenced by revolutionary zealous behavior and mysticism as a Christian. Under Carlstadt's influence in November 1521, thirty of the forty monks in Luther's Augustinian cloister at Wittenberg left in a rebellious and disorderly manner. While the monks had the right to leave and to reshape their lives according to the Biblical teaching of the Reformation, Luther believed that they could have done this with much more respect, order, and humility so as to adorn the gospel of grace and glorify God as a Reformer, rather than an average and meager revolutionary. At the end of 1521, the revolutionary movement continues to worsen when two fanatical mystics arrive in Wittenberg. One of these mystics was Thomas Munzer who was a millenarian enthusiast and would later be a key figure in the Peasants Revolt of 1525. These mystics and enthusiasts focused more on feelings and inner experiences rather than being led and guided by the objective Word of God like ancient Montanists, or modern day Pentecostals or charismatics. These fanatics were called the "Zwickau Prophets", and they with Andreas Carlstadt focused not only on inward "impulses of the Spirit" but also outward radical activity supposedly performed in God's Name and by the leading of God's Spirit. The problem of this radicalism and mysticism in the Reformation was as much a challenge to the written Word of God which was the foundation and formal cause of the Reformation, as was the additions of traditions of men in the former reign of

Medieval Roman Catholicism. Luther knew this movement had to be stopped at all costs. Against this movement, he taught the people not to merely give lip service to the power of the Word of God, but to preach it, make it known, and this Spiritual power will effect the right change. Luther wrote that the greatest threat to the devil is preaching: "... When he sees the Word running and contending alone on the battlefield, then he shudders and shakes for fear. The Word is almighty, and takes captive the hearts." Luther is saying that any movement (even one that claims to be Protestant) that does not place all the priority and power on the Word of God, then that movement is as powerless to change men as Medieval Roman Catholicism. Whether one adds to the Word of God through traditions, or through teachings that are found within one's feelings, the Word of God is undermined and the Reformation is threatened. Dr. Luther eventually by God's grace, preached the Zwickau Prophets out of Wittenberg and he protected his little flock from these dangerous teachers and doctrines. Carlstadt, once a close friend of Luther's, was exiled from Saxony in 1524 and continued to hold feelings of jealousy, revenge and contempt toward Luther. He returned briefly then joined the work of the Zwinglians, concluding his life in 1541 while teaching theology at Basel.

This radical and revolutionary impulse continued to grow and the people were influenced negatively by the Zwickau Prophets (or Carlstadt and Munzer's teaching). At this time in European history, the peasants were under heaven burdens, great duress, and practically slaves of the nobility and clergy. This seemed an opportune time for them to anarchically rise up in rebellion and fight the powers for liberation. From the peasants' perspective they heard Luther's criticism of the excesses of Rome, as well as his teaching

on Christian liberty through the gospel, and rather than humbly striving through the Sword of the Spirit, the criticisms and teaching on liberty sparked in them a violent desire to overthrow by the Sword of violence. The peasants at this time did not seem to understand the distinction between Christian liberty and license; license being a freedom to do whatever one wants and desires because Christ has set you free in the gospel and forgives you. Unfortunately, Thomas Munzer, one of the Zwickau Prophets fueled these sinful desires of the peasants. Munzer became more than a harmless spiritualist and enthusiast; with his influence and aggressive leadership, he became the evangelist of a social revolution that would cause over 100,000 men to die a horrible death. He preached that true reformation would be to overthrow through violence the social order of the time: no princes, no priests, no nobles, no private property. Munzer through tracts and pamphlets stirred up the peasants to believe that the true reformation would be also a social revolution that made all men equal in position and wealth. This preaching agitated the fanaticism of the people and the peasants revolted beginning in the Summer of 1524. Luther responded to this revolution with cries of peace and appeals to understand the true gospel-driven nature of the Reformation. Luther realized that the work of Munzer and the revolt of the peasants was more the work of Satan than of God, because this radical and rebellious behavior would undermine the good fruits of the Reformation thus far. In the rebellion of 1524, palaces of princes were destroyed, convents and libraries were burned and there was much havoc throughout Germany. In the Battle of Frankenhausen on May 25th, 1525 the rebellion was defeated and five thousand lay dead, many of the rebels were beheaded, and Munzer was taken prison and eventually beheaded as well for his crimes.

Luther and Erasmus of Rotterdam

One of the theological highlights of this time period was Martin Luther's debate and dialogue with Erasmus of Rotterdam. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (ca. 1467-1536) was an erudite, prolific, and well-loved scholar and satirist of the time. Erasmus was one of the most astute minds and thinkers of his time and generation in the 16th century. Consistent with Luther's thinking, he saw the many abuses and sinful excesses in the Roman Catholic Church of his day. Contrasted to Luther, he thought the primary need of the hour was a return to the studies of the Classics, and particularly the classic humanists of Greek and Rome. In comparison to Luther, Erasmus would write more satirical and humorous critique of the Church and papacy of his time, he would not be willing as Luther to lay down his life for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Erasmus in his Biblical scholarship and his writings on a return to a knowledge of the Classics, has been described as the preparation for Luther's Reformation, or more poignantly his work and influence have been described as "the egg that Luther hatched." Erasmus like Luther had spent five years of his life in monastic seclusion and he was ordained to the priesthood in 1492. Erasmus' influence was with other scholars of his day, and even with great rulers such as Charles V; so great was his influence that he was known throughout all of Europe, greatly appreciated, honored, admired, and treated like royalty. In his many letters written to scholars throughout Europe, as well as his written works such as *Praise of Folly* and *Colloquies* Erasmus' influence and notoriety spread as these two books became equivalent to best sellers of our day, both books going through many editions and publications. *Praise of Folly* is a winsome, humorous, and realistic book of observations about life; it is filled with irony and satire, and seems to be imitating in its candor and

interesting observations the Biblical *Book of Ecclesiastes*. Though Erasmus observed and critiqued openly the abuses and excesses of Rome, he disagreed with both Dr. Luther's reformation, and particularly his Reformation theology.

