

Church History



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- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



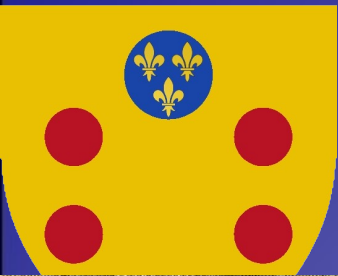
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- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
 - *Martin Luther*



The Reformation

- At the turn of the century, things got worse
 - 1513 Medici Pope Leo X took power in Rome
 - Leo loved being Pope because of the power and luxury that it brought him
 - His extravagant—and morally corrupt—lifestyle actually bankrupted the Roman Catholic Church
 - So he began selling off anything that people would buy—statues of the apostles from the Vatican, cardinals' birettas, holy offices, furniture, dishes, silverware, etc.
 - He also sold indulgences by the score, for pretty much any sin that people could financially afford to commit
 - His Grand Commissioner for Indulgences, Johann Tetzel, coined the phrase, “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs...”
 - Some priests just couldn't take it any more



The Reformation

- The Church gets a much-needed Reform
- 1517 Martin Luther protested with 95 *Theses*
 - Luther was born in 1483 to a middle-class family in Saxony
 - His father wanted him to be a lawyer, so he sent him to the best schools he could find to learn Latin, philosophy, and argumentation
 - In the process, he learned a great deal about the classical philosophers, but felt that they had little to do with understanding what it meant to be a good *Christian*



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 - At the age of 23, he was almost struck by lightning during a thunderstorm, and realized that he was absolutely terrified of dying without knowing where he stood with God
 - Since he was riding on horseback at the time, he promised Saint Anna that he would become a monk and serve God
 - He took the black robes of an Augustinian friar, and resigned himself to an unhappy life
 - Luther later wrote about his agony living as a monk, saying,
“I lost touch with Christ the Saviour and Comforter, and made of him the jailer and hangman of my poor soul”



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- Nonetheless, he excelled at his studies, and within three years, he was called to the faculty of the University of Wittenberg

- By 1512, he was their resident “Doctor in Bible” teaching theology



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 - In 1516, Johann Tetzel came to Germany to sell indulgences to help the bankrupt Church pay for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica
 - Luther found this tacky at best—and immorally un-Biblical at worst
 - "Since the Pope's income to-day is larger than that of the wealthiest of wealthy men, why does he not build the basilica of St. Peter with his *own* money, rather than with the money of impoverished believers?"



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 - But that was just one of 95 issues with the Church in general and indulgences in particular that Luther articulated in a letter to his bishop, Albrecht of Mainz



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - According to tradition, he also posted his 95 *Theses* on the door to the church in Wittenberg
 - As strange or aggressive as this may seem to us today, remember that Wittenberg was a college town, and the church's door was essentially a bulletin board for students and faculty to post their thoughts on
 - Think of it as a 16th century Facebook...



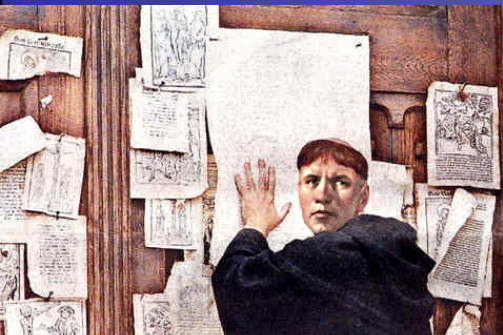
The Reformation

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 - According to tradition, he also posted his 95 *Theses* on the door to the church in Wittenberg
 - As strange or aggressive as this may seem to us today, remember that Wittenberg was a college town
 - Unfortunately, we have no idea whether or not this really happened, since the tradition is based on an off-hand comment made years later by someone who wasn't even in Wittenberg at the time—but it makes for a great visual...



