

A WILD BOAR IN THE VINEYARD

In June of 1520, the Medici pope Leo X published a bull known as *Exsurge domini*, which began as follows:

"Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. Be mindful of the daily slander against thee by the foolish, incline thine ear to our supplication. Foxes have arisen which want to devastate thy vineyard, where thou hast worked the winepress. At thy ascension into heaven thou hast commanded the care, rule and administration of this vineyard to Peter as head and to thy representatives, his successors, as the Church triumphant. A roaring boar of the woods has undertaken to destroy this vineyard, a wild beast wants to devour it."

This "roaring boar" was an Augustinian monk from Wittenberg named Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation. In previous chapters, we have seen many other men who "protested" against the evils in the Roman Catholic Church. What was there about Luther and the revolt that he led that set them apart from previous reform efforts?

There can be no question that the time was right. From a religious standpoint, the corruption of the Catholic hierarchy was an open, festering sore. Everyone knew that change was needed. From an intellectual standpoint, the Renaissance had taught people to think for themselves rather than submitting to authority. In the political realm, growing nationalism was breeding deep feelings of resentment against "foreign" (i.e., papal) interference in national affairs. Economically speaking, the financial burdens imposed by Rome were becoming increasingly unbearable, and rulers, peasants,

and especially the members of the growing middle class, were unwilling to underwrite the pope's artistic and military ventures. To view the Reformation primarily in terms of such factors, however, is like explaining the spread of the Gospel in the first century in terms of the *Pax Romana* and the sterility of pagan religion. While all of these factors contributed to the Reformation, they must be seen, not so much as causes, but as providential preparation by God for the work He was about to do. To characterize the Reformation as anything other than a religious movement is to miss the point.

The key question of the Reformation was the question the Philippian jailer asked the Apostle Paul: "What must I do to be saved?" The fact that Luther gave Paul's answer caused the Reformation to be a radical departure from medieval Catholicism. The Catholic Church had over the years interposed a succession of mediators between God and man. When men sought God, they prayed to Mary or the saints; when God gave His grace to men, it was distributed by the priest, through the sacraments of the church. A veil much thicker than that which kept men out of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple had been lowered between man and God.

Luther tore that veil. Like the pre-reformers, he taught that God spoke through the Bible, which every individual was to read and understand for himself. No longer were people dependent upon the priest to tell them what the Bible said and meant. Like a few of his predecessors, Luther emphasized the grace of God in salvation. He returned to the Augustinian (and Pauline) teaching that men are incapable of saving themselves, and can only be saved by a

free and sovereign act of God's mercy. Like some who had gone before, he taught the priesthood of all believers. He said that all men could come to God without the need of a human mediator. While all of these teachings represented departures from medieval Catholicism, they were not in themselves new. Various reformers in the centuries before Luther had said each of these things, though no single man had said them all. What made Luther the father of the Reformation was his teaching of justification by faith alone. What was it that brought the simple German monk to the understanding of salvation that would shake the church to its very foundations?

LUTHER'S EARLY YEARS

By all accounts, there was nothing remarkable about Luther's childhood. He was born on November 10, 1483, the oldest son of Hans and Margaret Luther of Eisleben. His parents were good Catholics, and named him after Martin of Tours, the fifth-century saint on whose day he was baptized. The Luthers were strict disciplinarians, but the whippings he described from his youth were nothing out of the ordinary for a child of his or any other day. His father was a miner, a hard-working peasant who managed to amass considerable wealth for himself by the time young Martin was ready to go to school. Luther studied at a school run by the Brethren of the Common Life, then went off to the University of Erfurt, then the best and largest university in Germany. His father wanted him to study law. Luther was a good student, and finished second in his class, then went on to study for his Master's degree.

In the summer of 1505, he was returning to school after a visit home when a sudden thunderstorm arose. Lightning was flashing all around him, and Luther was terrified. In his fear, he called out to St. Anne, the patron saint of miners, and promised that if he survived the storm he would become a monk. Much to the displeasure of his father, he kept his vow, and two weeks later entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.

