

## **Philosophy and Theological Ideas of Martin Luther as a Prelude to Protestant Reformation**

Ibrahim Bashir Aminu and Isaac IorhenAkuva, Ph.D

Department of Political Science, Federal University Dutsin-Ma

Email: politicalbash6@gmail.com; politicalbash0@gmail.com Email:

iakuva@fudutsinma.edu.ng; akuvaisaac@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This paper is analytical and adopted the use of secondary method of data collection to examine the theological as well as the political philosophy of Martin Luther as a responsible factor to the Christian Protestant Reformation in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The authors used the existing extant literature on the philosophy of Luther on church reformation to show how Luther contributed to the revolution in the Roman Catholic Church. Before the Church reformation, Luther was dissatisfied with the life style of the clergy and the condition the church found itself. The Church was highly monetized; the condition made the Church to gradually lost touch with its spiritual and moral essence. The degradation was found in the sale of indulgences as a ‘means’ for salvation, Luther found this absurd. The climax of Luther’s dissatisfaction was registered when he nailed his famous ninety five thesis on the door of Wittenberg. It was found that the awareness created by the ninety five thesis gave birth to the emergence of the protestant denominations. The findings on the philosophy of Luther show that, the world around us can be changed with the persistent pursuit of truth founded on selflessness. If the society we live in can be anywhere better for human existence, then the role of philosophy cannot be taken for granted.

**Keywords: Philosophy, theological, ideas, prelude, protestant, reformation**

### **Introduction**

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546), a German Theologian, Professor, Pastor (Rev. Father of an Augustinian congregation), and religious reformer was the catalyst of the 16th-century protestant reformation. Through his words and actions, Luther precipitated a movement that reformulated certain basic tenets of Christian belief, resulted in the division of Western Christendom between Roman Catholicism and the new protestant traditions, mainly Lutherism, Calvinism, The Anglican Communion, the Anabaptists, and the Antitrinitarians. He is one of the most influential figures in the history of Christianity. Martin Luther went on to become one of the Western history’s most significant figures. Luther spent his early years in relative anonymity as a monk and scholar.

Luther began the Protestant Reformation with the publication of his *Ninety-Five Theses* on October 31, 1517. In this publication, he attacked the Church's sale of indulgences. He advocated a theology that rested on God's gracious activity in Jesus Christ, rather than in human works. Although, these ideas had been advanced before, Martin Luther codified them at a moment in history ripe for religious reformation. The Catholic Church was ever after divided, and the Protestantism that soon emerged was shaped by Luther's ideas. His writings changed the course of religious and cultural history in the West. Nearly all Protestants trace their history back to Luther in one way or another. Luther's relationship to philosophy is complex and should not be judged only by his famous statement that "reason is the devil's whore." Given Luther's critique of philosophy and his famous phrase that philosophy is the "devil's whore," it would be easy to assume that Luther had only contempt for philosophy and reason. Nothing could be further from the truth. Luther believed, rather, that philosophy and reason had important roles to play in our lives and in the life of the community. The study highlights three major contributions of Martin Luther which are his theological ideas and belief and how it precipitated the total splintering of the Christendom which started in Germany and later spread all over Europe.

### **Historical Background to the life and time of Martin Luther**

Martin Luther who challenged the authority of the church and set off the protestant reformation was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben in the Holy Roman Empire in present Eastern Germany. Soon after Luther's birth, his family moved from Eisleben to Mansfield. His father was a successful miner and smelter and Mansfield was a larger mining town. Martin was the second son born to his parents Hans and Margaret Luther. Two of his brothers died during outbreaks of the plague.

Luther's father knew that mining was a cyclical occupation, and he wanted more security for his promising young son. Hans Luther decided that he would do whatever was necessary to see that Martin could become a lawyer. Martin started school in Mansfield probably around seven. The school stressed Latin, a bit of logic and rhetoric. When Martin was 14 he was sent to Magdeburg to continue his studies. He stayed only one year in Magdeburg and then enrolled in Latin school in another city known as Eisenach until 1501. In 1501, he enrolled in the University of Erfurt, where he studied the basic course for a Master of Arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, metaphysics, etc.). Significant to his spiritual and theological development was the principal role of theology and metaphysics in Erfurt's curriculum. In 1505, it seemed that his father's plans were about to finally be realized. His son was on the verge of becoming a lawyer. Unfortunately, the plans were interrupted because Martin dropped out of school almost immediately, believing that law represent uncertainty (Hendrix, 2015).