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment²—
 - Whether or not Luther made use of *that* social media, we do know that his friends made use of *another* one to disseminate his ideas
 - Luther had originally simply intended his *Theses* to be an intellectual critique, shared with his bishop but when his *friends* got a hold of the document, they had it printed by local presses, and spread copies of it everywhere
 - Within the span of two months, everyone in Europe was reading Luther's thoughts



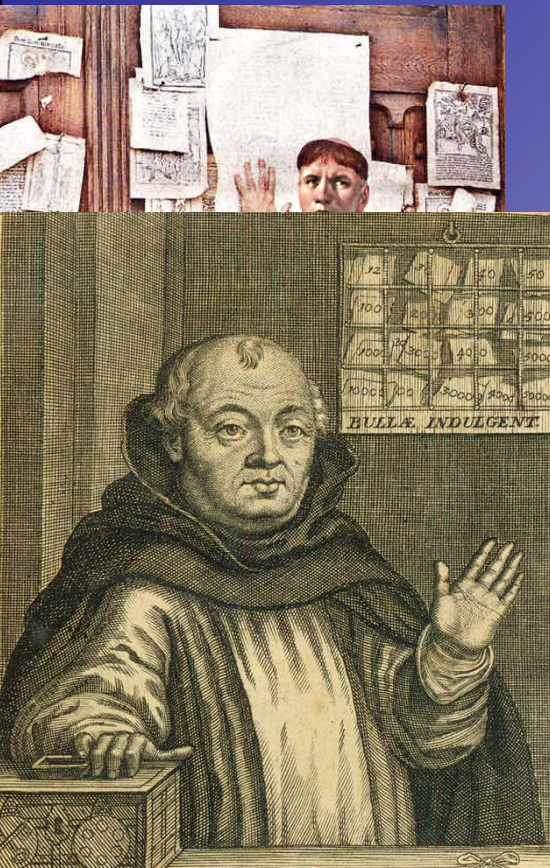
The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment³—
 - Luther's problems with the very concept of indulgences had led his lawyer's mind to consider how that played out in other Catholic doctrines
 - For instance, if, when "Jesus Christ said 'Repent!' He called for the *entire life* of believers to be one of repentance," then why would specific acts of penance be necessary?
 - Either they'd simply be what you as a Christian were *supposed* to be living out already, or they'd be over-and-above what you're supposed to be doing—which means that we'd be *adding* to what was needed in order for us to be saved
 - All of that would undermine the efficacy of Christ's perfect sacrifice on the Cross as well as undermining the sincerely *heartfelt* repentance that we're *supposed* to be feeling every day



The Reformation

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 - Or, as another example, if “God never remits guilt to anyone without, at the same time, making him humbly submissive to the priest,” then “The penitential rules apply only to men who are *still alive*, and [by definition] *none* applies to the *dead*” which means that it makes no sense that “penalties were changed and made to apply to [those in] Purgatory” so that payments for any indulgences now could affect those *already* dead, since “death puts an end to all the claims of the Church” on the deceased—logically proving that “There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of Purgatory the moment that the money clinks in the bottom of the chest”
(as Johann Tetzel had so often claimed)



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment³—
 - Luther's problems with the very concept of indulgences had led his lawyer's mind to consider how that played out in other Catholic doctrines
 - Besides, Luther argued, "The Pope himself cannot remit guilt, but only *declare* and *confirm* that it has *been* remitted by God," due to the genuine contrition of the penitent believer
 - Thus, "Papal indulgences should only be preached with caution, lest people gain a wrong understanding, and think that they are preferable to other good works: those of love" (for instance, "Christians should be taught that he who sees a needy person, but passes him by—although he gives money for indulgences—gains no benefit from the Pope's pardon, but only incurs the wrath of God.")



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment³ —
 - Luther's problems with the very concept of indulgences had led his lawyer's mind to consider how that played out in other Catholic doctrines
 - For that matter, if it really were up to the Pope to decide who gets forgiven and who doesn't, then "Why does not the Pope liberate *everyone* from Purgatory for the sake of love (a most holy thing) and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for *money*, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very *minor* purpose."
 - "Surely a *greater* good could be done to the church if the pope were to bestow these remissions and dispensations, not *once*, as now, but a *hundred times a day*, for the benefit of *any* believer *whatever*."



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 - But that was just one of 95 issues with the Church in general and indulgences in particular that Luther articulated in a letter to his bishop, Albrecht of Mainz
 - Albrecht, thinking that Luther was teaching heresy, never responded
 - Instead, he simply forwarded the letter on to Rome



The Reformation

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 - 1517 Martin Luther protested with 95 *Theses*
 - 1518 Luther appeared at the Diet of Augsburg
(NOTE: A “Diet” was a formal assembly of the Church)
(it comes from the Greek *δίαιτα* [*“diaita”*], meaning, “a way of life” or “a daily regimen” which is why “diet” could come to mean either a formal meeting to decide what to do, or the set of foods that one eats as part of their daily regimen of health)



The Reformation

- The Church gets a much-needed Reform

1517 Martin Luther protested with 95 *Theses*

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- Cardinal Cardinal Tommaso de Vio grilled Luther about his *Theses* and “heretical” teachings