Luther turned out to be a good monk in

everyone's eyes but his own. He took the rigors and responsibilities of monastic life very seriously, and often went far beyond what was required in terms of fasts and deprivations, to the point where he nearly ruined his health. The harder he struggled to make himself acceptable to God, however, the more unworthy he felt. He would go to confession for hours on end, then worry that he had forgotten something, and that the omission would cost him his salvation. He became increasingly conscious of his own sins, and realized that he could never possibly confess to God, or even remember, all the evil thoughts that went through his mind in even a single day. At times he despaired of his own salvation, and in his frustration admitted that he hated God. Johann von Staupitz, the head of the order, encouraged young Martin to read the Scriptures and the writings of the German mystics, and the young monk found these a source of some comfort.

Luther became a priest in 1507, then in 1508 was sent to teach at the newly formed University of Wittenberg, which Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, had established in 1502. After teaching there for one semester, Luther was called away to deal with some business for the Augustinian order. Part of this business involved a trip to Rome in 1510. What an incredible eye-opener that trip turned out to be for Luther! The following are some of Luther's later reflections on his trip:

"In Rome I was a frantic saint. I ran through all the churches and catacombs and believed everything, their lies and falsehood. I celebrated several masses in Rome, and almost regretted that my father and mother were still living, for I would have liked to redeem them from purgatory with my masses and other good works and prayers. There is a saying in Rome: 'Blessed is the mother whose son celebrates a mass in the Church of St. John on Saturday.' I surely would have liked to make my mother blessed! But there was a great commotion and I could not get close. I ate a salted herring instead.

"I did not stay long in Rome, but found occasion to celebrate and hear many a mass. I

still shudder when I think of it now. I heard people laughingly boast in the inn that some celebrated mass, saying to the bread and wine, 'Bread thou art and bread wilt thou remain.' Then they elevated it. I was a young and pious monk who was hurt by such words.... If pope, cardinals, and the courtiers celebrated mass that way, I had been deceived, since I had heard many masses by them. I was especially annoyed over the speed with which they said the mass. By the time I reached the gospel the priest next to me had already finished mass and shouted, 'Come on, finish, hurry up.'"

Luther saw for the first time some of the abuses that had led so many others to criticize the church, and what he saw shocked him. He still somewhat naively believed that the pope was above it all, however. Even after the Reformation had begun, he continued to believe that change could be made if only the pope were informed of the abuses going on around him.

Luther returned to Wittenberg in 1511 to teach Bible and theology while studying for his doctorate. It was during these years that his understanding of justification by faith developed. As he lectured on the books of Romans and Galatians, he came to understand that justification was an immediate and judicial act of God. In other words, salvation was not so much God making a person righteous through doing good works and taking the sacraments as it was God declaring a person to be righteous because of the saving work of Christ on the cross. Good works were thus not the cause of salvation, but the result of it. Once Luther realized that his continued sin did not separate him from God, but that God accepted him because he trusted in the death of Christ on the cross, it was like a great burden had been lifted from his shoulders. From that point on, justification by faith became, not only the keynote of Luther's preaching, but the rallying cry of the Reformation.

THE SPARK IS IGNITED

The pope needed money. That in itself was nothing new, especially for Leo X. Leo was such a generous patron of the arts that it was said

that he spent the funds of three popes; he quickly emptied the full treasury left behind by his thrifty predecessor Julius II, spent every penny that came in during his papacy, and left behind him an enormous debt that his successor had to spend his entire reign making up. At the moment, the project in question was the restoration of the Basilica of St. Peter. In order to finish this marvelous piece of architecture with artwork of a suitably grand nature, Leo turned to that old tried-and-true technique, selling indulgences. Most of the monarchs of Europe had caught on to the scam by now, and demanded some kind of kickback for allowing indulgence peddlers to operate in their jurisdictions. In Germany, the demand came from Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz, who had just finished paying the pope an enormous bribe in order to gain that valuable office (he was only in his twenties, and he already had two bishoprics, so the bribe had been well over a million dollars). Albrecht had borrowed the money from the banking house of Fugger in Augsburg, and the interest rates were atrocious. The Fuggers wanted their money back, so they demanded that the pope pay to Albrecht half of the indulgence receipts collected in his district; they then sent a representative along with the indulgence peddlers to make sure they didn't get cheated.