He later attributed his decision to an event when he was returning to university on horseback after a trip home. During the trip, there was a thunderstorm, a lightning bolt struck near him, Martin was afraid that he was going to die, he screamed out, “save me, St. Anna, and I will become a monk.” St. Anna was the mother of the Virgin Mary. He told his father that he was terrified of death and the divine judgment. He left law school, sold his books and entered St. Augustine’s monastery.

The decision to enter the monastery was a difficult one. Martin knew that he would greatly disappoint his parents (which he did), but he also knew that one must keep a promise made to God. Beyond that, however, he also had strong internal reasons to join the monastery because he was haunted by insecurity about his salvation. To him, a monastery was the perfect place to find assurance. However, he threw himself into the life of a monk with vitality. Finally, his mentor told him to focus on Christ alone in his quest for assurance (Brecht, 2015).

In 1510, Luther traveled as part of delegation from his monastery to Rome in Italy. He was not very impressed with what he saw. In 1511, he transferred from the monastery in Erfurt to one in Wittenberg where after receiving his Doctor of Theology degree, he became a Professor of Biblical Theology at the newly founded University of Wittenberg.

In 1513, he began his first lectures on the Psalms. In these lectures, Luther’s critique of the theological world around him began to take shape. In 1515/16, this critique became more noticeable. It was during these lectures that Luther finally found the assurance that had evaded him for years. The discovery that changed Luther’s life ultimately changed the course of church history and the history of Europe (Erikson, 1958). During his life, Luther had several publications, among which were the Ninety-five theses 1525, the Bondage of the Will 1517, This is My Body 1527, Concerning Monastic Vows 1521, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church 1520, The Freedom of a Christian 1520, Earthly Government 1523 etc.

From the mid-1530s Luther was plagued by Kidney stones and an obvious coronary condition. He attributed his poor health to the severity of his life in the monastery. He nevertheless continued his academic teaching from 1535 to 1545. He lectured on the book of Genesis, one of his most insightful biblical expositions and preached regularly at the city church until his colleague Johannes assumed that responsibility. Even then, Luther continued to preach in the Augustinian monastery. After the death of one of his oldest friends, Nikolas Hausmann, in 1538 and that of his daughter Magdalene four years later, references to death became increasingly abundant in Luther’s correspondence. Thus, he wrote in June 1543, letter to a friend: “I desire that there be given me a good little hour when I can move onward to God. I have had enough. I am tired. I have become

nothing. Do pray earnestly for me so that the Lord may take my soul in peace’’ (Marty, 2004, p.126).

In February 1546, Luther journeyed, despite his failing health, to Eisleben, the town where he was born. He set out to mediate an embarrassing quarrel between two young and arrogant noblemen, the Albrecht and Gebhard of Mansfield. He was successful, and he so informed his wife in what proved to be his last letter. One day later, on February 18, death came. His body was interred in the Castle Church in Wittenberg (Lull and Derek, 2015).

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Philosophy originate from a Greekword “*philosophia*,” literally "love of wisdom". It is the study of general and fundamental questionsabout existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language. Such questions are often posed as problems to be studied or resolved. The term was probably coined by Pythagoras (c. 570 – 495 BCE). Philosophical methods include questioning, critical discussion, rational argument, and systematic presentation. Philosophical problems lead to philosophical questions and philosophical questions leads to philosophical analysis. A philosophical problem is usually framed in form of arguments. An argument is a set of discussions in which inferences are made in support of a given point (Ujoma, Omonzejele, and Maduka, 2011).