Erasmus did much study of the Bible and considered it a divine text from God; he regarded the Bible with great respect and reverence. In opposition to Luther, Erasmus believed the Church could be reformed in a peaceful way. He wrote of the Roman See (agreeing with Luther): "I could wish that its discipline were such as to favor every effort to promote the religion of the gospel; for several ages past it has by its example openly taught things that are plainly adverse to the doctrines of Christ." Erasmus' greatest Biblical achievement and arguably his most far-reaching and influential work was his publication of the 1516 Greek Testament that Luther and other Reformers would use to translate the Bible into the common tongues of the people. Erasmus does not seem to be wholly orthodox from his theological writings. Not only did he disagree with the Augustinian understanding of sin and grace, he seems to have been sympathetic with ancient Arians who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. Erasmus' theology can be summed as theologically moderate, or even closer to modern Liberalism of the 20th century than the extreme conservative orthodoxy of Augustine and Luther. Erasmus had a high opinion of many Classic scholars such as Cicero, Socrates, and Plutarch, and mistook their brilliance revealing they were made in God's image, with their being orthodox Christians who populated heaven. He even went so far to exclaim: "Holy Socrates, pray for us." As Philip Schaff says in his *History of the Christian Church*, "Erasmus was essentially a scholar; Luther a reformer; the one was absorbed in literature,

the other in religion...the former reached the intellect of the educated, the latter touched the heart of the people” (Vol. VII, 422). Erasmus was initially glad for Luther’s reform and stand for truth, but he grew more and more uneasy that the reform he was witnessing was one that he would have to withdraw support from because of Luther’s manner of reforming. Additionally, Erasmus could never accept the Biblical teaching of justification by faith *alone* that Luther was preaching and making known, nor could he tolerate the doctrine that fallen man’s will is in bondage. In 1524, Erasmus chose to take scholarly opposition to Luther’s doctrine of total depravity. In September of 1524, Erasmus articulated his theological anthropology and soteriology against Luther in his book appropriately titled and revealing *The Freedom of the Will*. Essentially, Erasmus revealed that in his theological anthropology and soteriology he was Semi-Pelagian with regard to man’s ability to will to cooperate with God’s grace. Luther, an Augustinian, Pauline theologian took up his pen to write in 1525 the book *The Bondage of the Will* (also translated *Slavery of the Will*) explaining against Erasmus’ synergistic soteriology, a biblical doctrine of the sovereign and gracious, monergistic work of God on fallen man in salvation. Erasmus, like many Semi-Pelagians, confused God’s call through the gospel to all men, and the effectual and special call of God’s Spirit through sovereign regeneration. Luther, as Augustine before him, articulated the biblical position that a sinner must be regenerated and made alive as Ephesians 2:1-8 teaches before he can exercise his will through faith in Christ. Erasmus and Semi-Pelagians before him believed that all men had free will to choose or reject God, and that the theological priority they placed on the will, could and would respond to the call of God through the gospel, then the grace of God would supervene to achieve their salvation. It is important to note that all of the

Reformation theologians were Augustinian and articulated the depravity of man's sinful condition, and the absolute sovereignty and initiative of God in salvation. While Luther thought Erasmus was a greater and more erudite scholar than him, nevertheless, he thought his theology was extremely man-centered, and after their debate would go on to call him "an enraged viper" and an "enemy of all religion".

Luther's Marriage to Katie von Bora

Luther's biblical understanding of Christian liberty allowed him to think freely about what scripture teaches concerning marriage and the truth that Luther came to understand was that the Bible does not in any way forbid marriage, nor in any way teach vows of celibacy. Luther had taken a vow of celibacy when he joined the Augustinian cloister, but as the truths of Scripture penetrated his heart and his mind, he considered marriage something that God blesses. At the end of 1523, Luther was busy about his reforming work and was not necessarily searching for a wife, though he wasn't opposed to it.

