

The Life of Martin Luther – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – An overview of the life of Martin Luther and his effect upon the medieval church
2. aim – To cause us to understand how the Protestant Reformation began in the 16th C.

b. outline

1. The Biography of Luther
2. The Development of Luther
3. The Immediate Effect by Luther
4. The Long-Term Effect on Luther

c. overview

1. the “reformation” period of the church begins with the appearance of Martin Luther
 - a. born in 1483 in Eisleben, Saxony Germany, moving to Eisenach, having a strict upbringing
 - b. in 1505, Luther joined the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt
 1. this was caused by his *spiritual struggles*: overwhelmed by the holiness of God vs. his own sin
 2. at the time, justification before a holy God was *infused* through a life of discipline
 - c. in 1511, he returned to Wittenberg to teach theology, where he encountered **Romans 1:17**
 1. the righteousness of God (for him) was not *good news* (gospel), but the frightening reality of God’s holiness expressed as judgment over sin
 2. but ... Luther came to realize that this righteous “of” God is something *granted to the sinner* through the completed work of Christ – an *imputation* of righteousness *by faith alone*
 3. thus, justification *cannot be a process* – all medieval teaching re: justification was now obsolete
 - d. so, through two (2) sets of *theses*, Luther attempted to debate, *in the academy*, issues in the life of the church, allowing him to discuss his new position on justification
 1. this led to his *direct* conflict with the issue of indulgences, as related to purgatory
 2. but ... his new-found understanding of justification also put him in danger, as the church and the empire respond to his teachings, and the effect of those teachings on many others ...

IV. The Long-Term Effect on Luther

Content

a. the response to the 95 Theses

1. the matter wound up before Leo X (from Albrecht forwarding Luther’s letter to him)
 - a. the emperor, Maximilian, also asked Leo X to intervene against the young friar
 - b. so, the pope asked the Augustinian Order to deal with Luther as one of its members
 1. Luther was called before their next meeting, in Heidelberg – he expected to be condemned
 2. but, many of his fellow friars favored his teachings and some saw this as nothing more than the ancient dispute between Dominicans and Augustinians (**remember above**)
 3. so, Luther returned to Wittenberg *buoyed* by their support and encouraged by those won over
 - c. so, the pope tried a different tack – he called for Luther to appear before the Imperial Diet
 1. Diet = an assembly of princes and nobles – the next one scheduled to meet at Augsburg, with Maximilian presiding
 2. Leo X sent Cardinal Cajetan (**cag-a-tin**) as his legate, to convince the court to undertake a crusade against the Turks (threatening W Europe) by imposing a tax for it
 - a. but, he was also sent to force Luther to recant, or be sent as a prisoner to Rome
 3. Luther was protected by Fredrick the Wise, Elector of Saxony – mostly because Fredrick was an honest and noble man, not wishing to see Luther (a member of *his* university) condemned unfairly or without (at least) a fair hearing
 4. so, Fredrick promised Luther safe passage to Augsburg (although Luther remembered what had happened to Huss) – he went trusting the will of God to keep him safe
 5. Cajetan refused to debate with Luther, and demanded his recantation – so, Luther fled by night, returning to Wittenberg, to remain under the protection of Fredrick
 - d. the potential vacancy of the German throne opened the door to the pope supporting Fredrick to it
 1. Fredrick continued to protect Luther, at least until he was *properly tried* and convicted