### **Theology**

The word “theology” comes from two Greek words that when combined, mean “the study of God.” Theology is the critical study of the nature of the divine. It is taught as an academic discipline, typically in universities and seminaries. Theology is the study of deities or their scripturesin order to discover what they have revealed about themselves. It occupies itself with the unique content of analyzing the supernatural, but also especially with epistemology, and asks and seeks to answer the question of revelation. Revelation pertains to the acceptance of God, gods, or deities, as not only transcendent or above the natural world, but also willing and able to interact with the natural world and, in particular, to reveal themselves to humankind. While theology has turned into a secular field, religious adherents still consider theology to be a discipline that helps them live and understand concepts such as life and love and that helps them lead lives of obedience to the deities they follow or worship.

### **Protestant Reformation**

The Protestant Reformation was the 16th-century religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered Catholic Europe, setting in place the structures and

beliefs that would define the continent in the modern era. In northern and central Europe, reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin and Henry VIII challenged papal authority and questioned the Catholic Church's ability to define Christian practice. They argued for a religious and political redistribution of power into the hands of Bible - and pamphlet-reading pastors and princes. The disruption triggered wars, persecutions and the so-called Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church's delayed, but forcefully responded to the Protestants.

### **Martin Luther's Relationship with Philosophy**

At some point, Luther expressed interest in Aristotle. He therefore became suspicious of even the greatest thinkers and tests everything himself by experience, because philosophy proved to be unsatisfying. To him, reason could not lead men to God, and he therefore developed a love-hate relationship with Aristotle over Aristotle's emphasis on reason. For Luther, reason could be used to question men and institutions, but not God. Human beings could learn about God through divine revelation (Falsbusch, 2017). Given Luther's critique of philosophy and his famous phrase is that, philosophy is the "devil's whore". It would be easy to assume that Luther had only contempt for philosophy and reason. Luther believed that philosophy and reason had important roles to play in our lives and in the life of the community. However, he also felt that it was important to remember what those roles are and not to confuse the proper use of philosophy with an improper one.

If properly understood and used, philosophy and reason are a great aid to individuals and society. If improperly used, they become a great threat to both. Likewise, revelation and the gospel when used properly are an aid to society, but when misused also have sad and profound implications.

The proper role of philosophy is organizational and as an aid in governance. When Cardinal Cajetan first demanded Luther's recantation of the *Ninety-Five Theses*, Luther appealed to scripture and right reason. Reason can be an aid to faith in that it helps to clarify and organize, but it is always a second order discourse and never the reverse. The two cannot be reconciled. Reason is the devil's whore precisely because it asks the wrong questions and looks in the wrong direction for answers. Revelation is the only proper place for theology to begin. Reason must always take a back seat.

Reason plays a primary role in governance and in most human interaction. Luther argued that reason is necessary for a good and just society. In fact, unlike most of his contemporaries, Luther did not believe that a ruler had to be Christian, only reasonable. Here, opposite to his discussion of theology, it is revelation that is improper. Trying to govern using the gospel as one's model would either corrupt the government or corrupt the gospel. The gospel's fundamental message is forgiveness, but government must

maintain justice. If forgiveness becomes the dominant model in government, people being sinful, chaos will increase. If however, the government claims the gospel but acts on the basis of justice, then people will be misled as to the proper nature of the gospel (Falsbusch, 2017). Luther was self-consciously trying to carve out proper realms for revelation and philosophy or reason. Each had a proper role that enables humanity to develop. Chaos only became a problem when the two got confused.

## **Theological Ideas of Luther**

The theology of Martin Luther was instrumental in influencing the Protestant Reformation, specifically topics dealing with justification by faith, the relationship between the Law and the Gospel (also an instrumental component of reformed theology), and various other theological ideas. Although Luther never wrote a "systematic theology" in the style of St. Thomas Aquinas, many of his ideas were systematized in the Lutheran confessions, and summed in:

- Justification by faith
- Law and Gospel
- Universal priesthood of the baptized
- Sacraments and the means of Grace
- Two Kingdoms

## **The Political Ideas of Martin Luther**

### **1. The Doctrine of Two Regiments or Kingdoms**

Martin Luther's doctrine of Two Regiments or Kingdoms is highly significant not simply because it is central to his theology, but because it is related to his thought about politics and society. In a nutshell, the doctrine of two regiments or kingdoms is central to his entire philosophy. At the centre of the doctrine, there is the idea that God has created two kingdoms in the world and through these kingdoms he governs the world. One is the spiritual world and the other is the temporal world or regiment.