However, the providence and mercies of God intervened here as well. In early 1523 some nuns had escaped their convent to seek protection under Luther and to be a part of the Reformation; they traveled all the way to Luther's university town of Wittenberg. It was in Wittenberg when Luther would find the love of his life, and his future wife in Catharina von Bora who was intelligent, godly, and fifteen years younger than Luther. In June 1525, Dr. Luther and Catharina were married and many celebrated and rejoiced with him, including his father and mother and the University of Wittenberg faculty and friends. This bold, yet tender move of Luther would cause him much criticism as others viewed this as a vow of chastity that had been broken, but he believed it was God's will

for him to marry this former nun because it was not forbidden in Scripture, and they were happy all the days of twenty one years of marriage. In the Medieval period of the Church, marriage became officially and strictly held to be one of the seven sacraments of the Church. In the interest of hierarchical power in the Church, those men ordained to office, could not marry but were required to take vows of celibacy. The cause of the Reformation was not because Luther wanted to get married, but because Luther believed that the Scriptures were the only rule of faith and life, and in these Scriptures, marriage was neither a sacrament, nor a union that an ordained man could not enter into (1 Timothy 3:1ff; Eph. 5:21ff). Thus Luther married and experienced the greatest joy as he reintroduced to the world the wisdom as well as the blessing of clerical family life. Dr. Luther and Catharina had their struggles like all married couples, but Luther was enabled to preach and teach practically and experientially now from the Scriptures on the benefits as well as challenges of marriage. Dr. Luther would say: "Next to God's Word, there is no more precious treasure than holy matrimony. God's highest gift on earth is a pious, cheerful, God-fearing, home-keeping wife, with whom you may live peacefully, to whom you may entrust your goods and body and life." Dr. Luther was never against those who wanted to take vows of celibacy because of their Christian liberty; but marriage was not to be denied to those who sought it, and the absolute enforcement of vows of celibacy on everyone was unbiblical and had led to many of the abuses and sexual excesses in the Roman Catholic clergy.

Luther's Family and Home Life

The blessed results of Luther's union with "Katie" (the name he affectionately called her) was six children. Luther and Katie had three daughters, and three sons, Hans, Martin, and Paul. The Luther Family's daily devotions including a recitation of the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the reading of a Psalm. Especially joyful in the Luther home was Christmastime, but there was also sorrow as well, particularly when death came to cause pain when their fourteen year old daughter Lena died. Luther used the occasion of the death of his most precious daughter to remind family, friends, and congregation of the hope of our resurrection in Jesus Christ! Even in the dark time of death, Luther led his family and people with his eyes on Jesus the Author and Perfector of their faith. Luther and his family enjoyed life, eating good food, wine and beer as gifts of the Creator, suffering various ailments of the body, but knowing the importance of rest and restoration, especially on the Sabbath as God has given this as a gift to man. Luther was known as an extremely hospitable and friendly man that many in his congregation and at the university enjoyed being with. Luther's guests would write down some of his talks at the table as they discussed various theological topics (which became known as Luther's "Table Talk" after these were published for all interested to read). Luther was a gifted and very personable man who sought to influence as many people in his short life as possible through formal preaching and informal talk around the table. Luther was also a lover of arts and culture, and was himself a man of culture with knowledge of music, paintings, poetry, and literature. In fact, for Luther music was second in important only to theology. Luther said of music that "the heart is satisfied, refreshed, and strengthened by music." Luther's wife Katie was an efficient and loving mother, housekeeper, and wife. They both lived modestly and happily with their

children, being oftentimes blessed by God with many fine gifts of appreciation, though they were never avaricious in their lifestyles and hopes. Luther died in 1546 and Katie survived him by seven years when she contracted a cold that led to consumption and she died on December 20th, 1552.

The Reformation of Worship in the Church

The home was not only reformed and refashioned through marriage because of the Reformation, the worship of the Church was also considered as desperately needing to be reformed according to Scripture. Public worship was cleansed of the idolatry that had come to characterize the Medieval Roman Church; the sale of indulgences was forbidden, the worship of the saints, images, and relics, pilgrimages, private masses and masses for the dead were all abolished by the Reformation. Of the seven Medieval Roman sacraments, there were only two preserved: baptism and the Lord's Supper (because these were the only two commandments commanded in Scripture). The worship service was restored to its proper biblical simplicity and beauty with the focus of worship on God through Jesus Christ the Mediator, with preaching and reading of God's Word, the Sacraments, prayer, and the congregation singing of hymns being the main parts of the service. Hymns were sung in the German language as well as the traditional singing of the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, and the *Agnus Dei*. In comparison to the later fuller Reformation of worship in the Swiss Reformation under Calvin, Luther's worship service could be called a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. Dr. Luther thought that if the Bible did not forbid a practice in worship such as clerical robes, candles, kneeling for prayer, confession and absolution, and even the use of the term

Mass for the service, then it should not be something necessarily forbidden in worship. In contrast to Luther's thinking, Calvin and John Knox of Scotland would have only the elements of worship that were expressly taught in Scripture. The Lutheran service was very ceremonial and the logic behind this was that the form of the service itself as well as its content could instruct the unlearned in the gospel. According to Luther and Melancthon, the ceremonies and liturgy were pictures of the gospel that all could see and behold throughout the service. Although the later Swiss Reformation would seek to reform worship according to Scripture more thoroughly, in Luther's Reformation in Germany you have the seed of evangelical worship in "spirit and truth".

The primary elements of evangelical worship during the Reformation were a primacy and priority on the sermon and preaching of the word of God in the common tongue of the people, catechesis, and the Lord's Supper. The Bible would be read and preached in German, then explained and applied for the people of God to learn of the gospel and their position and right standing in Jesus Christ. Pastor Dr. Luther was known as a great preacher of the gospel and the Word of God in his time. Luther's three rules of effective, Spirit-filled preaching was "Start fresh; Speak out; Stop short". These three rules intended to teach that one was to speak freshly from the words of Scripture, and breathe out grace to the people that is found in Christ alone; speak boldly with passion and help with the power of the Holy Spirit; stopping short meant that one would take into consideration the attention span and ability of the people who were listening to his sermons.

