

#4

Anxiety is defined as “feelings of apprehension, dread or uneasiness.” (Coon). An anxiety disorder is when these feeling are severe for a prolonged or recurring length of time. According to this definition, Martin Luther seems to be a dead ringer for one suffering from an anxiety disorder. The question of whether his anxiety stemmed from, physiological or divine origins is something that can never really be answered. What can be said is that Martin Luther suffered, and that he channeled that suffering into what became one of the most important and long reaching periods of the Catholic church and Christianity in the western world.

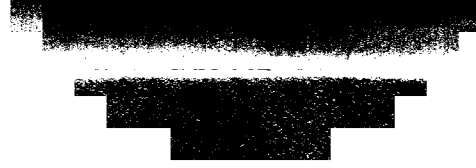
Luther’s anxiety took the form of a sense of alienation from god and continuing doubts about his salvation. His crisis was “caused by an intense craving for certitude about his salvation.” (Bokenkotter, 211). He experienced this apprehension through a series of crises that spanned his entire life and career. Luther’s religious journey began because of a crisis. Namely his near hit from a bolt of lightning. In a panic, he vowed to join a monastic order if he was spared. This crisis was external rather than internal, but it did foreshadow Luther’s sensitivity, and set him on the path to visionary, reformation and rebellion.

Luther’s first internal crisis came when he was saying his first mass as a priest. He experienced a great sense of terror and unworthiness, like a depraved worm coming before the most holy of judges, “how could a pigmy stand before divine majesty...” (Bainton, 31). Luther had a continuing sense of doubt and unworthiness before god. He would fast and pray, but always wonder “Have you fasted enough? Are you poor enough?” (Bainton, 34). He would engage sometimes daily in marathon confessions lasting hours, until his confessor would kick him out, with no relief.

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neurosis

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If comfort was to come to Luther through the means already in place, Rome, the seat of the Catholic Church should have been the place to do it. This was not the case. Luther was surprised and disheartened at the corruption he saw at the higher levels, such as mindless recitations of the mass and churchmen visiting brothels (Bainton)^{p. 7}. Perhaps more than that, He found no comfort in the grace of relics. Luther crawled up the steps of Pilate, a very famous and powerful relic, kissing the steps as he went and doubt assailed him even there.

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The continuing failure of confession led Luther to truly embrace the idea of man's sinful nature. To Luther, confession did not work because "The very nature of man is corrupt. The penitential system fails because it is directed to particular lapses." (Bainton, 41). Because of Luther's lack of confidence in the validity of confession, he continued to be beset by fear and anxiety.

One of Luther's mentors at Wittenburg, Dr. Staupitz, was a mystic and vicar of the Augustinian order. He tried to help Luther with his anxiety, and Luther experimented for a time with mystic exercises. He did at times feel the intense personal connection to God that is a hallmark of mysticism, but just as often felt even more separated and despondent than before. The experienced mystics knew of the tendency towards this downfall, calling it the "dark night of the soul". The standard advice was to persevere in the mystical practices, and the connection with god would once again be found. For Luther, this advice was not sufficient. He wrote about feeling how "panic invaded his spirit" (Bainton, 42). Luther was later to report that at its worst, his feelings of dread and alienation were so bad that if the torment had lasted "the tenth part of an hour, his bones would have crumbled into ashes" (Bokenkotter, 210).

what about Bainton's characterization of medieval religiosity?

good use of the 2 sources.

All of these negative experiences led Luther to have an intense personal reaction to god. He found it almost impossible to love a god who was presented as a harsh judge. As is so often the

why not capitalized

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case when intense feelings are involved, love turned to hate. Luther's declaration that he ~~hated~~ god caused him guilt and more despair, but he had come to doubt the justness of god, and even viewed him as a tormentor instead of a savior (Bainton). Luther's personal reconciliation with god came from studying the gospels, and St. Paul's epistles to the Romans became the scripture

he most identified with. Luther had already accepted the depraved nature of man, when he realized that confession was insufficient, since it dealt with individual lapses instead of the whole of man's sinful nature. Now Luther had to accept the just ~~nature~~ of God, and that man was saved through faith. Luther came to believe through his study of the gospels that man could not save himself, but that God would save man by making man just. This idea not only formed the core of Luther's journey of spiritual understanding, but also set him on the road that was to lead to his break with the Catholic Church.