The indulgence seller hired by Albrecht and the Fuggers was a Dominican named Johann Tetzel. He had been in the indulgence racket for a long time, and he was good at it. His tear-jerking sermons were calculated to wring hard-earned money from the pockets of the ignorant and superstitious. He would preach, for instance,

"Don't you hear the voices of your wailing dead parents and others who say, 'Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with a small alms and yet you do not want to do so.' Open your ears as the father says to the son and the mother to the daughter, 'We have created you, fed you, cared for you, and left you our temporal goods. Why then are you so cruel and harsh that you do not want to save us, though it only takes a little?'"

Though the official teaching of the Catholic Church was that indulgences could take the place of earthly penances (such as prayers and pilgrimages), but only God could forgive sin, the two soon became muddled in the preaching of the indulgence peddlers. With regard to purgatory, the church taught that an indulgence would pay for the pope's intercession on behalf of the one for whom the indulgence was bought, but that didn't stop Tetzel from proclaiming that "as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Frederick the Wise had refused to allow Tetzel to operate in Saxony, but when he arrived just across the boundary line from Wittenberg, Luther found out what was going on. The blatant commercialism of Tetzel's sales pitch shocked him, and he decided to issue a challenge. On October 31, 1517, he posted a list of ninety-five debate topics having to do with indulgences on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. This was common practice. Academic debates were frequent in university towns, and the church door served as a sort of community bulletin board. Though no one stepped forward to accept the challenge, friends of Luther took the Ninety-five Theses to a printer and had copies made, which within two weeks were all over Germany. Soon a copy even found its way to the pope in Italy. Before long, all Europe was in an uproar. The Reformation had begun.

Why should these debate topics cause so much trouble? After all, Luther was only criticizing the abuse of indulgences, he wasn't challenging the doctrine or even the authority of the church - yet. One reason for this, of course, is money. The mercenary officials of the church hierarchy could take almost any kind of criticism except the kind that hurt their pocketbooks. When sales of indulgences dropped off, something had to be done to silence Luther. From the other side, the theses sparked a major response because they articulated and gave focus to a protest that had been growing under the surface for a long time. The resentment that so many had been feeling toward the abuses of the church hierarchy now could come out into the open through support of this new-found

champion.

THE FIRE SPREADS (1517-1525)

Luther had no idea what all the commotion was about. He had no more desire to start a religious movement than he had to join a circus. He remained certain that if the pope could only be convinced of the abuses indulgence sellers were perpetrating in his name, he would quickly put a stop to them. Fortunately, Luther's supporters were not quite so naive. When Leo summoned Luther to Rome in 1518, Frederick the Wise arranged to have the summons canceled. The pope then sent Cardinal Cajetan to examine Luther. The conference was cordial, and Luther became convinced more than ever that the pope did not approve of Tetzel's actions.

Tetzel became the scapegoat for the whole business. Cajetan criticized him severely, and he became the butt of jokes all over Germany. One favorite story told about a man who came to Tetzel and asked if he could buy an indulgence for a sin not yet committed. Tetzel readily agreed, as long as he paid in advance. The man quickly purchased the indulgence, and later Tetzel left for the next town. During his journey, a robber jumped him, beat him up and stole all his money. The robber was none other than the man who had bought the indulgence earlier. He thereupon informed poor Tetzel that this sin was the one he had in mind when he purchased the indulgence! Things got so bad that even Luther later wrote a letter to Tetzel to encourage him and tell him that it was his superiors who were really at fault.