German Hymnody

One of the greatest contributions to the worship of Christ, as well as to culture in general, was the contribution of German hymnody. Dr. Luther was particularly a gifted musician, and his music assisted the people of God with the worship of God. In the Medieval Roman Church, hymns were primarily sung by ecclesiastics and choirs in the Latin tongue, but not by the common people. Luther's return to Scripture as the foundation of one's faith, and understanding the Scripture in the common German tongue also contributed to the priesthood of all believers not just in their reading of Scripture, but also in their singing to God his word gratefully and passionately in home, school, and worship service. Luther's most famous and characteristic hymn is *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* based on Psalm 46 that is melodic, worshipful, and full of great dignity and power to inflame the soul and direct one's heart to Christ alone. The hymns that were sung were now by the people in worship, and they hymns were addressed to Christ alone our One Mediator, where they had once been addressed idolatrously to Mary "the mother of heaven" and the saints. The German Reformation had a huge impact on the worship of God, and on the rest of cultural history with regard to music. The influence of Germany on music and culture particularly since the Reformation would have been beyond what Martin Luther could have thought or imagined. Dr. Luther has been rightly called the "St. Ambrose of German church poetry and music" because of his inestimable contribution to the reformation of worship in his writing and arranging of hymns.

Reformation of Church Government: Visible and Invisible Church

Since the Reformation abolished the authority of the degenerated Roman Catholic papacy over the people, there was the need for a reconstitution or reconstruction of the visible church with appropriate pastoral oversight and discipline. In order to articulate a biblical position, it was necessary for the Reformers to make the traditional distinction between the visible and invisible Church. While the Reformers rightly understood that the invisible Church was the congregation of all the elect who receive salvation in Jesus Christ alone, the visible Church of which the invisible Church is the soul needed outward government and governing. Luther was not the disciplinarian and organizer like John Calvin and John Knox after him, but he contributed greatly to the reorganization of the German Church. With regard to the government of the Church Luther believed in the equality of bishops and presbyters (as had been revealed in Scripture (Acts 15; 1 Peter 1 Timothy 3:1 ff; 5:1-6), but also articulated by the early Church Fathers such as Clement of Rome, *The Teaching of the Twelve*, and Jerome. The Lutheran Church believed in the Presbyterian doctrine of the parity of ministers because of this Biblical teaching, and exposition of some of the Church Fathers. The German Churches were divided into districts according to the prince who ruled over them, and made a distinction between nominal and communicant membership. Unfortunately, because of the spirit of the age at the time of the Reformation, Lutheran princes took over in governing the churches as the bishops or popes had done previously. This was arguably needed at the time for the protection of the people of God, and the propagating of the truth against the powerful Roman Catholic armies who would have threatened the life of the churches had they not been protected by the state (Ulrich Zwingli was killed and beheaded by Roman Catholic armies in 1531). Luther wrote on the civil magistrate in 1523 that was dedicated to

Prince John and proved from the scriptural principles of Romans 13:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 that it was a Christian's duty to obey the civil authorities, and that we must balance this with Acts 5:29 to obey God rather than man if the civil authorities ever threatened punishment for obedience to God and His Scripture. Luther made a safe and right distinction between the church and the state (and arguably this is the evangelical seed of the principle of separation of church and state). Luther wrote in 1523: "God has ordained two governments...the reign of God under Christ, and the reign of the world under the civil magistrate, each with its own laws and rights...In matters which relate to the soul's salvation nothing should be taught and accepted but God's Word." Roman Catholicism had abused their power tyrannically and confused the position of the earthly ruler with the churchly ruler. The State's purpose was to protect the church and enable the Gospel to continue to be preached and the sacraments administered, but it was a civil sword that it wielded and should not interfere in spiritual matters. Luther wrote: "If the civil magistrate interferes with spiritual matters of conscience in which God alone must rule, we ought not to obey at all, but rather lose our head. Civil government is confined to external and temporal affairs..." Luther's teaching on church and state was to ensure the gospel of the Lord Jesus would continue to be preached and the Great Commission completed until the return of the Lord; this teaching was against the confusion of Church and State in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and aimed at the radicalism and anarchy of Carlstadt and the enthusiastic spiritualism of Munzer. As carefully as Luther articulated this position of Church and State, there were errors made with regard to the German princes such as Elector John being essentially a bishop over the German Church. Luther wrote in what would be the first draft of the *Augsburg Confession* that "now, as the pure

gospel has returned, or first begun, we need a true episcopacy; and, as nobody has a proper authority or divine command, we asked the Elector, as our divinely appointed ruler (Rom. 13), to exercise his authority for the protection and promotion of the gospel. Although he is not called to teach, he may restore peace and order, as the Emperor Constantine did when he called the Council of Nicea for the settlement of the Arian controversy.” Thus, the territorial Church-State government was formally established in Germany.

