

Events:

Seeds of Reformation

- Criticism of the church began even before the Great schism of the papacy from 1378 to 1416 but accelerated quickly after that time. These criticisms included many of the things that are still criticized in the Roman Catholic Church today:
 - Transubstantiation – changing of the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood at the time of the sacramental prayer
 - Selling of indulgences and the entire concept of Purgatory
 - Absolute authority of the Pope over all matters religious and secular
 - Availability of the Bible in the common language of the people
 - Five of the sacraments (confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance and extreme unction) were not instituted by Christ
 - Devotion to and praying to Mary and the saints for intercession
 - Mandatory celibacy of the clergy
- Peter Waldo (c.1140 – c.1218), probably a merchant from Lyon, gave away all his possessions and began a life of poverty and lay preaching from the Bible around 1160. These two traits were the marks of his followers, the Waldensians. Waldo took his cause to the Pope in 1179, but he was not taken seriously, and he was finally condemned as a heretic and excommunicated in 1184.
- Marsilius of Padua (c.1275 – c.1342) was a scholastic and medical doctor who taught at the University of Paris. He wrote a book in 1324 entitled Defensis Pacis (Defender of Peace), which set forth the tones for the Empire’s independence from the church. This book was well received by Louis of Bavaria, the Holy Roman Emperor, who was having a dispute with the Pope over authority. But the Pope was angered, and the church excommunicated Marsilius in 1327.
- John Wycliffe (c.1325 – 1384) was an English lay preacher and university teacher. He translated the Bible from Latin into English in 1382. He was an active critic of Papal authority influencing secular power. He was called before the church in 1382 to answer for his beliefs, but, because of his weak physical condition at the time, he was not excommunicated. His followers became known as Lollards, which is a derogatory term meaning “without an education”. Because of his work prior to the reformation, Wycliffe is sometimes called “The Morning Star of the Reformation”.
- Jan Hus (c.1372 – 1415) was a Czech theologian and teacher at the University of Prague. His views on indulgences, corruption of Papal authority, the error of the church taking up the sword, and his adherence to the writings and teachings of Wycliffe led to Hus’s excommunication in 1410. Three “Hussite” adherents were beheaded then, and Hus was burned at the stake in 1415. As Hus was being tied to the stake, he proclaimed, “In a hundred years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” Just 102 years later, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door at Wittenberg.

Heroes:

Martin Luther

- Born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. Died in 1546.
- He attended schools in his teens and studied the “trivium”: grammar, rhetoric and logic. In his later years he compared his school years to purgatory and hell.
- In 1501, he entered the University of Erfurt (“a beerhouse and whorehouse”) and received a master’s degree four years later. He studied law and philosophy for a while, but left unsatisfied because they taught nothing about loving God – a goal that was important to Martin.
- In the summer of 1505, Martin was riding in the countryside when he was almost struck by a lightning bolt. Seeing this as a divine sign, he cried out “St. Anne protect me, I will become a monk!” Martin had a final dinner with his friends, left law school and became an Augustinian monk just 15 days later. His father was furious over the “waste” Martin had made of his education.
- While in the monastery, Martin fasted, prayed long hours and confessed often – too often according to his superior, who felt that Martin needed more work to take his mind off his excessive introspection. Two quotes tell us about his condition:
 - “If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would have indeed been among them.”
 - “I lost touch with Christ the Savior and Comforter, and made him the jailor and hangman of my poor soul.”
- Martin was ordained in 1507 and transferred to the University of Wittenberg in 1508 to teach theology. He earned two Bachelor’s degrees in 1508 and 1509 and his Doctor of Theology in 1512.
- In 1516-17, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican, was sent to Wittenberg in order to sell indulgences needed to rebuild St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Tetzel taught that faith alone would not justify man unless charity and good works also accompany that faith. Tetzel was quoted as saying, “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory into heaven springs.” Sales were so high that confessions were way down!
- Martin called for a scholastic disputation on 95 theses, which he sent to his archbishop and nailed to the door of the Castle Church on October 31, 1517. He only meant to have a scholarly discussion and not to confront the church.
- The “media” of the time quickly translated and printed the 95 Theses from Latin into German and distributed them throughout Europe. Throngs of people from all over came to hear Martin preach.
- For the next four years, Martin was confronted several times by legates from the Pope in order to get him to recant but all the attempts failed. A Papal Bull was issued late in 1520, which Luther burned. The Pope excommunicated Martin in 1521.
 - Exsurge Domine – “Arise, O Lord, and defend Thy cause! A wild boar has invaded Thy vineyard”

