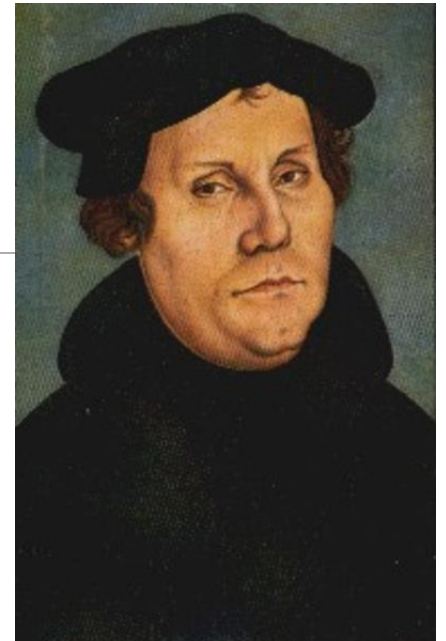


Historical and Theological Contours of the Reformation

CLASS 4 – MAGISTERIAL REFORMERS –
MARTIN LUTHER
OCTOBER 22, 2017



Martin Luther (1483-1546)

- German Reformer, credited with launching the Protestant Reformation



Portrait by Lucas Cranach



"Life of Martin Luther" Tour (pavlus.com)

The Early Years

- Born in Eisleben, November 10, 1483
- Son of Hans & Margaret Luther
 - copper miner



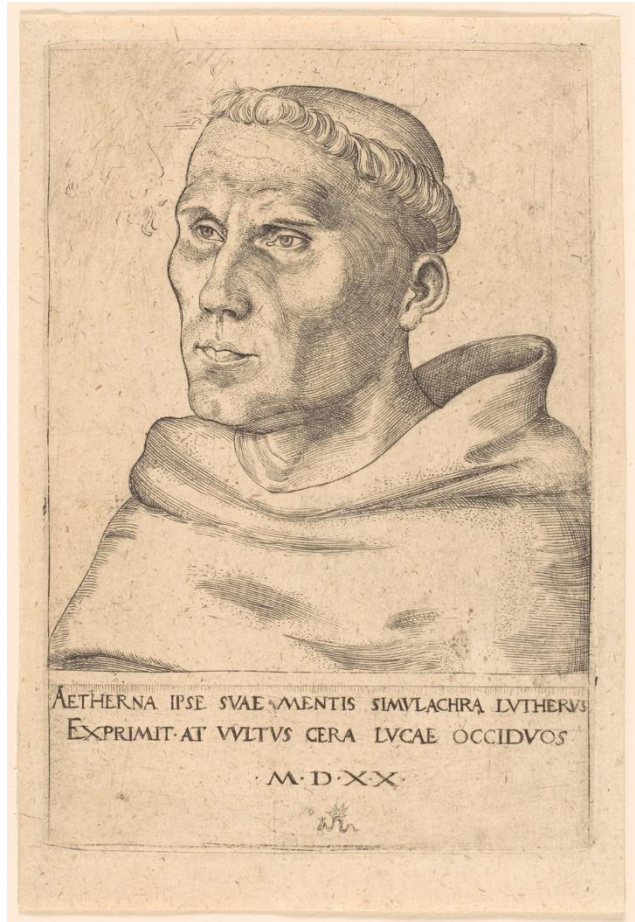
The Early Years

- Education
 - Schooling in Eisenach (1498-1501)
 - Bachelors (1502) & Masters (1505) degrees from University of Erfurt
 - Per father's wishes, headed for law degree



'Damascus Road' Experience

- July 1505 – caught in a thunderstorm
- Knocked to the ground by a nearby lightning strike
- “Help me, St. Anne! I will become a monk!”
- Entered an Augustinian order in Erfurt as a monk 2 weeks later



Life as a Monk

- Luther was gripped by a sense of the holiness of God and of his own sinfulness
- How could an unrighteous sinner come before a righteous God?
- Up to 6 hours at a time in Confession... but...
 - Had he confessed everything?
 - Had he been sufficiently sincere in his repentance, that God should accept him?

Life as a Monk

“Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, “As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteous wrath!” Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience.”