Although there were some unfortunate decisions made by Luther in the German Reformation, his doctrine of the Church was a faithful articulation of Biblical teaching and the Church Fathers such as Augustine. A biblical doctrine of the Church was greatly needed during the German Reformation. The questions of what the Reformers agree upon with the Roman Catholic Church, and what they must biblically disagree with became a priority and need as the Reformation continued, and rather than merely having a destruction of abuses and excesses from within the Church, now there was needed also a confessional constructive effort. Luther and the Reformers argued concerning the Church that “Catholic” means universal and is as wide as humanity. They argued that “Catholic” indicates the capacity and aim of the Church, but the actual realization of the universalness of the Church is a process of time that will not be completed fully until the return of Jesus Christ. The Medieval Church had made three distinctions with regard to the Church: 1) The Church Militant, meaning those who are alive and confessing on earth; 2) The Church Purgatorial, meaning those who were sleeping in Purgatory; and 3) The Church Triumphant, or those elect believers who were now in heaven. The

Reformers all rejected the designation of Church Purgatorial, but confessed and properly made the distinction of the Church Militant and Triumphant as the fathers had done before them. Following Augustine, Luther taught that there was a true body of Christ on earth, and a mixed body of Christ on earth. The true or pure Church on earth is made up of all the elect in Jesus Christ and the mixed churches are those who are visible, but made up of both the elect and the non-elect and that will not be formally sorted out until the Judgment Day. The Reformers sought to articulate the Biblical teaching on the visible and invisible Church, or rather the true invisible church and the mixed visible churches. Incidentally, Luther was the first Reformer to coin the term “invisible Church” and Zwingli would add the term to his *Exposition of the Christian Faith* in 1531. Against the false medieval teaching of Roman Catholics on the doctrine of the Church, the Reformers continued to use the term “Catholic” to describe the Church as universal, being made up of all the elect from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The Reformers taught against Rome that Romanists were too sectarian and exclusive to be truly “catholic”.

“Marks of the True Church”

While the gospel continue to save and change many lives, the people of God (formerly Roman Catholics) who had come to faith in Jesus Christ alone through sound and biblical preaching, were looking for the faithful visible Church of God on earth. Luther gave the people of God helpful “Two Marks of a Church” so that one could identify a faithful congregation of saints, and identify one with the visible Church of Christ on earth through confession. Luther’s “Two Marks” were 1) the right preaching of God’s Word and the purity of doctrine; 2) the right administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the

Lord's Supper), and these were the essentials that made a church by definition a Church of Jesus Christ. Later Reformers such as Calvin and Knox would include also discipline as the third and essential "mark" of the Church, because it was needed to uphold the first two marks. This may have been implicit in Luther's doctrine of the Church, but historians think Luther was too light on discipline, and should have articulated a more precise biblical position on discipline as well. It is important to note that Luther and the Reformers never denied that there were true believers in the Roman communion ("mixed visible Church"), and never doubted the validity of the ordinances of the Roman Church such as when the Ten Commandments were taught, the *Apostle's Creed* confessed, and the Sacraments administered; this is why the Reformers did not believe in the rebaptizing of former Roman Catholics. Luther wrote: "We confess that under the papacy there is much Christianity, yea, the whole Christianity, and has from thence come to us. We confess that the papacy possesses the genuine Scriptures, genuine baptism, the genuine sacraments, the genuine keys for the remission of sins, the true ministry, the true catechism, the Ten Commandments, the articles of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer...I say that under the Pope is the true Christendom, yea, the very *elite* of Christendom, and many pious and great saints." (Quoted in Schaff, Vol. VII, 530). For Luther and the Reformers, despite Rome's discontinuity with regard to their heretical abuses and excesses in doctrine, there was a continuity of unbroken tradition and correct Biblical teaching in the visible Church of Christ on earth! As has been noted, it was extremely important for Luther to go back to the sources of the Church Fathers to focus on the sound and biblical exegesis which they handed down to the Church that had in many ways been overlooked and forgotten by the papacy.

Luther and Catechism in the Church

As people join the visible Church and confess Jesus Christ before God and man, they must be taught the basic doctrines of the faith. With a desire to help the people to learn basic Bible doctrines, Luther wrote two important catechisms of the Reformation, known as *Luther's Small Catechism* and *Luther's Larger Catechism*. The *Smaller* was written by the intellectually great Dr. Luther to young children; his catechism bears a gentle spirit of a father to a child, and of an experienced teacher who can reduce difficult teachings so that any student no matter what age can understand. Historian Philip Schaff describes Luther's *Small Catechism* in this way: "The Little Catechism, which is his best, bears the stamp of his religious genius, and is, next to his translation of the Bible, his most useful and enduring work by which he continues a living teacher in catechetical classes and Sunday schools as far as the Lutheran confession extends. Here he adapts the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to the capacity of children..." (Schaff, Vol. VII, 550). As catechetical instruction was inherited from the practice of the Jewish synagogues, and was used regularly in the foundation of the New Testament Church, so Luther and the Reformers continued this important practice so that both children and adults would know the basic tenets of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. Infants were baptized in the Reformation as early as possible, then would be catechized in order to prepare for full communion in the Lord's Church; Adult believers were catechized, then baptized after they were able to make a profession of faith before the congregation. The three essential parts of Luther's Catechisms were 1) the Ten Commandments; 2) The *Apostle's Creed*; and 3) the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Luther continued to contribute confessionally and catechetically throughout his life, and his example of catechism writing would continue

in the history of the Reformation, as these confessions of faith were honed and theologically made more precise and biblically accurate as the Reformation continued.