- Just who *won* this “debate” kind of depends on which side of the fence you’re sitting on

- De Vio pressed Luther to capitulate to the ultimate authority of the Pope, which made Luther admit that he didn’t recognize that the Pope *had* any ultimate authority specifically given to him by Scripture

- Thus, the Catholics saw the Diet of Augsburg as a rousing success for them, since it brought Luther’s heresy to light while the Protestants saw the Diet of Augsburg as a rousing success for *them*, since it clarified Luther’s take on the larger un-Biblical issues of Catholicism in general

- (NOTE: Luther snuck out of Augsburg when it became clear that they were going to arrest him if he didn’t recant his views)



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - But that's kind of the whole point, when it came to Martin Luther
 - Pope Leo was under fire from all fronts for his obvious excesses and corruption, so he really needed a “whipping boy” to divert attention to
 - Foolishly, they thought that Luther—whose writings had exploded across Europe—would be a good person to force to roll over and capitulate to the Pope's Divine authority
 - But every time they pressed him on things, he just pressed back and drew farther away
 - They pressed him about the Pope's ultimate authority, and he admitted that the Bible *gave* the Pope no ultimate authority
 - They pressed him about the need for Purgatory at all, given his *Thesis*, and he admitted that they were right—that Purgatory made no sense, and had no Biblical basis



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 - They pressed him about the need for penance for sins *at all*, if it wasn't required for salvation or for the reduction of time spent in Purgatory which simply made Luther admit that they were, again right—penance as a requirement for forgiveness goes against the clear teaching of Scripture that salvation is by faith alone, and should thus not be demanded from believers



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 - But every time they pressed him on things, he just pressed back and drew farther away
 - They also weren't prepared for his lawyer's gift for not just expressing his case well, but for slamming back at them with great force of conviction and scathing wit—he was an absolute *nutcase*, but a nutcase for Jesus
 - Consider these actual Martin Luther put-downs...





You run against God with the horns of your pride
up in the air and thus plunge into the abyss of hell.
Woe unto you, Antichrist!

From **Defense and Explanation of All the Articles**, pg. 87 of
Luther's Works, Vol. 32

Insult me again*

*Enter/Return

Insulter • [List of Insults](#) (way less fun) • [Explanation of Insults](#) (read before judging the reformer)

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You should not write a book before you have
heard an old sow fart; and then you should open
your jaws with awe, saying, "Thank you, lovely
nightingale, that is just the text for me!"

From **Against Hanswurst**, pg. 250 of Luther's Works, Vol. 41

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You people are more stupid than a block of wood.

From **Against Latomus**, pg. 242 of Luther's Works, Vol. 32

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 - Pope Leo wrote a response to the 95 Theses called *Exsurge Domine* (“Arise, Lord!”)
 - In it, he argued that Luther's emphasis on contrition is *itself* the most heretical part
 - Since *no* one is completely, *genuinely* contrite, “contrition makes one a hypocrite, indeed more a sinner” (and besides, “it is *impossible* that you know *all* mortal sins,” so if you were to forget to be contrite about even one, you're still lost in your sinfulness)



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 - Since *no* one is completely, *genuinely* contrite, “contrition makes one a hypocrite, indeed more a sinner”
 - And even if we *could* genuinely confess *all* of our sins, we're then *stealing* God's grace from Him, since “as long as we wish to confess all sins without exception, we are doing nothing else than to wish to leave nothing to God's mercy for pardon”



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 - So forgiveness requires a priestly mediation before God, *not* penitence of heart—“if you have obtained the absolution of the priest, and firmly believe yourself to have been absolved, and you will *truly* be absolved, whatever there may be of ‘contrition’.”



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 - So forgiveness requires a priestly mediation before God, *not* penitence of heart
 - In fact, “If... he who confessed was *not* contrite, or the priest did not absolve *seriously*... if nevertheless he *believes* that he has been absolved, he is most *truly* absolved.”
 - Thus, “No one ought to answer a priest that he is contrite, nor should a priest inquire,” since the question is pointless—or even *blasphemous*



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 - He used the Eucharist as an example, saying that it's those who prostrate their hearts in contrition before God who thus “eat and drink judgment on themselves” (1 Corinthians 11:29)
 - Christians do not come to the table to express contrition, but in anticipation “that they will attain a [sacramental] grace”