Life as a Monk

- Ordained as a priest in 1507
 - At his first Mass, overwhelmed with terror at the majesty of God
 - How could an unrighteous sinner like himself now speak directly to the Righteous Judge of all the earth?
 - Initially assigned to teach philosophy to younger monks
 - In 1509, allowed to start teaching Bible

Professor Luther

- Transferred to Wittenberg in 1511
 - A small town at the time (~2000 people)
 - Capital of electoral Saxony
- Obtained doctorate in theology, 1512
- Became Professor of Biblical Theology at University of Wittenberg, 1512
 - A new university established by Frederick of Saxony
 - Remained in this position for the rest of his life



Professor Luther

- Lectured on the Psalms (1513-1515) and Romans (1515-1517)
- Study of Romans 1:17 convinced him that one was justified by faith alone in Christ (c.1518-1519?)
- “For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” (Rom. 1:17)

Sola Fide: Justified by Faith Alone

- On Romans 1:17...
- *“I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was... a single word in Chapter 1, “In it the righteousness of God is revealed,” that had stood in my way. For I hated that word ‘righteousness of God,’ which according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.”*

Sola Fide: Justified by Faith Alone

- On Romans 1:17...
 - *“Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience.... did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners.... I was angry with God, and said, “As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteous wrath!” Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience.”*

Sola Fide: Justified by Faith Alone

- On Romans 1:17...
- *“At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In it righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” There I began to understand the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”*

Sola Fide: Justified by Faith Alone

- Luther's understanding of the 'righteousness of God' revealed in the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)
- Referring not to God's righteousness in which He judges and punishes unrighteous sinners
- Rather, the gift of righteousness that He bestows on those who have faith in Christ, by which they have life
 - *"He who through faith is righteous shall live."*

Sola Fide: Justified by Faith Alone

- Luther's understanding of the 'righteousness of God' revealed in the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17)
- Justified by faith ***alone*** in Christ – our works add nothing to salvation
 - Luther would later understand justification to involve God *imputing* (rather than *imparting*) righteousness to those who believe
 - Christ's righteousness counted as our own
 - "The article by which the church stands or falls"

Controversy over Indulgences

- In 1506, construction begins on the new St. Peter's Basilica in Rome
- Construction completed in 1626
- To fund construction, Pope Julius II authorized offering of indulgences



Controversy over Indulgences

- In 1514, Albert of Brandenburg sought to become Archbishop of Mainz, but...
- He was already Archbishop of Magdeburg
- Needed to pay Pope Leo X for special dispensation to hold 2 archbishoprics
 - Took out a large bank loan



Controversy over Indulgences

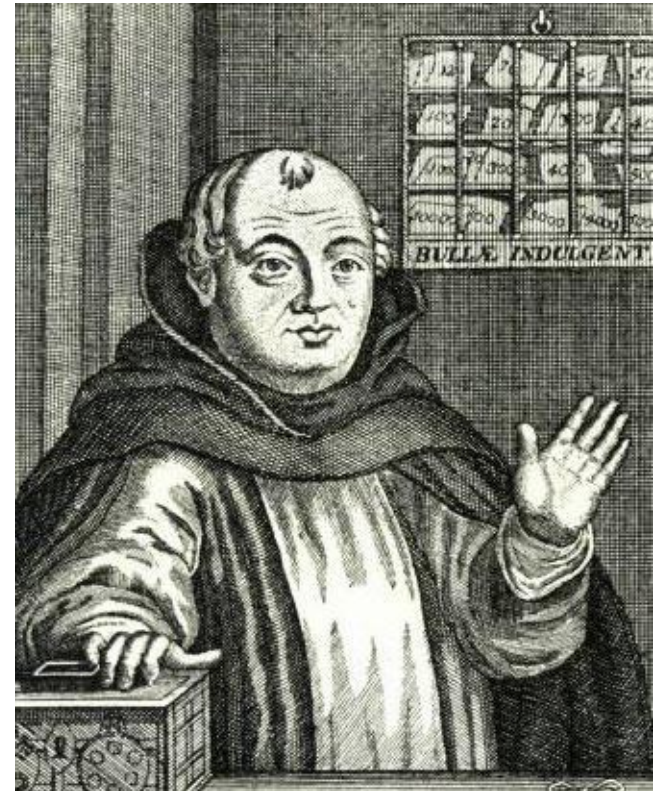
- To repay his loan...
 - Albert received permission from Leo X to offer indulgences
 - Half would go to Rome for St. Peter's Basilica
 - Half would go to repaying the loan
 - Engaged Johann Tetzel to sell indulgences



Pope Leo X

Controversy over Indulgences

- Johann Tetzel
 - Dominican monk & experienced seller of indulgences
 - Made extravagant claims about the power of indulgences
 - “When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!”