Philip of Hesse and the Colloquy of Marburg: *How is Christ present in the Eucharist?*

The Reformation continued to expand and spread throughout Germany through the aid of Protestant princes or rulers of regions, and the phenomenal success and use of the printing press. Melanchthon was responsible for most of the scholarly influence at this point in the Reformation, while Luther continued to teach the people, and the teaching of the Reformers spread to Leipzig (where the most influential Lutheran university was located), on to Nuremberg which was the Alexandria of learning, knowledge, and the arts in Germany, into Strassburg the capital of the Alsace where the chief reformer and teacher was Martin Bucer (1491-1552) who had been a Dominican monk and ordained priest who labored for the Reformation for twenty five years of his life. As Electors Frederick and John would give princely favor and help to Luther and his Reformation against the tyrannous rule of the papacy, so Philip of Hesse became committed to the Reformation in 1526 and sought personally to unify the growing Lutheran and Reformed people against the common powerful roman Catholic foe. During this time the Roman Catholic armies grew in strength in power because the Emperor had made peace with the in June 29th and joined together to unify against the threat of Protestantism. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse was surnamed “Magnanimous” (1504-1567) and ruled over the region of Hesse (or Hestia) in Middle Germany; this became next to the region of Saxony the greatest theater of Reformation success, particularly at the University of Marburg that

became reformed according to the Word of God and instrumental in propagating the Protestant cause. Philip of Hesse made Dr. Luther's acquaintance as early as the Diet of Worms in 1521 and knew Melanchthon from a meeting he had with him in Heidelberg in 1524. Philip of Hesse was agreed with the Reformers that everything which had been deformed by Roman Catholicism must be reformed by the Word of God, and God used this powerful prince to extend this principle. Because of Philip, the region of Hesse was reformed and the mass was abolished as he put himself as the head of the Church in order to seek reform. Because the Reformation had spread so far, there was a great need for unification among the Protestant Reformers, but several providential occasions prevented this from occurring.

As the Roman idolatrous mass of transubstantiation had been abolished as unbiblical, the Lutherans and Reformed teachers needed to articulate constructive a biblical doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Like the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the early church, the Protestant Churches needed to discuss together and attempt a unified articulation of the Bible's teaching on the Sacraments. In the Medieval Church there was a sacramental debate in the ninth and eleventh centuries with the doctrines of substantiation being advocated by most and the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The leading Protestant teachers were united on denying the scriptural basis for medieval transubstantiation, but were divided as to how to articulate the true presence in correction of the false doctrine. Philip of Hesse called the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529 to be held in the old castle at Marburg with the hope and intention of

unifying both of the Protestant communions on the teaching of the Lord's Supper and the real presence of Christ in the supper.

The question to be answered at this Colloquy with hopes of an alliance was how was Christ present in the supper (in a corporeal or spiritual sense). Unfortunately, due to misunderstandings at this first official Protestant council an alliance was not accomplished and Lutheran and Reformed Churches continued side by side, but not fully unified and together because of this one issue. As historian Philip Schaff wrote: “[Luther’s] peculiar view of the Eucharist became the most, almost the only, serious doctrinal difference between the two wings of the Reformation, and has kept them apart ever since” (Vol. VII, 617). The difficulty with attaining unity was with Luther’s moderate position on his understanding of the Eucharistic Presence of Christ in the supper. Luther believed in a hyper-literal manner that when Jesus said “This is my body” that this meant a real and corporeal presence of Christ in the supper, and he had held this view of the corporeal presence of Christ since his debate with Carlstadt in the early 1520s, where Luther rightly argued against Carlstadt’s absurd teaching and interpretation which appears to be similar to Zwingli’s view. Luther believed in God’s omnipresence, the resurrection and ascension of Christ to God’s right hand, but this doctrine of God’s omnipresence Luther applied to the risen body of Jesus Christ in heaven. Luther taught that Jesus’ body was ubiquitous and could be omnipresent, and so he could really and truly be corporally present in, with, and under the elements in the supper, while the actual elements do not change or become the body and blood of Christ as the Roman Catholics taught in their doctrine of transubstantiation. Luther wrote of his understanding of the

ubiquitous nature of the Person of Christ: “I believe...that Christ is in heaven, but also in this sacrament, as substantially as he was in the Virgin’s womb. I care not whether it be against nature or reason, provided it be not against faith.” At this colloquy Luther called upon the Swiss to prove the absence of Christ, and he told them that he would never change his opinion on the real presence and would teach it until his death. Luther was so forceful on his literal position and understanding that he took chalk and wrote in large letters on the table “*Hoc est corpus Meum*” insisting that when Christ said “This is my body” he meant it literally, not spiritually as if the supper was a bare memorial with the absence of Christ’s presence. Luther’s doctrine of consubstantiation was formalized in the *Augsburg Confession* that teaches in Article X: “Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine, and are there communicated to and received by those that eat in the Lord’s Supper. And they disapprove of those that teach otherwise.”

On the other side of the table and the debate sat Swiss theologians and Reformers Oecolampadius and Zwingli (known as the “Luther of Switzerland”), who differed on their understanding of the Lord’s Supper (and they awaited John Calvin’s careful and more precise teaching later on the subject), but agreed that Christ was truly one person, the God-Man and therefore to be truly human he could not be omnipresent. For Oecolampadius, Christ was truly present in the supper, but spiritually and truly present with us, not corporeally present, saying that the language Jesus uses in “This is my body” is as figurative as when Christ says “I am the door” or “I am the Vine”. Zwingli taught that the supper was a mere commemoration and memorial, while Luther and

Melanchthon insisted that there was a corporeal presence of Christ (what became to be called “consubstantiation” in contrast to “transubstantiation”). All of the Reformers except Zwingli agreed that Christ was truly present, but how he was present was not agreed upon at the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529. All of the Reformers rejected the papal monstrosity of the mass where Christ was sacrificed each time the priest spoke the appropriate words over the bread and the wine, and after much heated discussion, tears shed, and attempted forgiveness offered between the brethren for rash words, they could not agree on what the Bible teaches with regard to this important doctrine.

