

Footstep #44 Luther's Letter to Albert, the Archbishop of Mainz

“Inasmuch as there is now no hope of unanimity in the faith, I humbly beseech your Grace that you will endeavor to have the other side keep the peace, believing as they will and permitting us to believe this truth which has been confessed and found blameless. It is well known that no one, be he pope or emperor, should or can force others to believe, for God himself has never yet seen fit to drive anyone by force to believe. How then shall his miserable creature presume to coerce men not only to faith but to that which they themselves must regard as lies? Would to God that your Grace of anyone else would be a new Gamaliel to commend this counsel of peace.” (Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 254)

Luther believed that God ruled the universe and controlled the outcome and destiny of the Church. However, God placed many barriers to how the human mind would configure reforms in the Church. Some of these barriers were persecution of believers, execution of martyrs, threat of war, loss of land and property, and as expressed in the quote above, no hope of a united Christian church. Luther's discussions with Zwingli at Marburg did not result in a plan for the Protestant Movement, primarily because of Luther's insistence on the teachings of the sacraments.

The new challenge, as expressed above, would mean that the “independence” of the local congregation would now have to yield to a faith and church with written doctrines. In this way, the Luther or Lutheran churches would need to follow printed teachings. It will take another 50 years for the teachings of the Lutheran Church to become organized into the doctrines in the *Book of Concord*. Martin Luther contributed to all of these, except for the *Formula of Concord* in 1577.

In 1536, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark was established as the official religion of Denmark and its empire of Greenland, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands. The Lutheran Church was also established as the state church in Norway.



The Marble Lutheran Church in Copenhagen