Controversy over Indulgences

- Luther preached against indulgences in the Wittenberg church as early as 1516
- Urged people to cultivate genuine repentance rather than trying to avoid penance by buying indulgences
- On October 31, 1517, posted 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church



The Ninety-Five Theses

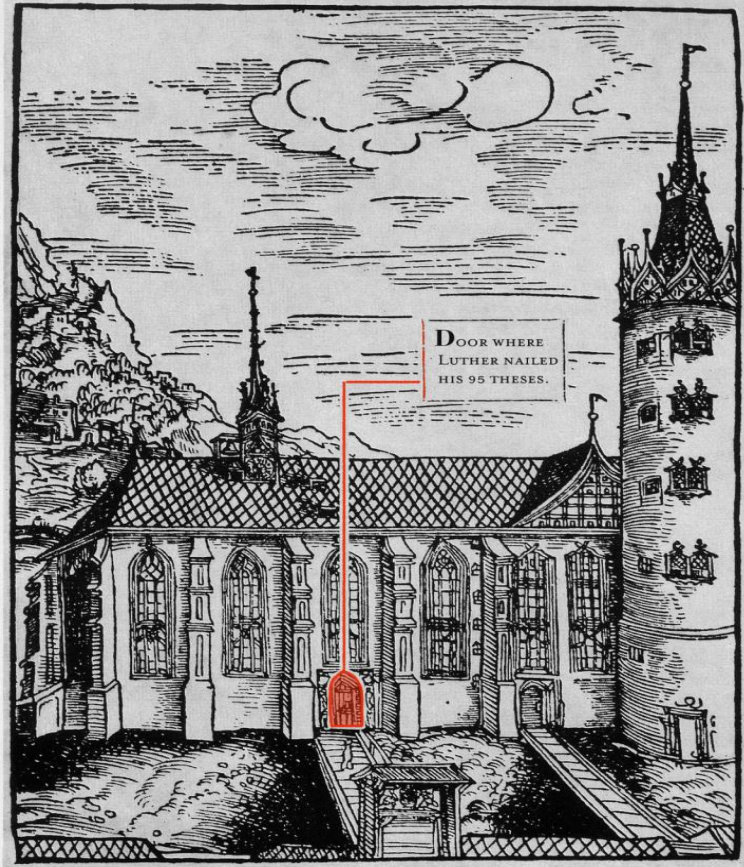
Background

- aka Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences
- Published on the Eve of All Saints (Oct 31, 1517)
 - The Feast of All Saints was the time when previous relics were exhibited to worshippers
- Posted on the door of the Church of All Saints in Wittenberg
 - Intended for scholarly debate
 - Copy sent to Archbishop Albert

WITTELBYAG

WITTENBERG CASTLE CHURCH





Why in the form of Ninety-Five Theses?

In Medieval Universities the “disputation” was a well-established institution

A series of “theses,” which were statements of opinion tentatively advanced as the basis of argument

Announced himself ready to defend these statements against all comers



What is the Content of the 95 Theses?

Not a trumpet-blast of reform

- No mention of the word “faith
- Validity of the Sacrament of Penance is not disputed
- The right of the pope to remit penalties for some sins is not denied
- Even the virtue of indulgences is not completely denied and the question at issue is primarily “What is that virtue?”

What is the Content of the 95 Theses?

3 Main Themes

1. An objection to the avowed object of expenditure (the funding of St. Peter's Basilica)
2. A denial of the powers of the pope over purgatory
3. Consideration of the welfare of the sinner

1) Objection to the object of expenditure (St. Peter's Basilica)

Theses 50-51, 82- 91

Thesis 50: “Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.”

Thesis 82: “Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church? The former reason would be most just; the latter is most trivial.”

Thesis 86: “Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?”

2) A denial of the powers of the pope over purgatory

Theses 5-29, 52-81

Thesis 5: “The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons”

Thesis 20: “Therefore the pope, when he uses the words ‘plenary remission of all penalties,’ does not actually mean ‘all penalties,’ but only those imposed by himself.”

Thesis 52: “It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters, even though the indulgence commissary, or even the pope, were to offer his soul as security.”

Thesis 78: “We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written.”

3) Consideration of the welfare of the sinner

Theses 1-4, 30-49, 92-95

Thesis 32: “Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.”

Thesis 36: “Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.”

Thesis 41: “Papal indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of life.”

Thesis 43: “Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences”

Luther on Indulgences

“Indulgences are most pernicious because they induce complacency and thereby imperil salvation. Those persons are damned who think that letters of indulgence make them certain of salvation. God works by contraries so that a man feels himself to be lost in the very moment when he is on the point of being saved...When a man believes himself to be utterly lost, light breaks. Peace comes in the word of Christ through faith. He who does not have this is lost even though he be absolved a million times by the pope...”

What happened after the Theses were posted?

- Wide dissemination
 - Within 2 months before the end of 1517, three editions of the Latin text had been printed
 - Numerous editions, both Latin and German, quickly followed
- Because Luther had challenged the pope's authority to define the benefits of indulgences, Archbishop Albert forwarded the 95 Theses to Pope Leo X to decide on what should be done

What happened after the Theses were posted?

- Opposition to Luther emerged quickly
 - Tetzel denounced Luther - called for him to be burned as a heretic
- Johann Eck (Catholic theologian) debated Luther in Leipzig, in 1519
 - Forced Luther to admit...
 - that popes & church councils could err
 - that ***Scripture alone*** could be trusted as infallible
 - that he held many of the same beliefs as Jan Hus

What happened after the Theses were posted?