Heroes of the Christian Faith
Lesson 16 – 11/15/2009

- Martin was summoned before the Diet of Worms in 1521. Emperor Charles V led the council, and Luther's friend and protector Frederick promised safe passage. Johann Eck, prosecutor for the Empire, confronted Luther with his writings and asked if they were his and if he stood by what they contained. After praying overnight, Luther responded:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.”
- Martin was declared an outlaw subject to arrest and execution, but Frederick kidnapped him and took him to his castle at Wartburg for protection, where Martin continued writing for a year.
- It was not uncommon for men who had been raised in a religious home in the Middle Ages to be beset by devils, evil spirits and demons (“And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us”). Martin normally fought these feelings with prayers and “happy songs”, but legend has it that one night, it was particularly troublesome, and he threw an inkwell at the devil. The stain is still on the wall of his room at Wartburg, although it has apparently been restored due to its fading over time.
- The reformation gained a foothold in Wittenberg, and when it finally had enough control, Martin returned in 1522. He made several corrections to beliefs that he felt were detrimental.
- Martin married a former nun, Katharina von Bora, in 1525 much to the chagrin of his friends, who thought the reformation would end. Katharina took over the household efficiently and bore Martin six children. He supported other members of her family in his house as well.
- Several peasant uprisings sprung up in Germany during 1524-25, but Martin always preached against using force. The uprisings were put down in mid-1525.
- Martin's continued fights against the Roman Catholic Church along with his views against the peasant uprisings caused him trouble on all sides. During the 1520's, he debated the humanist Erasmus, which caused splits between Luther and the other reformers such as Calvin and Zwingli.
- The aging Luther became ill and irascible with a quick temper. He alienated other religious groups and sentenced all who did not believe as he did. He wrote polemics against the Roman Catholics and the Jews. He refused to talk to other reformers.
- He continued to teach and preach in Wittenberg until very near the end of his life, when he said, “I am weak. I cannot go on.” He died in 1546 while on a trip to his hometown to help settle a dispute. His last words are reported to be, “Into your hands I commend my spirit. You have saved me, Father, you faithful God.”

Heroes of the Christian Faith
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- Martin did his most writing during the 1520's.
 - He wrote many commentaries, which alienated him from Rome, the Jews and other Reformers
 - He wrote many sermons that still exist in his writings and online
 - He wrote many hymns including his most well-known “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” (“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”) in 1529
 - While at Wartburg, Martin began to translate the New Testament from its original Greek into German. It was further edited and published in 1522.
 - His major work was “On The Bondage of the Will” in 1525, which was a response to “On Free Will” written by Erasmus a year before.
 - He continued to write until at least 1543.
- Luther taught:
 - Man is not justified by his cooperative work with God (the teaching of the day) but by God alone as in Ephesians 2:8-10.
 - Man is justified by faith alone (“sola fide”) through grace alone (“sola gratia”) as taught in the Scriptures alone (“sola scriptura”).
 - During the Lord's Supper, the consecrated bread and wine are united “in, with and under” Christ's body and blood (“sacramental union”), but the elements maintain their own identity and do not change into Christ's body and blood (“transubstantiation”), which Luther describes as repugnant.

Audio CD: #5 – Martin Luther (Part I)

Discussion

- What was Luther's view of God's law?
- What did Luther read in Augustine that led to his “tower crisis” of 1515 about how he viewed salvation?