The next year, in 1519, another papal representative named Karl von Miltitz visited Luther and arranged a truce of sorts. Luther agreed to keep quiet about indulgences if his opponents would do the same. He even wrote a very submissive letter to the pope. The truce didn't last long, however. Later that year, someone finally accepted Luther's challenge to debate. Johann Eck, a noted humanist and professor at the University of Ingolstadt, agreed to debate Luther, but wanted the topic to be broader than simply indulgences (as it turned out, indulgences were hardly mentioned). The reason

for this was that he wanted to trap Luther into some declaration of heresy that could be used against him. The debate was held at Leipzig, and though both sides claimed victory, Eck achieved his purpose. During the debate, he maneuvered Luther into an open criticism of the Council of Constance, along with an affirmation of the truth of some of John Huss' teachings. This was heresy indeed, and the pope now had a handle by which he could grasp the troublesome Wittenberg monk. The coin had two sides, however. Luther was not far from Bohemia, and his defense of Huss gained him a large number of new supporters. He was becoming more popular by the day, and Eck soon found it difficult to walk the streets in safety.

The press had been the chief weapon of the Reformation, and it became even more so in 1520. In that year, Luther published a series of pamphlets in German that were soon circulated all over the country. These included *Address to the German Nobility*, in which he encouraged the secular rulers to undertake a reform of the church and society, since the hierarchy refused to do so. He based this on the concept of the priesthood of all believers. The princes were to cleanse the church of unbiblical practices, but do so without violence. In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, he attacked the sacramental system, maintaining that Scripture only sanctions two sacraments rather than seven. He also criticized the doctrine of transubstantiation as an innovation in the church. In *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, he tried to do two things. On the positive side, he asserted that each man was free to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself, and need submit to the hierarchy only insofar as it was in accord with the Bible. On the negative side, he emphasized that freedom means nothing apart from faith and love, thus attempting to silence the critics who had insisted that his teachings would lead to anarchy, where each man would do what was right in his own eyes.

Meanwhile, the pope was writing as well. While Luther was writing pamphlets, Leo was drafting a bull of excommunication - *Exsurge domini*, the document quoted at the beginning of the chapter. By this time, however, it was clear to Luther that the only solution was

to break away from the corruption of the hierarchy. Calling Leo the Antichrist, he posted another announcement in Wittenberg, calling all to a public burning of the papal bull.

By this time, Luther had become a national hero. Leo simply could not deal with a man who had such enormous popular support. He turned instead to the newly crowned Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. While Charles was a devout Catholic, he had good reason to mistrust the pope. Leo had actively worked for the election of his rival Francis I of France as Holy Roman Emperor, and had shown little enthusiasm for the religious reforms introduced into Spain through the Inquisition. He badly wanted to put a stop to the turmoil in Germany, however, so he agreed to summon Luther to a meeting of the German parliament, or Diet.

In 1521 the Diet was to meet in the city of Worms. Luther's friends begged him not to go, and reminded him of what had happened to John Huss when he had depended on an emperor's safe-conduct. The fact that Frederick the Wise also offered a safe-conduct convinced Luther that he was on his home turf, however, and he agreed to go. Like Huss, Luther hoped to have the opportunity to explain his teachings before the assembled nobility of Germany, but also like Huss, that opportunity was denied. The Diet only permitted Luther to answer two questions: "Did you write these books?" and "Are you willing to recant their contents?" He readily affirmed that the books were indeed his, but asked for a day to consider the matter of recantation. This request was not because of any uncertainty on Luther's part - that night he wrote to one of his supporters that he did not intend to recant a single word. He simply wanted to make sure that what he was affirming was according to Scripture and not simply the product of his own imagination. The next day, he returned to the Diet and asserted that he simply could not recant what he had written, for to do so would be to deny the truth revealed by God in his Word. While he agreed to give up any views that could be shown to be wrong from Scripture, he refused to submit to the edicts of popes or councils.

Charles V condemned Luther as an

outlaw, but insisted on honoring the safe-conduct (though on his deathbed he said that his failure to do away with Luther was the greatest regret of his life). On the way back from Worms to Wittenberg, a group of men surrounded Luther's carriage, seized him and carried him off. They had been sent by Frederick the Wise, and they took Luther to the Wartburg Castle, where he remained in hiding for almost a year. Not even his friends knew where he was, and some of them thought he had been killed by agents of the pope or emperor. Why Frederick protected Luther continues to be somewhat of a mystery. The two men never met. Frederick certainly valued Luther as the most famous professor in the university he had founded, and heartily approved of the monk's denunciation of papal practices in Germany. Yet he never clearly understood the theological basis for Luther's activity; to the end of his days, he maintained one of the largest relic collections in Europe (it consisted of over 5,000 relics; a pilgrim viewing them all could earn almost two *million* years off his time in purgatory).