- Luther published 3 pamphlets in response, in 1520
 1. *Address to the German Nobility*
 - Argued that
 - Princes should work the reform the church when necessary, e.g. by calling a Church Council
 - The pope should not interfere in civil affairs
 - All believers are spiritual priests and can interpret the Scripture – not just the pope

What happened after the Theses were posted?

- Luther published 3 pamphlets in response, in 1520
 - 2. *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
 - Attacks the Sacramental system as a means of grace
 - Accepts only 2 sacraments – baptism & the Lord's Supper
 - 3. *The Freedom of the Christian Man*
 - Develops concept of justification by faith alone

What happened after the Theses were posted?

- Leo X issued a papal bull against Luther, June 1520
 - “Arise, O Lord, and judge Your cause. A wild boar has invaded Your vineyard...”
 - 41 of Luther’s teachings deemed heretical or in error
 - Recant within 60 days or be excommunicated
 - Luther’s books to be burned
- Luther’s response
 - Publishes a tract, *Against the Execrable Bull of Antichrist*
 - Publicly burned his copy of the bull

Diet of Worms, 1521

- Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, summons Luther to appear at the next imperial council at Worms
- Luther went, with assurance of protection by Frederick of Saxony
 - Prince of the state in which Luther lived
 - Founder of University of Wittenberg
 - A powerful prince – one of seven Electors of the Holy Roman Empire

Diet of Worms, 1521

- At the Diet, Luther was called on again to recant and renounce his writings
 - Luther refused



Diet of Worms, 1521

- *“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason-for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves-I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one’s conscience is neither safe nor sound. Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”*

Diet of Worms, 1521

- Charles V condemned Luther as a heretic
 - Ordered any subject of the emperor to seize Luther & turn him in
 - Fearing for his safety, some of his supporters kidnapped him en route to Wittenberg
 - Brought him to Wartburg Castle – lived under protection of Frederick of Saxony

Wartburg Castle, 1521-22

- Luther remained very active while in hiding for 8 months at Wartburg castle
 - Translated Erasmus' Greek New Testament into German
 - Entire Bible completed in 1534
- Continued writing & publishing



Driving Reform

- Luther emerged from hiding and returned to Wittenberg in 1522
 - Needed to deal with chaos caused by some (very) Radical reformers
 - The Zwickau prophets
- Continued to be very active in preaching & writing
 - Typically preached 2-3 times/week
 - Wrote hymns to teach theology

Driving Reform

- Prolific writing
 - Luther wrote ~500 works from 1522-1524
 - Wrote both in Latin & German – every day language, accessible the people
 - Not just theology, but many works dealing with pastoral concerns
 - Writings widely disseminated through printing presses
 - Luther became very well known throughout Germany & beyond

Interlude

- In 1526, Luther married Katherine von Bora ('Katie'), an escaped nun
 - "In domestic affairs I defer to Katie. Otherwise I am led by the Holy Spirit"
 - 6 children, two of which died at early ages

Driving Reform

- Diet of Speier, 1526
 - German Princes supporting Luther got the Diet to agree to permit rulers of each state to follow what he thought to be the correct faith
- Decision reversed at a subsequent Diet of Speier, 1529
 - Roman Catholicism would be the only legal faith
 - 6 princes & representatives of 14 free cities issue a *Protestation*
 - Known thereafter by their opponents as 'Protestants'

Driving Reform

- Towards a Lutheran Church
 - Augsburg Confession drafted in 1530 by Philip Melancthon, one of Luther's colleagues at Wittenberg
 - Official creed of what would become the Lutheran Church
 - In 1535, faculty at Wittenberg started examining and ordaining ministers
 - A break from Rome

Driving Reform

- Towards a Lutheran Church
 - Schmalkaldic wars (1546-1552)
 - Expecting to be attacked, Protestant princes organized the Schmalkaldic League in 1531 for mutual defense
 - War started in 1546 between Emperor Charles V and Catholic forces vs. Schmalkaldic League
 - Ended with Peace of Augsburg, 1555
 - Lutheranism given equal legal status as Roman Catholicism in Germany

Final Years

- Luther struggled with poor health for the last 10-15 years of his life
- First of several heart attacks in 1534
 - Also kidney stones, chronic leg abscess, severe headaches, dizzy spells, loud ringing in his ears
- Died February 18, 1546, while on a pastoral visit to Eisleben (his birth town)
 - Last words: “We are beggars. This is true.”



Martin Luther - Some Reflections

- God's sovereignty over the Church and the affairs of the world
 - Luther's reforms gained traction where those of others (e.g. Hus) had not
- Our responsibility to be faithful to proclaim His truth, even in the face of great opposition
- The centrality of justification by faith alone
 - Frees us to live fearlessly for God