



1

Lutheranism	
<p>• <b>Historical Intro</b></p> <p><b>How are the structured/organized?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because there are different Lutheran communions, there is no singular form of church government, but the primary form of church government seen is local church autonomy in line with confessional standards.</li> <li>• In Lutheranism, ordained clergy—“pastors”—are generally thought of as distinct from “elders,” who, despite being an extension of pastoral ministry, are conceived more of as assistants to the pastor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The elders nevertheless share in shepherding ministry and directing the affairs of the church. In ILC churches, only men can serve as pastors, though men and women can serve as deacons/deaconesses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

2

## Lutheranism

### What do they believe about authority and Tradition?

- *sola Scriptura* in conversation with Tradition
  - Although it is subject to confusion and must be teased out to avoid abuse, often *sola Scriptura* is defined by saying that the Scriptures are the sole, infallible, rule of faith for the church.
- Lutherans, like other most other confessional Protestant traditions, accept the first six ecumenical councils while rejecting the seventh (i.e., veneration of icons).
- Authority without ultimacy
  - Lutherans maintain that creeds and councils are authoritative, but not the final authority.

3

## Lutheranism

### What do they believe about justification?

- Contrasting sharply with the Catholic Church, Luther—and Lutherans—strongly advocate justification by faith alone apart from any works or any meritorious action. As the tradition in which the “theology of the cross” resounds the loudest, justification by faith occurs because Christ was justified in the resurrection and sinners get credit for his perfect righteousness in light of being united with him.
  - “But since we receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost by faith alone, faith alone justifies, because those reconciled are accounted righteous and children of God, not on account of their own purity, but through mercy for Christ’s sake, provided only they by faith apprehend this mercy.” Defense of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (II)

4

## Lutheranism

- Thus, we get Luther’s famous phrase “simul justus et peccator” (i.e., “at once, just and sinner”).
- However, for Lutherans, because our union with Christ an enduring, daily reality, justification is an extended forensic event—we are justified daily, though never “re-justified,” and there is no “progress” in justification as in Catholicism. Instead, the same verdict is spoken over us every day—“righteous” and “sins forgiven” in light of union with Christ.

5

## Lutheranism

- Justification, Faith, Predestination and Perseverance
  - Lutherans believe that man is depraved and needs God’s grace to move toward him in order to ever repent and believe the Gospel. Additionally, God has unconditionally elected certain individuals unto salvation in Christ who will all come to faith and remain in a justified state.

6

## Lutheranism

- “The predestination or eternal election of God, however, extends only over the godly, beloved children of God, being a cause of their salvation, which He also provides, as well as disposes what belongs thereto. Upon this [predestination of God] our salvation is founded so firmly that the gates of hell cannot overcome it. John 10:28; Matt. 16:1.” FOC, XI.5
- “Therefore, we reject the following errors.... that God is unwilling that everyone should be saved, but that some, without regard to their sins, from the mere counsel, purpose, and will of God, are ordained to condemnation so that they cannot be saved.” FOC, XI.19

7

## Lutheranism

- One of the implications of this is that people can repent, be justified and receive the Spirit in response to universal, saving grace—be a Christian in the most robust sense of the word—and ultimately fall away.
  - When asked, “Why do they fall away as opposed to continue in the faith?” the answer is not that God did not elect them, but that they rejected God and were ultimately faithless. Though God plays a determining role in election to salvation, he plays no determining role in the fate of the damned, active or passive.
    - “As to the question why not all men are converted and saved, seeing that God's grace is universal and all men are equally and utterly corrupt, we confess that we cannot answer it.” LCMS, Doctrinal Positions, “Of Conversion”

8

## Lutheranism

- Interestingly, however, it is far from clear that Luther himself actually rejected “double predestination.”
  - “St. Paul teaches us about the eternal providence of God. It is the original source which determines who would believe and who wouldn’t, who can be set free from sin and who cannot. Such matters have been taken out of our hands and are put into God’s hand...” Preface to Luther’s Commentary on Romans, previewing Romans 9.
  - “God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus, he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. It is our business, however, to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone....” Luther, Bondage of the Will

9

## Lutheranism

- Law vs. Gospel
  - The distinction between Law and Gospel is an indispensable part of Lutheran theology in general and sanctification in particular.
    - “All of Scripture is divided into two parts: commands and promises.” Luther, On Christian Liberty
    - “All of Scripture is either law or gospel.” Melancthon, Commonplaces
  - Law: demands perfection, conditional, brings knowledge of sin, consists in commands/moral demands
  - Gospel: presents Christ’s perfection, unconditional, overcomes sin, promise

10

## Lutheranism

- The Law: Three Uses
  - Brings knowledge of sin and recognition that we need grace and a Savior (primary use)
  - Restrains sin and evil
  - Helps us see examples of love “fleshed out” and what kinds of actions please God
- Nevertheless, the confessional Lutheran documents strongly support progressive sanctification and growth in holiness throughout the Christian life.
  - “These words say absolutely nothing about our will, nor do they say that it effects something, even in the newborn human being, of itself, but they ascribe that to the Holy Spirit, which cleanses human beings and daily makes them more upright and holier.” SD II.35

11

## Lutheranism

- “Although those born anew come even in this life to the point that they desire the good and delight in it and even do good deeds and grow in practicing them, this is not (as was mentioned above) a product of our own will or power, but the Holy Spirit.” SD II.39
- “As soon as the Holy Spirit has begun his work of rebirth and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that on the basis of his power we can and should be cooperating with him, though still in great weakness.” SD II.65

12