Luther lived in the Wartburg disguised as a nobleman named Junker George. While he was there, he went on occasional hunting trips, wrote letters to his friends to let them know he was safe (though he didn't tell them where he was), but spent most of his time translating the New Testament into German. This translation, based on the Greek text of Erasmus, became as important in shaping the German language as the King James Version was later to be for English. He later added the Old Testament, so that the entire Bible was available in German by 1534.

While Luther was in hiding, the Reformation almost collapsed before it even had a chance to get started. Luther's followers tried to provide leadership while he was gone, but they lacked his sense of judgment, and soon Wittenberg was in chaos. The two most prominent among Luther's followers were Philip Melancthon and Andreas von Carlstadt. Melancthon was a great scholar, and wrote the first Protestant work of systematic theology, *Loci Communes* ("Theological Commonplaces"), but was not a leader of men. Carlstadt, on the other hand, was full of fire, but had absolutely no

common sense. He immediately established himself as the leader of the church in Wittenberg. He encouraged the magistrates to remove every remnant of Catholicism from the worship of the church. The people began to destroy works of art and drive monks from their monasteries. Meanwhile, Carlstadt began referring to himself as Brother Andreas. Things only got worse when a group of "prophets" arrived from the nearby town of Zwickau. Thomas Münzer, Nicholas Storch, and Marcus Stübner claimed that they had received revelations directly from God, and that the existing order was soon to be overthrown. They taught community of property, rejected infant baptism, and advocated the violent overthrow of everything Catholic.

When Luther heard about this, he knew he could not remain in hiding any longer. Despite the sentence of death that hung over him (and remained there for the rest of his life), he would not allow the Reformation that he had begun to disintegrate into fanaticism. He returned to Wittenberg and soon brought things under control. Carlstadt accused Luther of compromising his principles, and eventually went into exile. He never seemed satisfied wherever he went, despite being openly received in Switzerland. He died a bitter man, but his ideas did have somewhat of an influence on the Anabaptists. Luther, by stepping in and restoring order, assured that the Reformation would focus on theology rather than practice. He was determined to reject only those things that were directly against Scripture, and to this day the Lutheran Church retains many of the Catholic practices that Luther considered to be compatible with Scripture, though not contained in it.

Meanwhile, Charles V was trying another tactic to gain control of the situation in Germany. When Leo died in 1521, Charles used his influence to get his Dutch tutor elected to the papacy as Adrian VI. Adrian was fully committed to the Spanish reforms, but was wholly incapable of carrying them out. To begin with, his notion that church leaders should live simple and pious lives did not sit well with the members of the curia. Furthermore, Adrian was an outsider - he didn't even know how to speak

Italian. As a result, any attempt he made to change things in Rome was quickly sidetracked by the cardinals behind his back; when he died in 1523, many suspected that he had been poisoned. The experience with Adrian was one that the cardinals had no desire to repeat; he was the last non-Italian pope elected by the College of Cardinals until the election of the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II in 1978.

Luther, meanwhile, was in the process of losing the support of many who had followed him for reasons that had little to do with his theology. The humanists had stood to one side and cheered while Luther skewered the pope and his cardinals, but when he led an open schism, they were unwilling to follow. Besides, they were uncomfortable with his theology. Humanists valued the freedom of the individual man above everything. When Luther wrote about freedom, they were behind him one hundred percent. However, it soon became clear that Luther had adopted the Augustinian doctrine of predestination. Like Augustine, he taught that man was incapable of doing anything to please God, and that therefore salvation was entirely a work of God's grace, to which man could contribute nothing, not even his assent. To the humanists, this sounded like a denial of free will. Luther, however, was not denying man's volitional freedom - his ability to make responsible choices, he was denying man's moral freedom - his capacity to choose God apart from God's grace. Erasmus voiced this humanistic discontent when he penned *The Freedom of the Will* in 1524. Luther responded by writing *The Bondage of the Will*, which clarified his theological position, but alienated many of his humanistic supporters.

