

Peter Marty distorts faith

Peter Marty on “The art of trusting”:¹

“In the Middle Ages, *fides* was the key word for faith. Believers understood the life of faith mostly as an intellectual assent to certain propositions.

“In place of *fides*, Luther **helped popularize** the word *fiducia*, meaning **personal trust.... Deep Christians trust their whole life to God....**”

By making faith into an “art,” something we must do, Marty turns faith into a work.²

Rather, Luther **helped popularize** the following:

1. Luther **helped popularize** that faith is **purely passive**.

“Without any merit or work of our own, we must first be justified by Christian righteousness, which has nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law or with earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and **passive**. We do not have it of ourselves; we **receive it** from heaven. **We do not perform it**; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works.”³

2. Luther **helped popularize** that faith is **election**. Faith is God’s doing. The Lord **elects** us:⁴

“I believe that **I cannot** by my own understanding or effort **believe** in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. **But the Holy Spirit has called me** through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and **sanctified and kept me in true faith.**”⁵

3. Luther **helped popularize** that faith is a **gift** given in baptism. Thus salvation comes from outside of us, in spite of us. To say that God calls us does not mean that God invites us and we must respond in faith. Rather, God does it all: He elects us, sanctifies us, and keeps us in true faith.

¹ Peter Marty, “[The Art of Trusting](#),” *The Lutheran*, August 2011, p. 3; emphasis added.

² Phrases from Marty’s article that make faith a work: “Trust works like this unworried state of confidence;” “Deep Christians trust their whole life to God.”

³ *Luther’s Works* 26:8; emphasis added.

⁴ Cp. John 6:44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him;” John 6:65: “...no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father;” John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.”

⁵ Small Catechism, Explanation to the Third article of the Creed; emphasis added.

Luther: “Thus we see what a great and excellent thing Baptism is, which **snatches** us from the jaws of the devil and makes God our own....”⁶

Baptism does not give a spark of the Spirit to which the believer adds his personal trust. Baptism does not give merely “the pilot light” of the Holy Spirit which later can fanned into the flames of being “filled with the Spirit.”⁷ The Christian life is not a matter of becoming skilled in the art of trusting God.

Nor can the Holy Spirit be quantified or increased so that some are shallow and others are “deep Christians.”

4. Luther **helped popularize** that the **infant** is given faith in baptism. Baptism gives eternal life and the Holy Spirit.⁸ Luther: “Even if infants did not believe – which, however, is not the case, as we have proved – still their Baptism would be valid....”⁹

Peter Marty, by omitting these four items and how they work together – as if *fiducia* were the point! – gives the false impression that Luther’s Reformation was about **something we do**: “trust their whole life to God.”

No. To be faithful to Luther –

God **gives** faith to the **infant** in **baptism**, **not** by the infant’s “**understanding or effort**,” because the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.”¹⁰

Thank God my salvation does not depend on the art of trusting, on my feelings, my mental state (whether I have Alzheimer’s, Schizophrenia, or Down’s Syndrome), my doubts and questions, the faith of the church, or me (in any way, shape, or form) – lost and helpless as I am.

⁶ Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, #83, Tappert, p. 446; emphasis added.

⁷ Ephesians 5:18 is mistranslated from the Greek to English in the RSV and NRSV. “Filled with the Spirit” here is explained by the context of how the Ephesians should conduct themselves in worship – addressing one another with songs, singing, and giving thanks. See [Problems with ALPHA](#).

⁸ Small Catechism, Baptism, Questions 2 and 3.

⁹ Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, #55, Tappert, p. 443.

¹⁰ Small Catechism, Explanation to the Third article of the Creed.