The spiritual kingdom is governed through the Word of the Bible and without sword and in this kingdom men become righteous and godly only through the Word. In the spiritual world, there is no need of sword or law and only Word is enough. All the inhabitants of spiritual world are true Christians those are governed by the spirit of godliness and spirituality.

The spiritual Regiment is essentially a government of the soul whose purpose is to lead men to everlasting life. God rules through Holy Spirit and the Word, the government of the spiritual kingdom is invisible. Men act and lead their spiritual life only through the

sermon preached by human ministers. In the spiritual world, there is no place of force and the whole system is based on voluntary rule (Lehman, 2002).

The nature of temporal regiment is quite different. People in this kingdom are not true Christians or ardent believers of Christianity. Their main concern was worldly enjoyment and pleasure as well as possessions. People of this kingdom cannot be governed only by Word, because Word carries very little significance and in most cases, its importance upon the people of temporal world is not worthy to mention. Sword and word are essential instruments by which God governs this kingdom. For the maintenance of peace and order, God has awarded the government of the temporal kingdom with the manifold sources of enjoyment and luxury. So God himself is the founder, lord, master, promoter and rewarder of both forms of righteousness, temporal as well as spiritual. There is a very close similarity between Luther's *doctrine of two regiments* and St. Augustine's *City of God*. Both offer us interesting narratives of *world of God* and *world of Devil*. All are children of God but are divided into two classes. One lives in the *kingdom of God* and the other lives in the *kingdom of Devil*. Luther says, God has created the *kingdom of Devil* to punish its inhabitants for their sins.

The two kingdoms are loosely connected, in between these two worlds, there is God who watches over them all. The temporal kingdom is dominated by conflict, quarrel and strife, and human nature is vicious and self-centered. The two regiments are weapons which God employs against devil's kingdom. The first regiment is at first, God appeals through word to the hearts of men in order to ensure obedience to him and if it fails, he uses the sword to punish them. Martin Luther draw a distinction in order to emphasize that in the temporal world, God created the post of a king or governor to maintain law and order and punish the wrongdoers. The simple implication is that political system was created by God. In this idea, religion and politics are mixed (Lehman, 2002).

## **2. State and its Relation to Church**

Luther's theory of state or theory of government is naturally from the theological assumptions. Like St. Augustine, Luther asserted that government was both a consequences of sinfulness of human nature and a divine institution, it exists because vast majority of men are evil. So we can say that a state according to Luther is a mechanism devised by God to punish the evil minded people. From the theological point of view, the state is necessary. It is the primary duty of the temporal government with the help of sword to force people to lead a spiritual life. Otherwise, it will have no use. It was the belief of Luther that the king or temporal power performs all duties or action in accordance with the directives sent through the church. In this process the king himself has no personal liking or disliking, God wishes are final. This ultimately leads to autocratic rule (Dillenberger, 1961).

Luther's state is not only an instrument to punish the people for their sinful activities, but it was also a way which will save them from inevitable destruction. Luther demanded a radical reform on the whole system of the church, and for this, he proposed the institution of general council. He looked to the secular power for the reform of the church, therefore, he formulated twenty-seven points of reforms and he said, these reforms would be carried out by the secular power or general council. One of these points was all revenues and jurisdictions of the Pope in the regions outside the estate of the Roman Church would be abolished, all matters of money or material interest would be left to the secular authority. It would be absolutely wrong on the part of the Church, if it involves itself in the acquisition of earthly wealth and possessions. It should try to satisfy itself with religious or spiritual considerations. Pope, Priests and Bishops are merely officers for the regulation and promotion of Christian principles, under no circumstances they are to be related to secular affairs. The purpose of this was to dislodge the Church from its position. The ultimate result was that the checks upon the secular authority were removed and the church started to function as an institution under the secular authority. Through his movement, he succeeded in establishing absoluteness of political power. We can say, Luther was the originator of absolutism in politics. Martin Luther apprehended that his writings might be misinterpreted by secular rulers; they would try to encroach or overlap upon the spiritual affairs. To remove this possibility, he clearly stated that the prince and magistrates had nothing to interfere in spiritual matters; they were concern with life and goods and also everything external on earth. He strongly opposed any attempt to promote spiritual ends through temporal means. This implies that Luther was in support of division of duty. The secular authority was design for earthly affairs. The spiritual would go to the church. But the objective of both was to bring about peace and salvation. The prince would punish the sin after which people would be fit for receiving blessing of God. In Luther's conception, the state and the church are not completely separated from each other (Dillenberger, 1961).