Luther's intense religious discomfort compelled him to embrace the various forms open to him equally as intensely. Monasticism, confession, sacraments, mysticism, all failed him. If Luther had been in less agony, it is possible his religious efforts would have been less wholehearted, and this would have allowed him to attribute any lack to himself, instead of to the religious forms he tried. His very agony and resulting dedication however, made it impossible for him to attribute the lack of efficacy to himself, "I was a very good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly...I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, readings and other work." (Bainton). If Luther tried as hard as he was able, and still felt this anxiety, he could only conclude that that the forms of worship had failed, not he.

This new outlook, relying on the ~~grace~~ of God instead of any work he could do, brought Luther the comfort he so craved. For perhaps the first time, Luther became comfortable in the

well put.

implying he didn't think himself so depraved

presence of god. Now that he experienced the love of God in the form of grace, Luther was finally able to love God.

Luther's personal comfort came from scripture, and it is scripture that he believed would provide the vehicle for every man's salvation, not the machinations of the Catholic Church.

Luther rejected forms of worship that had no precedence in the bible. This led to a rejection of all but two sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist. He also rejected the ideas of indulgences, the grace of relics, the extreme importance of clergy over laity and a large degree of papal authority.

Luther's new stance regarding the emphasis on scripture and salvation through faith placed him in conflict with several key Catholic practices of the time. The practice of indulgences and visiting relics put "excessive emphasis on the role of man in the work of salvation."

(Bokenkotter, 214). Luther Did not start out wanting to break with the Catholic Church, but as ^{escalated} conflicts grew between him and ranking church officials ~~etc~~, he began to distance himself and denounce the church. He believed that the Catholic Church was "betraying the Gospel of Jesus Christ by teaching people that heaven could be purchased by good works." (Bokenkotter, 214).

Luther's conflict with the church was exacerbated by the fact that his new views seemed to reject church and papal authority. He had rejected the idea that the pope could bestow the grace of salvation, and that the Catholic Church was a divinely inspired institution that was lent infallibility by God. As a human institution, the church and pope were held within the same

good, tho
This memo somewhat beyond your topic.

limits as any other humans, and were unable to give salvation. This was the province of God, and only God in Luther's view. Luther also lessened the importance of the clergy, since the great separation and powers of the Catholic priesthood seemed to have no biblical precedent in his view. His major religious views could be summed up as salvation by grace alone, the priesthood of all believers and the emphasis on scripture as the basis for the forms of worship challenged

Catholic practices and powers and put him in a position that almost inevitably led to rebellion.

The same revelations that finally comforted Luther in his spiritual quest were the same ones that drove him from the church he had grown up in.

Luther's doubts and anxiety were not fully abolished when he read the letters of St. Paul. His bouts of religious depression were to continue for the rest of his life. Sometimes his anxiety would be worse when he considered that he was the spiritual leader and teacher for so many and that others were dying for this new form of faith while he was not (Bainton). Luther writes in his later years about his ways of dealing with his dark periods, both in confronting the "Devils" inside directly, and in busying himself so that he had less time to focus on them and waited them out. Despite the doubts that plagued him throughout his life, Luther was a sensitive intelligent man who had a great deal of energy, tenacity and courage to stand up to the most powerful institution in the world, and to create a new religious expression that has lasted for almost five centuries.

+ agree!

A sort of limited approach to the subject (Bok + Bainton) you mainly follow those 2 sources. But you use them extremely well. Your ideas are clear. Your writing is close to impeccable (unlike Luther).
Good job.
A.