At about the same time, he lost the support of the German peasants, also because they misunderstood his teachings about freedom. They saw in Luther's teachings about the priesthood of all believers an affirmation of the fundamental equality of all men before God. For them, this meant they now had a theological justification for throwing off the oppression under which the German nobility had kept them for centuries. A Peasants' Revolt broke out in 1525, led by Thomas Münzer. Luther at first

sympathized with the peasants, and advised them to proceed slowly. When they began burning and looting across the countryside, however, he wrote a pamphlet condemning their rebellion against authority established by God (*Against the Thieving and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*), and encouraged the authorities to put down the revolt by force. The nobles needed little encouragement in that area, and over a hundred thousand peasants were slaughtered. As a result, Luther lost the support of the peasantry of southern Germany, who viewed him as a traitor; many returned to Catholicism, and some joined the new Reformed movement that had recently begun in Switzerland.

The year 1525 also marked an important transition in Luther's life. That year he married a former nun named Katherine von Bora. He had always resisted marriage because of the threat of death hanging over his head, but he finally succumbed, both to set a good example for others, and because Katherine made it clear to him that she was more than willing to take the step. She provided firm support for him for the rest of his life, managed the funds of the household (he time and again refused to take any money for the publication of his books, and was so generous that he would have given everything away to the needy had not "Katie" kept an eye on things), and bore him six children. Their family conversations at mealtime became the basis for *Table Talk*, a record of Luther's often-rambling dinner discourses as transcribed by his students.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL (1525-1555)

Though Luther remained an influential figure in Germany until his death in 1546, control of the movement passed from his hands after 1525, and into the hands of the Lutheran princes like Philip of Hesse and the theologians like Melancthon. Charles V still wanted to bring the German situation under control, but he was preoccupied with war in France and conflicts with the new pope, to say nothing of the conquest of the New World. Thus when the German Diet met at Speier in 1526, they simply agreed to maintain the status quo, thus in effect giving the

Lutheran princes the authority to continue making changes in their domains. By the time a second Diet met at Speier in 1529, however, Charles had made peace with the pope and the French, and was ready to deal with the Lutherans. He took a hard-line position, insisting that Lutheranism spread no farther. He outlawed Lutheranism in Catholic lands, and demanded that the Lutheran princes tolerate Catholicism in their domains. The Lutheran princes protested against this unfair treatment, and thus earned for themselves the name of Protestants, which later came to be applied to the entire movement. The Lutheran princes earned the right to present their case before another Diet at Augsburg in 1530. They commissioned the scholarly and tactful Melancthon to prepare a statement of Lutheran belief; the result was the Augsburg Confession. The Lutheran position was weakened because they were unable to come to terms with the newer branch of Protestantism that had sprung up in Switzerland and spread into southern Germany. The Swiss reformers, led by Ulrich Zwingli, were far more radical than the Germans, and insisted that worship in the church should contain only those elements commanded in Scripture. They thus rejected every aspect of Catholic worship on which the Bible was silent. The Lutheran prince Philip of Hesse realized that if the Protestant house were divided, it would soon fall, and invited Luther, Zwingli, and some of their supporters to his castle in Marburg to resolve their differences. This Marburg Colloquy (1529) proved to be a failure. Though the Germans and Swiss could agree on fourteen of fifteen articles, they could not come to terms on the Lord's Supper. Luther insisted that Christ's body was truly present in the sacrament along with the bread (sometimes called "consubstantiation"), while Zwingli believed that the Supper was a memorial service to celebrate Christ's death, and that the bread and wine merely symbolized Christ's body and blood. The disagreement was so bitter that soon the two sides were using the same kind of language to describe one another that they had earlier reserved for Catholics.

By the time they arrived at the Diet of Augsburg, they were totally incapable of

presenting a united front against the Catholic opposition. While the Lutherans submitted the Augsburg Confession, the Reformed submitted two other confessions to explain their beliefs. Charles, who was now determined to enforce conformity at any cost, rejected all of them. The Lutheran princes formed the League of Smalcald to defend themselves against the attack they felt sure would come. Charles soon became embroiled in other wars, however, and was unable to devote any attention to Germany until the year of Luther's death.