### **3. Obedience to Secular Authority**

In his analysis of obedience to the secular authority, Luther has again taken the help of scripture. He says that the Christians among themselves need no law or sword, because it is not necessary for them. But this does not mean they will disobey the secular authority or violate the man-made laws. According to Luther a true Christian lives not for himself alone, but for his neighbors. It is the primary duty of a Christian to obey the laws of the secular authority and act in accordance with the law made by such authority. The obligation to the authority as well as its law is the duty of a Christian. This idea later on has given birth to the important political theory (political obligation). He also said, people must pay taxes and perform other duties. A true Christian should serve the state as well as the society spontaneously and with undiluted love. That is to say, his obedience to secular authority must come out of love, while obeying the state he should not bring the question of material gain under his consideration. A true Christian cannot prevent a man from



obeying the law of state and if he does, it would be his unchristian act (Dacker, Johnson and Revell, 1957).

Bearing in mind the above three major factors, it is clear why Luther took the radical steps of engaging on the enterprise of ensuring that the Church of his time was reformed

### **The Condition of the Church before Luther's Protest**

The Medieval Church played a far greater role in medieval period than the Church does today. In Medieval Europe, the Church dominated everybody's life. All Medieval people, village peasants or town's people believed that God, Heaven and Hell all existed. From the very earliest of ages, the people were taught that the only way they could get to Heaven was if the Roman Catholic Church let them. Everybody would have been terrified of Hell and the people would have been told of the sheer horrors waiting for them in Hell in the weekly services they attended.

The control the Church had over the people was total. Peasants worked for free on Church land. This proved difficult for peasants as the time they spent working on Church land, could have been better spent working on their own plots of land producing food for their families (Durant, 2005). They paid 10% of what they earned in a year to the Church (this tax was called tithes). Tithes could be paid in either money or in goods produced by the peasant farmers. As peasants had little money, they almost always had to pay in seeds, harvested grain, animals etc. What the Church got in tithes was kept in huge tithe barns; a lot of the stored grain would have been eaten by rats or poisoned by their urine. A failure to pay tithes, so the peasants were told by the Church, would lead to their souls going to hell after they had died. This is one reason the Church was so wealthy (Christopher).

This relationship between people and church was essentially based on money which enhanced the huge wealth of the Catholic Church. Rich families could buy high positions for their sons in the Catholic Church and this satisfied their belief that they would go to heaven and attain salvation. However, a peasant had to pay for a child to be christened (this had to be done as a first step to getting to heaven as the people were told that a non-baptized child could not go to heaven); you had to pay to get married and you had to pay to bury someone from your family in holy ground (Durant, 2005). The Catholic Church also had a three other ways of raising revenue.

**Relics:** These were officially sanctioned by the Vatican. They were pieces of straw, hay, white feathers from a dove, pieces of the cross etc. that could be sold to people as the things that had been the nearest to Jesus on Earth. The money raised went straight to the church and to the Vatican. These holy relics were keenly sought after as the people saw

their purchase as a way of pleasing God. It also showed that you had honored Him by spending your money on relics associated with his son.

**Indulgences:** These were ‘certificates’ produced in bulk that had been pre-signed by the Pope which pardoned a person’s sins and gave you access to heaven. Basically if you knew that you had sinned you would wait until a pardoner was in your region selling an indulgence and purchase one as the Pope, being God’s representative on Earth, would forgive your sins and you would be pardoned. This industry was later expanded to allow people to buy an indulgence for a dead relative who might be in purgatory or hell and relieve that relative of his sins. By doing this you would be seen by the Catholic Church of committing a Christian act and this would elevate your status in the eyes of God.