2. so, the pope *postponed* his condemnation of Luther until he could secure Fredrick's election
 - a. Leo X sent Karl von Miltitz as an ambassador to Saxony, with a "sign" of special papal favor
 - b. Miltitz met with Luther, and Luther promised that he would abstain from controversy as long as his opponents did too – resulting in a brief truce
3. but, the truce was broken by John Eck, a professor at the University of Ingolstadt, who despised Luther's teachings, but was wary to attack Luther *directly*
 - a. instead, Eck challenged the beliefs of Andreas Karlstadt, another professor at Wittenberg who had been converted to Luther's views
 - b. Eck challenged Karlstadt to a debate at Leipzig, but Luther saw through the "ruse" and decided to attend the debate with Karlstadt
 - c. in the debate, Luther declared that the Council of Constance had incorrectly condemned Huss, and that a Christian with the support of Scripture has more authority than all popes and councils (the beginnings of *sola Scriptura*)
 - d. from this statement, Eck gets what he wants: the admission by Luther that he is a heretic, who supports the teachings of a known heretic
 - e. thus, the new teachings of Luther *exploded* in controversy throughout Europe
 1. many other debates like at Leipzig took place throughout the continent, and increasing numbers of Europeans saw in Luther a "champion" of biblical faith
 2. **e.g.** the old "humanists" saw in Luther the reformation they had been longing for; the German nationalists saw in him the face of the abuses of Rome
4. Maximilian dies, and (contrary to Leo's wishes) Charles of Spain is elected to the throne
 - a. Charles V was ruthlessly orthodox, and his election spelled danger for Luther
 - b. Fredrick still supported him, and was becoming more convinced that *Luther was right*
- e. the result: Leo X now condemns Luther as a heretic
 1. he issues the papal bull *Exsurge Domine*, calling Luther a "wild boar who had entered the Lord's vineyard" – he orders all of Luther's books burned and gave Luther 60 days to recant
 2. the bull took some time to reach Luther himself, but it was circulated throughout Europe
 - a. some took it literally and burned Luther's works, others supported him and burned the works of his opponents
 - b. when Luther received it, he burned it *publicly*, along with other books that he declared to be nothing more than "popish doctrines"
 3. the breach between Luther and the Catholic church was now final
2. the matter also (**now**) wound up before the emperor and the German nobility
 - a. through much political intrigue, it was *eventually* decided (by Charles V) that Luther should appear before another Diet, this one at Worms, April 16, 1521
 - b. at the Diet, Luther was confronted with a number of books and was asked if he had written them
 1. he agreed he had, and also indicated that he had written many other works, as well
 - c. he was then asked if he still held to the beliefs of these books, or if he wished to recant anything
 1. this put Luther into a dilemma: although he recognized that both ecclesiastical and imperial power had been instituted by God, and to oppose them is to impose what is ordained by God, he also recognized that human entities are inherently weak and can be wrong
 2. so, he asked for a day to consider his answer ...
 - d. the next day, Luther is brought before the king and his contingent of Spanish soldiers
 1. Luther argued that much of what he had written was, in fact, orthodox Christian teaching, and even his opponents could not repudiate such things
 2. he also argued that much of what he had written dealt with the tyranny that the German people had endured from outside forces (i.e. the papacy), and certainly the court would appreciate that
 3. and, he agreed that some of his points were (in fact) attacks against his opponents, and he confessed that some of it may have been too harsh
 - e. but, the emperor was not satisfied by these answers (still convinced that Luther's *main* points were heretical), so he asks Luther *directly*: do you recant, or do you not?
 1. Luther responds *in German*: "My conscience is a prisoner of God's Word. I cannot and will not recant, for to disobey one's conscience is neither just nor safe. God help me. Amen."
 2. Luther makes a sign of victory, and leaves the hall, returning to his quarters
 - f. Charles V now determines to have Luther done away with
 1. he issues the following edict: "Luther is now to be seen as a convicted heretic. He has 21 days from the 15th of April. After that time, no one should give him shelter. His followers also are to be condemned, and his books will be erased from human memory."

2. however, several powerful members of the Diet opposed this action (maybe because they were sympathetic to Luther's views?), and Charles was forced to negotiate with them
 - a. which allowed Luther to leave and return home ...
 - b. eventually, they all agreed to Charles edict, and proposed to have him arrested
 - c. but, Fredrick the Wise had secured an armed band to abduct Luther in the Thuringian Forest on his way home and take him to the Wartburg Castle – he had planned this *in advance*
 - d. so, Luther remained in hiding at Wartburg for 10 months
 1. he grew a beard, he wrote to friends not worry about him, and he began his German translation of the Bible, beginning with the NT (which was finished 2 years later; the OT took an additional 10 years to complete)
 2. this added great impetus to the Reformation, not only in Germany, but beyond – he continued to help it, even from Wartburg, as the Reformation now “burst into flame”
3. so ... in burning the papal bull, Luther had challenged Rome; now, at Worms, he challenges the empire – he does indeed need God to help him!
 - a. but, God (in his sovereignty) had orchestrated a number of *political realities* which would aid Luther's new view of justification to take hold in Europe
 1. the (potential) vacancy of the German throne forces Leo X to (temporarily) sympathize with Luther because of his desire to see his protector, Fredrick the Wise, to be installed as king
 2. the advancement of a papal bull against Luther causes *clear* divisions throughout Europe between the “traditional” teachings of the church and Luther's *Augustinian* view of justification
 - a. the pope, in condemning Luther, only *fanned* the flames of discontent, particularly in places (like Germany) where Roman “interference” was greatly despised
 3. the condemnation of Luther by the German nobility *also* exacerbates the tensions now rising in Europe against the “traditionalisms” and excesses of the Catholic Church
 - a. this is where the story will continue beyond the life of Luther himself ...