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 - He used the Eucharist as an example, saying that it's those who prostrate their hearts in contrition before God who thus “eat and drink judgment on themselves” (1 Corinthians 11:29)
 - In the same vein, he declared it “a pernicious poison” to teach that “Purgatory cannot be proved from Sacred Scripture which is in the canon”



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 - In response, Luther wrote,
 - “Whoever wrote this bull, he is Antichrist. I protest before God, our Lord Jesus, his sacred angels and the whole world that with my whole heart I dissent from the damnation of this bull, that I curse and execrate it as sacrilege and blasphemy of Christ, God's Son and our Lord. *This be my recantation, O bull, thou daughter of bulls!*”
 - And later, “I was wrong—I admit it—when I said that indulgences were ‘the pious defrauding of the faithful.’ I recant and say, ‘Indulgences are the *most pious frauds and imposters of the most rascally Pontiffs*, by which they *deceive the souls and destroy the goods of the faithful.*”



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 - As you might imagine, Leo excommunicated Luther as a result, calling him “the slave of a depraved mind” and an “infectious animal” whose disease had to be kept from the healthy members of the flock
 - But even then—in large part because his fame and popularity continued to grow—Luther was given one last chance to recant...



The Reformation

- The Church gets a much-needed Reform

1517 Martin Luther protested with 95 *Theses*

1518 Luther appeared at the Diet of Augsburg

1521 Luther appeared at the Diet of Worms

- Since he was already dodging an arrest warrant, and since he'd already been excommunicated, Luther only appeared after he'd been promised safe conduct by Prince Friedrich III of Saxony

- Johann Eck happily served as the prosecutor and he laid Luther's writings before the assembly and asked Luther if he stood by their contents

- Luther took a day to pray, talk with his friends, and consider before he 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. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen."



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- Eck reminded Luther that *all* heretics quote Scripture, so Scripture itself cannot be trusted

- (Instead, its truths must be interpreted and understood through the filters of tradition and proper Church authority)

- (NOTE: It was in this context that Eck first coined the term "Lutheranism" to speak derisively of Luther creating his own, personal religion)



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- Which is why (German) Prince Friedrich III—who had promised Luther safe conduct—whisked him away to safety at Wartburg Castle, deep in Saxon territory
(even though Friedrich himself was a devout Catholic who had spent a small fortune on indulgences and relics)



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 - Which is why (German) Prince Friedrich III—who had promised Luther safe conduct—whisked him away to safety at Wartburg Castle, deep in Saxon territory
 - In response, Carlos declared it a crime to give Luther food or shelter, and that anyone was legally allowed to kill him if they found him, without any legal repercussions
 - (which is why Luther stayed at Wartburg for a year—producing a *lot* of writings)



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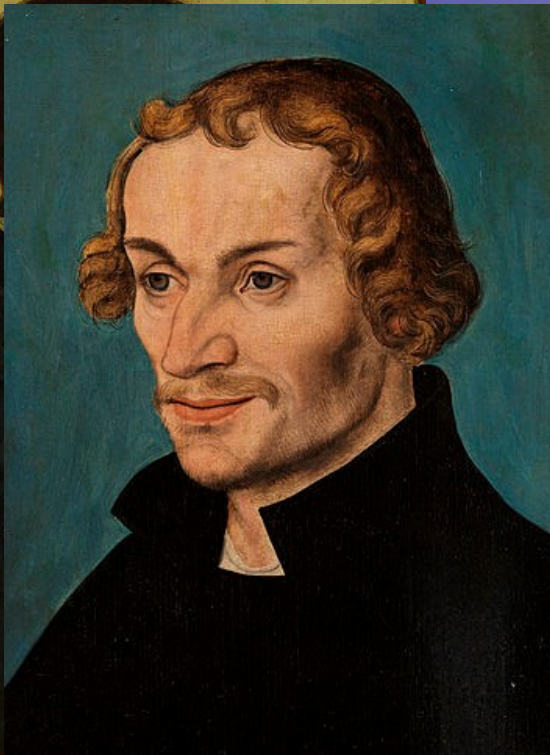
- Thus, Luther's influence continued to grow, the more that Rome attempted to suppress it

- Not only did he win over Friedrich, but the faculty at Wittenberg themselves took up his banner and continued his teachings