Unfortunately, in the light of later history, it is commonly accepted that Luther’s understanding of the real presence did not go far enough in making a true biblical distinction between Rome and the Reformers and no common unity was achieved through this colloquy because the Lutherans and Reformers were not only misunderstanding each other, but they had different conceptions of essential and non-essentials of doctrine. For instance, when the colloquy was over and the Reformers were parting, Zwingli peacefully extended his hand in love to Luther, and Luther said to him: “You are of a different spirit than us.” In Zwingli’s mind, the colloquy was for the discussion of non-essentials of the faith that brothers could agree to disagree upon and yet be joined in unity and love; for Luther his position and teaching was an essential of the faith that one cannot deny. Luther had the audacity to say because of this to Zwingli: “I am astonished that you wish to consider me as your brother. It shows clearly that you do not attach much importance to your doctrine.” The other men from Wittenberg agreed with Luther and said to the Swiss brethren: “You do not belong to the communion of the Christian Church. We cannot acknowledge you as brethren.” Despite these words, Philip

of Hesse encouraged the Reformers to make a list of what they agreed upon. There were fourteen articles of faith out of fifteen that they all believed together and confessed, but they could not agree on the fifteenth article with reference to the Lord's Supper and sadly the Reformation would continue as two different streams of Lutheran and Reformed Churches. The colloquy that had started on Friday afternoon October 1st now concluded sadly with no alliance of the brethren on the 5th of October. Unfortunately, Luther held his literal position, and his teaching that he thought essential to the faith all the way unto his death as he said he would, even proclaiming in a later book written against those who disagreed with his sacramental position that they should be solemnly condemned. He forcefully stated toward the end of his life that he would rather drink blood alone with the papists than wine alone with the Zwinglians. A few days before his death Luther wrote: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the *Sacramentarians*, nor standeth in the way of the *Zwinglians*, nor sitteth in the seat of the *Zurichers*." The Reformation would await a greater theologian to come to salvation (1532) and arise to articulate with pen this important doctrine and make it clearer for the Church as to what the Bible teaches. This man was John Calvin, and when Luther read one of his early Latin editions of the *Institutes* Luther revered Calvin's piety and scholarship so much that he said that if he had been at the Colloquy of Marburg to aid Zwingli and Oecolampadius in what they were teaching concerning the supper, that there would probably not have arisen this controversy. The Lord used John Calvin as his humble and peaceful servant to temper the Swiss Reformers who were the brunt of Luther's attacks often throughout the remainder of Luther's life by reminding them of his eminence, his scholarship, his piety, and to seek to listen and understand him. Christians should learn from Calvin's example,

learning from the faithful Christian Fathers in history, and particularly should take to heart the important saying “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

The Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation

Another threat to the unity of Christ’s visible Church was the Anabaptist controversy. This controversy has been called the “Radical Reformation” by some historians and theologians because the Anabaptists did not affirm that Rome had the ordinances of true and Biblical Christianity, and therefore if one was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, they should be re-baptized (which is what “Anabaptist” literally means). The Anabaptists’ Radical Reformation was not to restore apostolic Catholicism, but to start a new church altogether. In other words, where the Reformers insisted on the continuity of Christ’s Church while admitting of the errors and heresies, the Anabaptists focused on the inconsistency with New Testament teaching, and sought to make a totally new start. The Anabaptists also insisted that infant baptism was not a teaching of Scripture, and that baptism must be preceded by repentance and faith in Christ. One of the chief teachers of Anabaptism was Balthasar Hubmaier (born in 1480 in Austria) who taught that the baptism of a child had no meaning and was invalid. In the place of infant baptism he introduced into the Christian Church a solemn dedication or consecration of children before the congregation with prayers that when the child would one day profess their faith they would be baptized and admitted to the Lord’s Table. Hubmaier was rebaptized in 1525 after leaving the Roman Catholic communion, and he instituted the rebaptism of others who fled Rome’s abuses and excesses, but would not join the rest of the faithful

Protestant Reformers because he did not believe they went far enough in the abolishing of Catholic practices, nor that they were fully consistent with teaching only what the Bible taught, his implication being the Bible did not teach infant baptism regardless of how the Church had always practiced it. Many of the Anabaptists were persecuted and killed by well-meaning officials, but Luther again as he did in the Peasant's rebellion tried to remind the people that the Reformation will be won by the Word of God, and not by fire and sword.