**Pilgrimages:** These were very much supported by the Catholic Church as a pilgrim would end up at a place of worship that was owned by the Catholic Church and money could be made by the sale of badges, holy water, and certificates to prove you had been on pilgrimage and completed your journey. It was specifically the issue of indulgences that angered Martin Luther into speaking out against them (Hans, 2007).

### **The Nexus between Luther’s Philosophico-Theological ideas and the Rise of Protestantism**

In the history of Rome there was a time when the word of Caesar was the law and the worship of Caesar was the religion of the world. He held control of both church and the state in his own person. Indeed, in a large sense, he was the church and he was the state. Martin Luther changed the course of Christianity and Western history. His 1517 complaint against specific abuses in the Roman Catholic Church, a document published by Luther now known as 95 theses sparked the explosive Protestant Reformation that swept Europe for the rest of the century. Martin Luther an Augustinian Friar, set a series of events that led to the permanent split of western Christendom. The story of Martin Luther posting his *Ninety-Five Theses against Indulgences* to the door of the castle Chapel in Wittenberg is a defining moment in German history. But what were the origins of Luther’s movement for religious reform? How should we understand the individuals and the events that propelled his protest from Wittenberg onto the European stage? And how can we explain the Reformation’s significance in the context of contemporary concerns?

During Luther’s trip to Rome in 1510, he was shocked by the lack of morality and piety of the local clergy and by the luxurious lifestyle of the Pope. Pope Leo was known for his expensive tastes and was fond of hunting, gambling and carnivals. Luther was not happy with what he saw there. He was not against the existence of the Church; rather he was condemning its practices. He revolted against Papalism and vehemently opposed the usury and was against sale of indulgence (*the sale of indulgences, is a popular means by*

which pious Christians could make a financial contribution to the church in return for the hope of remission of their sins in the afterlife) and the mechanisms of finance. Therefore, he felt the pieces of paper being sold to escape Purgatory were worthless and pious Christians were being scammed. The fact that the funds were going from poor German peasants to wealthy Roman Clergy made the fraud even more disturbing. He wrote out a list of his objections to the practice, he named 95 issues he wished to dispute (Brecht, 1985). Luther wrote compellingly of his understanding of the true Christian life: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." The believer is freed from sin through his or her faith in God: 'Faith alone, without works, justifies, frees and saves' (Bekker, 2010, p.213).

After carefully observing the practices of the church and Papal, he composed his *Ninety Five Theses against Indulgences* and nailed them to the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church and sent it to Archbishop Albrecht, the Empire's most powerful churchman. The revolution against the church commenced in October 1517 when Martin Luther pasted his *Ninety Five Theses* on the Church door at Wittenberg. This move created commotion in the church circle (Atkinson, 1968).

The medieval Church claimed that it was the ultimate arbiter of all, it claimed of this were based on sacramental conception the Church occupied a special position between man and God. Only through the Church that men could find salvation. The Church claimed that it was authorized by God to perform the miracles. It could offer the body and blood of Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

Luther challenged and rejected the claims. He propagated that people had the right to follow scriptures and take decision on the basis of the knowledge of the Bible. They could follow and adopt faith. He declared that Priests had no right and power to forgive people of their sins. Forgiveness of the sins was dependent upon the repentance and not on priestly absolution.

He put forward the doctrine of Priesthood of all believers, which is the belief that there was no essential distinction between Priests and laymen. All the believers were entitled to mercy of God and Church had nothing to do with mercy. Luther also challenged the Papal doctrine of two swords, with its claim that Pope was the ultimate source of all authority, temporal as well as spiritual. The temporal authority derived its power from God and its functions were purely spiritual (Kolb, Dingel and Bakta, 2014). It is evident that his works and ideas show that Luther was a medieval thinker; renaissance had very little influence upon his thought, he was a medieval German. His conception of theology was the origin of his political ideas. His leading ideas on politics can be found in two of his publications; *The Sermon on Good Works* and *The Address to Christian Nobility*. His political treatise is of temporal government. It is to be noted that the scripture is the basis of his theology and politics. *Treatise on Christian liberty, Secular Authority, to what*