- One of the professors—Philipp Melanchthon—became a leader in his own right

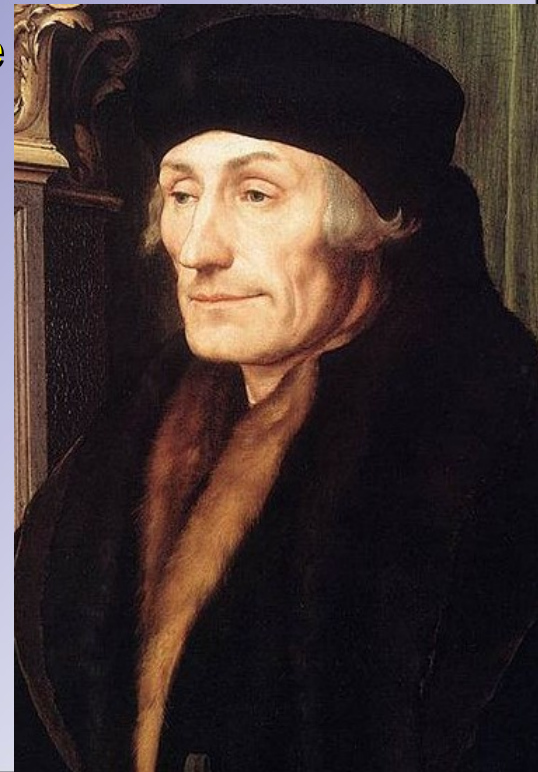
- Expressing his doctrine of salvation by faith alone to Melanchthon from his exile in Wartburg, Luther wrote,

“Be a sinner, and let your sins be *strong*, but let your trust in Christ be *stronger*, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides...”



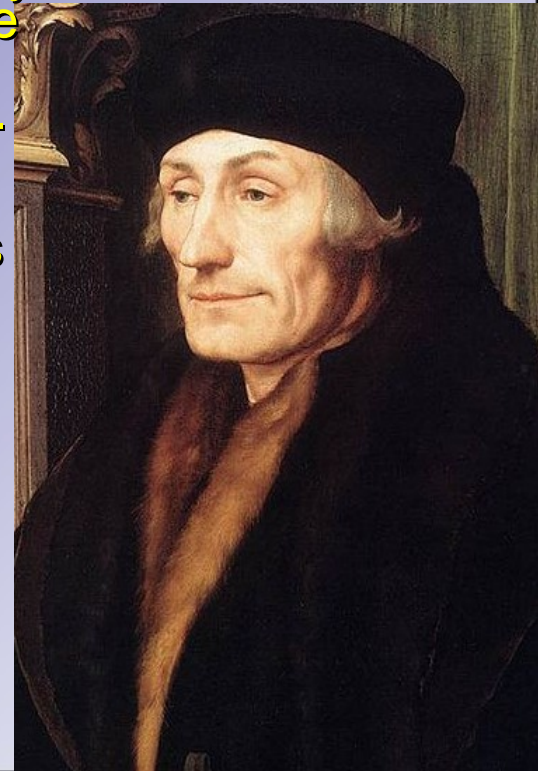
The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - It was exactly that sort of comment—and the day-to-day Christianity in Germany that was tacitly being preached—that brought Luther into conflict with Erasmus
 - As we discussed last week, Erasmus argued
“You declaim bitterly against the luxury of priests, the ambition of bishops, the tyranny of the Roman Pontiff, and the babbling of the sophists; against our prayers, fasts, and Masses; and you are not content to retrench the abuses that may be in these things, but must needs abolish them entirely... But look around on this ‘Evangelical’ generation, and observe whether amongst them less indulgence is given to luxury, lust, or avarice, than amongst those whom you so detest. Show me *any one person* who by that Gospel has been reclaimed from drunkenness to sobriety, from fury and passion to meekness, from avarice to liberality, from reviling to well-speaking, from wantonness to modesty. I will show you a great many who have become worse through following it...”



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 - It was exactly that sort of comment—and the day-to-day Christianity in Germany that was tacitly being preached—that brought Luther into conflict with Erasmus
 - As we discussed last week, Erasmus argued
 - Or, as Erasmus wrote to Melanchthon, looking at the armed rebellion that was growing in Germany, “I know nothing of your church; at the very least it contains people who will, I fear, overturn the whole system and drive the princes into using force to restrain good men and bad alike. The gospel, the word of God, faith, Christ, and Holy Spirit—these words are always on their lips; but look at their lives and they speak quite another language.”



