

## Martin Luther

- 1) In Germany, in the early 1500s, some people were dissatisfied with their religious life. The abuses in the Church, which some people had noticed for a while, needed reforming. The wealth and political power of the Church, the special law courts, the ignorance and immorality of some of the clergy, all served to arouse a strong feeling of discontent with the Church, particularly when the Church demanded money for all types of causes.

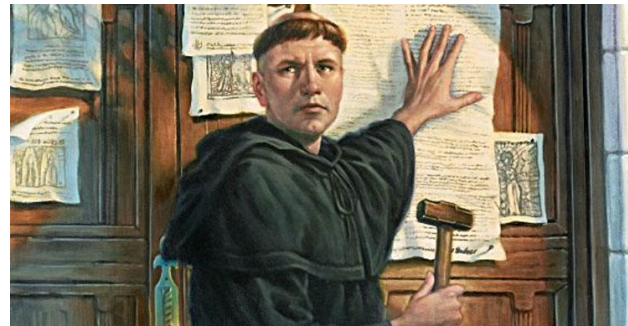


- 2) Some people criticized the doctrines and dogmas of the Church, which they believed to be outdated. Some in the rising middle class tended to resent the necessity of priest and sacraments to insure salvation, as taught by the Church. The rulers of the rising nations of Northern Europe also resented the interference of the Pope in national affairs, and the payment of taxes to a man that they came to regard as a foreign prince. The opportunity to take

Church lands and keep tax money in their own countries brought many rulers to the side of the reformers.

- 3) Finally, a supposedly intellectual basis for the revolt against the Church came from some, but not all, humanists. The majority of early humanists were Christian, some of them criticized things of the Church, such as relics, pilgrimages, monks, and the role the Pope had, on the mistaken grounds that these things were not part of the original Christianity. The man who united all of these critics to protest against the Roman Catholic Church was Martin Luther.
- 4) Martin Luther was born in Germany in 1483 of peasant parents. He was given an excellent education at the University of Erfurt, where he studied law. In 1506, he left the University and became an Augustinian monk. He was ordained a priest and sent to teach at the University of Wittenberg. While at Wittenberg, he began to question his beliefs and to criticize the more obvious abuses in the Church. Practice that first aroused him to public protest was that represented by a papal indulgence proclaimed by Pope Leo X to obtain money for the building of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. In Germany, the archbishop of Mainz sent Johann Tetzel to persuade the people to give generously. In his enthusiasm, Tetzel claimed that the purchase of an indulgence could bring pardon of sins and even affect sins not yet committed.

- 5) Luther protested against Tetzel's tactics by posting ninety-five theses or propositions on the subject of indulgences on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517. This was the standard practice of the day to announce one's willingness to debate a topic. At Leipzig in 1519, Luther met Johann Eck in public debate. Instead of discussing indulgences, the debate centered on the question of whether Luther would accept the Pope's authority as final in all matters. Luther said that he would accept the teachings of the Bible as



the final authority, but not the Pope, or even Church councils. This brought him into direct and open conflict with the Pope.

- 6)** Luther continued to develop his teachings and beliefs. He even called on the nobility of Germany to unite, and then destroy the power of the Pope in their states. Finally in 1519, Pope Leo X issued a papal bull (a formal document issued by the Pope) excommunicating Luther. When Luther received the bull, he burned it in the public square at Erfurt, showing that he no longer considered that the Pope had any authority over him. It was not until 1529 that Luther was formally summoned by the civil authority to answer for his rebellion. The Emperor, Charles V, called the Diet of Worms to decide the case against Luther. (A diet is a formal assembly called to discuss or act upon state or public affairs.) The Diet, after much debate, found Luther guilty of heresy and asked him to recant. He refused with the words: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." After this trial, he was declared an outlaw of the empire, but he found shelter in Saxony with Duke Frederick. During his year in enforced leisure, he translated the New Testament into German and began to make plans for organizing a church of his own.



- 7)** Luther's beliefs became the doctrine of this new church, which came to be called the Lutheran Church. He had been concerned all of his life with the very important question of what a man had to do in order to gain salvation. As a young Catholic monk he had developed the conception of God as a stern and unforgiving judge, and he had accepted the teaching of the Roman Church that salvation, in part, depended upon 'good works' and receiving the

sacraments. He had spent much time in prayer and fasting in order to convince himself that he had merited salvation. Then in 1515, after reading St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he found his answer. This letter contained the phrase, "the just shall live by faith". This phrase became the central belief of the Lutheran Church: Man could achieve salvation by faith alone. Good works, fasts, and sacraments were unnecessary, and no man needs the services of a pope or a priest for his salvation. A person could find in the Bible all those things that he must believe.

**8)** As the Lutheran Church finally took shape, it kept a good deal of the Catholic doctrine and practice. There were however changes. All of the sacraments, except baptism and the Lord's Supper were abolished, and with these two, their meanings were changed.

**9)** Since the Bible played such an important role in Lutheranism, Martin Luther translated it from Latin to German so that more people could read it. He also wrote many hymns in his attempt to reform and simplify public worship.

## Martin Luther Questions

Beside each answer, indicate the paragraph # where it is found, and for the Multiple Choice (1-10), copy the sentence that is the answer!

1. Martin Luther was concerned throughout his life with the question of:
  - a. Indulgences
  - b. The Pope's authority
  - c. How to merit salvation
  - d. Clerical marriages
  
2. Luther's beliefs became the doctrine of a new church known as the:
  - a. Protestant Church
  - b. Presbyterian Church
  - c. Lutheran Church
  - d. Reformed Church
  
3. The Catholic Church taught that man was saved through:
  - a. In part, faith in Christ, along with good works
  - b. Prayer to Mary, the mother of Jesus
  - c. Indulgences
  - d. Believing in the Pope's authority
  
4. The central teaching of Martin Luther concerning those who were saved was:
  - a. All who led good lives
  - b. Only those who received indulgences
  - c. Those who fasted and prayed
  - d. Those who had faith alone, in Jesus
  
5. The only source of authority for Luther and his church was:
  - a. The Bible
  - b. The Pope
  - c. Martin Luther himself
  - d. Monks, priests, and bishops
  
6. Luther retained \_\_\_\_\_ of the sacraments of the Catholic Church.
  - a. Two
  - b. Seven
  - c. Five
  - d. None

7. Luther abolished:
  - a. Churches
  - b. Monks and monasteries
  - c. Marriages of priests
  - d. Hymns
  
8. Luther was excommunicated by Pope \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Clement VII
  - b. Urban X
  - c. Leo X
  - d. Martin V
  
9. Luther was declared an outlaw of the empire by:
  - a. Charles V
  - b. John I
  - c. Leo X
  - d. Francis I
  
10. Luther was trained as a:
  - a. Doctor
  - b. Lawyer
  - c. Bishop
  - d. Professor
  
11. Why did the Reformation begin in Germany?
  
12. Could the Reformation have taken place before the Renaissance? Why?
  
13. What actions of Johann Tetzel caused Luther to publish his ninety-five thesis?
  
14. What were the ninety-five thesis?
  
15. Why did Luther nail them to the door of the Castle Church?