*extent it should be obeyed* etc. contain his other aspects of political ideas, but all based on religion. Luther's politics is not separate from religion. Here are some of the quotes from Luther's speeches that precipitated the protestant reformation; We have the empire in name, but the pope has our wealth, our honor, our bodies, lives, and souls and all that we have, oh noble princes and gentlemen, how long will you suffer your lands and your people to be the prey of these ravening wolves? To Luther:

Temporal Christian power must destroy the three walls that the papacy had built to protect itself: the elevation of spiritual power above secular; the belief that only the pope can interpret scripture; and the assertion that only he can call or appoint a council of the Church. All Christians are spiritually equal, all are priests and all must therefore share responsibility for the reform of the Christian community. The members of the German nation must compel the pope to 'free their country from his unbearable taxes and robberies' and to give them back their 'liberty, authority, wealth, honor, body, and soul (Dorman 2010, p.279).

### **The Diet of Worms in Western Germany and Luther's Recantation Refutation**

Every year, the Holy Roman Emperor would call a meeting of the German Princes and Bishops. These meetings were called as 'diets' and in 1521, the Emperor summoned Martin Luther to a meeting to be held in the Old Cathedral City of Worms in Western Germany. Emperor Charles was a very devout Catholic, but about half of the princes were sympathetic to Luther. Luther was given safe conduct to attend the meeting and defend his positions. At the Diet of Worms, Luther was shown a table with a pile of his books and other writings. He was offered the opportunity to recant, he admitted that the books were writing by him but refused to recant. Luther's reply was written down as he spoke it:

Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of Popes and Councils, for they have contradicted each other, my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen (Oberman, 2006, p.122).

Luther was allowed to leave Worms, but he was now considered an outlaw. Emperor Charles issued the Edict of Worms, declaring Luther an outlaw and ordering his death. Luther left worms, on his return journey he was kidnapped and taken into protective custody by the agents of Fredrick, the wise who was concern for his safety. Luther disguised himself as a nobleman, grew a beard and called himself "Junker Jorg". He was safe in the custody under the protection of the local prince. He spent nearly a year there, writing furiously and fighting depression and numerous physical ailments. It was

productive period for him during which he translated the New Testament from Greek into German vernacular and profoundly influenced the form and standardization of the German language (Oberman, 2006).

## **Conclusion**

Martin Luther is assuredly one of the most influential figures in Western civilization during the last millennium. He was the catalyst for the division of Western Christendom into several churches, but he also left a host of cultural legacies, such as the emphasis on vernacular language. He was primarily a theologian, and there is a great wealth of insights in his writings, which in their definitive scholarly edition comprise more than 100 folio volumes. But he was not a systematic theological thinker much like St. Augustine. Certain key tenets of Luther's theology have shaped Protestant Christianity since the 16th century. They include his insistence on the Bible, the word of God and his understanding of the church as a community of the faithful, a priesthood of all believers rather than as a hierarchical structure with a prominent division between.

The centre of scholarly attention in Luther studies in the late 20th century was Luther understanding of the proper role of the Christian in society and politics. According to many scholars, Luther's disavowal of the German peasants in 1525 and his notion that, as he once put it, "the Gospel has nothing to do with politics" facilitated a tendency toward political passivity among Protestant Christians in Germany. Likewise, his strident pronouncements against the Jews, especially toward the end of his life, have raised the question of whether Luther significantly encouraged the development of German anti-Semitism. Although many scholars have taken this view, this perspective puts far too much emphasis on Luther and not enough on the larger peculiarities of German history.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are necessary for the glorious Church:

- a. The study of theology should be highly Biblically based without the selfish and personal opinions of individuals or group of persons. This will help to deliver the Church from erroneous teachings;
- b. The Church should be separated from the influence of circular government. If the government is allowed to continue to dominate the Church, it will erode the influence of the Church on the followers;
- c. The Roman Catholic Church should reconsider the theological positions of Martin Luther in order to reposition the Church towards a more Biblically Oriented Church;
- d. The Church should refrain from the practice of indulgences which does not have the capacity to advance the Church;
- e. The Church should have reverence to the government and its regulations.

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