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - It was exactly that sort of comment—and the day-to-day Christianity in Germany that was tacitly being preached—that brought Luther into conflict with Erasmus
 - To help combat this, Luther returned to preach at Wittenberg
 - He taught the people from the pulpit of his church, “Do you know what the Devil thinks when he sees men use *violence* to propagate the Gospel? He sits with folded arms behind the fire of hell, and says with malignant looks and frightful grin: ‘Ah, how wise these madmen are to play *my* game! Let them go on; I shall reap the benefit. I delight in it.’ But when he sees the *Word* running and contending alone on the battle-field, then he shudders and shakes for *fear*...”



The Reformation

- **The Church gets a much-needed Reform**

1517 Martin Luther protested with 95 *Theses*

1518 Luther appeared at the Diet of Augsburg

1521 Luther appeared at the Diet of Worms

1524 Erasmus published *The Freedom of the Will*

- Arguing against Luther, Erasmus contended that just because God knows something is going to happen, His foreknowledge doesn't logically demand His predestination

- Like an astronomer who sees that an eclipse is coming, but didn't *create* the eclipse, God can foresee something that He in no way brought about

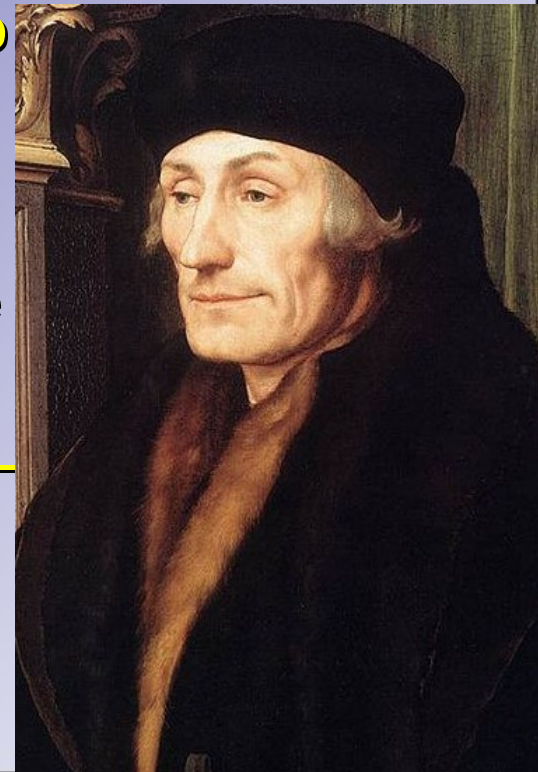
- Thus, we're saved when, by the action of our free will, we *choose to accept* the grace that God has freely given us



The Reformation

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- 1524 Erasmus published *The Freedom of the Will*
- 1525 Luther published *On the Bondage of the Will*
 - Arguing against Erasmus, Luther contended that it is illogical to conceive of an omnipotent God whose foreknowledge *doesn't* predestine
 - Humanity is completely sold to sin, and *cannot* choose good over evil—we *have* no free will to *choose* to accept God's saving grace
 - Thus, when God saves us, He does so *regardless* of our will, remaking us completely so that we are—for the *first time*—finally able to choose good over evil in our lives



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 - Arguing against Erasmus, Luther contended that it is illogical to conceive of an omnipotent God whose foreknowledge *doesn't* predestine
 - Regarding Erasmus himself, Luther wrote,
“There can be no doubt in the mind of a true believer, who has the Spirit in his nostrils, that his mind is alienated from and utterly hates all religion together; and especially, the religion of Christ...”



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- 1527 **The Lutheran Church became *the Church***

- Friedrich's brother and successor, Johann, officially declared the Lutheran Church to be the *official*, state church of Saxony

- So Luther and Melanchthon spent years putting together the basic structure and catechism of the new Church

- Luther decided to keep as much of the Catholic structure to their services and ecclesiology as he could, and simply tweak the theology *behind* the structures

- There were still priests, but now they could *marry*—like Luther did when he married a former nun



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- There were still priests
- Priests still consecrated the Eucharist—at which point it became *absolutely one* with the Real Presence of the flesh and blood of Jesus—but it didn't *become* the flesh and blood of Jesus



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- (and *everyone* in church was allowed to eat the bread *and* drink the cup)



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- There were still priests
- Priests still consecrated the Eucharist
- Infants were still saved through baptism, but a catechetical follow-up was required to *confirm* that they'd been saved



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- There were still priests
- Priests still consecrated the Eucharist
- Infants were still saved through baptism
- **Mass was still performed, but now everything was in *German***



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- **They ultimately summarized the new church for Emperor Carlos at *another* Diet of Augsburg in 1530**

(in a document that has come to be known as the "Augsburg Confession")