Diet of Augsburg and the Augsburg Confession (1530)

Brave Protestant princes who already supported Luther and the Reformation took their stand for the Protestant faith publicly and formally for the first time at the imperial Diet of Spier in 1526. The Diet held under Emperor Ferdinand, in God's grace and providence proclaimed that "every State [in the Holy Roman Empire] shall so live, rule, and believe as it may hope and trust to answer before God and his imperial Majesty." From this time on, Protestant sovereigns would decide whether their subjects would be Roman Catholic or Protestant based on the sovereign's confession and beliefs and the majority of the people who they ruled over. In light of this, Saxony, Hesse, Prussia, Anhalt, Augsburg, Frankfurt, Strassburg, and many other German regions adopted the Reformation. The Diet of Spier as well as the constant division and disagreement between Emperor Charles and the Pope further aided the continuation of the Reformation. In order to unify the Holy Roman Empire against the threat of the Turks another Diet at Spier was called in 1529 to basically overthrow the rulings of 1526 and forbade the continuation of reformation teaching (Zwinglians and Anabaptists were not

even to be tolerated, and this implied that Luther was again under the authority and condemnation of the Edict of Worms). The German Protestants resisted this edict as contrary to the Word of God, and sought the help of Elector John “the Constant” because the Word of God abide forever. This protest was a renewal and expansion of Luther’s first protest at Worms, and this second stand caused the Diet of Augsburg to be held in 1530.

The Colloquy (Council) of Marburg in 1529 had not united the Protestants against their Roman Catholic foes. In April 1530, the Diet of Augsburg was convened to settle religious matters and to discuss preparation for possible war against the invading Turks. The Emperor needed to know if Germany was behind him in the war against the Turks, but the Germans refused to discuss this until the religious problem had been decided. The emperor needed men to fight his war, and the German Reformers would not join his carnal crusade, until he had favored their more important spiritual crusade against tyranny and abuse. On June 25th the Augsburg Confession was read, while the emperor who knew very little German slept. The papists represented at the Diet thought that it was a moderate confession and the German princes agreed to sign it representing a German unity based on the teaching of the Reformation. Melancthon who penned the confession revealed the importance of the confession to be a truly “Catholic” document (against the Roman Catholic or papist doctrines), when it closes with: “This is the sum of doctrine among us, in which can be seen nothing which is discrepant with Scripture *nor with the Catholic or even with the Roman Church*, so far as that Church is known from the writings of the Fathers.” Because the emperor declared a recess for a season, and

Luther and the Reformers realized this would hold up the promotion and preaching of the gospel in the meantime, the Smalcaldian League was made up of allied German Protestant princes on December 1530 in order to protect their land and people from invasion by the emperor or pope. This league was to protect the gospel and the Lutheran Churches from harm during the time of the recess called by the emperor.

The *Augsburg Confession* is the first of all evangelical confessions of faith. The Confession begins with twenty-one articles of faith beginning with the Triune God, then the subjects of Christology where the Lutherans reaffirm that ancient councils and ecumenical creeds of Christendom, while condemning Arianism and Unitarianism. The Confession has a section on anthropology concerning the fall and original sin, accentuating the Augustinian necessity of God's initiative in divine grace, in opposition to Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian doctrines. The third section of the Confession teaches about the Christian life and particularly the doctrines of justification by faith alone, the gospel ministry, new obedience in Christ, the Church, repentance, ordination, good works, and the mediatorship of Christ. Under the sacraments, consubstantiation is articulated as the biblical teaching of the Lord's Supper, disapproving with Zwinglians and condemning Anabaptists as heretics for their views on infant baptism and infant salvation. In the second part of the Confession there is a list of doctrines that are rejected by Lutherans as abuses of Rome such as the celibacy of the clergy, the sacrifice of the mass, obligatory auricular confession, monastic vows, and the secular power of bishops is denied. The Confession states boldly and clearly that the ecclesiastical and civil powers are not to be confounded. To the publication of the *Augsburg Confession* came the

Roman Catholic response or “Roman Catholic Confutation” that approves of eighteen doctrinal articles of part one, not taking issue with justification by faith (because “alone” was not in this consensus confessional document) or Luther’s teaching on the Lord’s Supper. The articles on the church, on faith and good works, and the worship of the saints however, is rejected wholly; the second part on the abuses of Rome as declared by the Confession are all rejected, particularly the various abuses among the clergy. During the writing and professing of the *Augsburg Confession* the *Tetrapolitan Confession* was being written by Bucer and professed by the Swiss Reformers. The *Tetrapolitan Confession* is in doctrine and arrangement very similar to the Lutheran Confession, but is more distinctly Protestant in teaching because in comparison to the *Augsburg Confession*, this begins with a doctrine of the supreme importance of the Holy Scriptures as its confessional and doctrinal foundation. The Swiss who affirmed and professed this confession would also join the Smalcald League. During this tumultuous time, Melancthon admirably appealed to Charles V while Luther influenced the writing of the confessions from his prison cell in Coburg. Luther had once again to be obtained as a prisoner, as he was still under the ban of the empire and the anathema of the Pope. However, Luther’s faith did not fail him, and he continued to fear God and not man. He was eventually released from prison, and the *Augsburg Confession* became the first evangelical confession as well as the first Lutheran Confession, and by the time of his death in 1546, the Reformation had a strong and confessional foundation that would continue to be built upon by Calvin and the Swiss Reformers. Pastor Dr. Martin Luther was arguably the most influential theologian-teacher in history, second only to the great St. Augustine, but one who studied, learned and built upon the doctrinal foundation that

Augustine had faithfully laid. Because of Dr. Luther's faithfulness to Christ and His Gospel, the truth continues to "abideth still"! And the Reformation would continue with the Swiss Reformers.

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