Luther lived out the rest of his days in Wittenberg, suffering from poor health and becoming increasingly crotchety and violent in his verbal outbursts against his enemies. He exercised notably bad judgment in the incident involving the marriage of Philip of Hesse in 1540. Philip had contracted an arranged marriage at age nineteen, and his wife had been both faithful and fruitful, while Philip had engaged in constant extramarital flings, like most of the aristocrats of his day. His immorality genuinely bothered his conscience, but he felt unable to control himself. He therefore asked Luther's blessing to marry a seventeen-year-old girl with whom he had become infatuated, having already gotten permission from both his wife and the girl's parents. Luther reluctantly agreed, arguing that polygamy was better than divorce (he had given the same advice to Henry VIII fifteen years earlier). Since plural marriage was against the law, however, Luther told Philip to keep the marriage a secret. Word soon got out, though, and the scandal did much to damage Luther's credibility and reputation (despite the fact that some Catholic theologians had given the same advice).

Meanwhile, the pope had finally gotten around to calling a general council of the church at Trent in 1545. Protestants had been asking for a council for years to discuss their grievances, but the Conciliar Movement of the fifteenth century had taught the popes to be cautious. Thus the Council of Trent was called only after the pope had assured himself of complete control of the outcome (largely through the instrumentality of the Jesuits, founded a decade earlier). When the delegates got word of

Luther's death in 1546, some said that it was a pity that they didn't have the pleasure of burning him at the stake. Obviously the Protestants could hope for little from such a council.

In 1546, Charles V finally got around to using military force against the Smalcald League. Because of treachery on the part of some of the Lutheran princes, Charles was able to defeat the League and imprison Philip of Hesse. War soon broke out again, however, and a compromise settlement was reached at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. The treaty established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, meaning that the prince had the right to determine the religion of his people. The treaty guaranteed that those whose religion differed from that of their prince would be free to sell their property and move. The result was that Germany became a religious checkerboard. This not only set the stage for the Thirty Years' War, but also prevented the unification of Germany until late in the nineteenth century. The Peace of Augsburg only recognized Catholicism and Lutheranism as legal; the Reformed Church was still not granted toleration in Germany. Charles, meanwhile, abdicated his throne and in frustration retired to a monastery.

Thus the Peace of Augsburg institutionalized state control of the Lutheran Church. Luther himself had wanted congregational control as an expression of his belief in the priesthood of all believers, but also realized that an uneducated peasantry simply was in no position to run a church. Since the bishops for the most part remained loyal to Catholicism, the only option left was the nobility. Thus what Luther considered a practical expedient passed into the structure of the Lutheran Church.

THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL WARFARE (1555-1648)

The interval between the Peace of Augsburg and the Thirty Years' War was one of theological conflict among German Lutherans. After Luther's death, the mantle of leadership fell to Melancthon, but he was insufficient for the task. He had such a strong desire for peace and reconciliation that he seemed incapable of

taking a strong stand on anything, and appeared to many to be willing to give away the essentials of the faith in order to purchase peace. As a result, he lost the respect of many of his fellow Lutherans. In many ways, they were right. Though he held to the basic tenets of Lutheranism, he compromised in some key areas. In an attempt to make peace with the Reformed, he supported the teaching of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, causing Lutherans to accuse him of being a crypto-Calvinist. To make peace with Catholics, he declared himself willing to accept certain Catholic practices that Luther had rejected, and his frequent use of pagan philosophers made many suspicious. He moved closer to the humanists by allowing room for the human will to cooperate with God in salvation, thus vacillating on perhaps the most basic doctrine of the Reformation.

Melancthon's major opponent in these disputes was Matthias Flacius, a Wittenberg professor of Hebrew who was as prickly as Melancthon was peaceful. He himself got into trouble, and was eventually forced into exile, for teaching that the image of God was lost by man at the time of the Fall. The German Lutherans finally decided to settle some of these matters, and produced in 1577 the Formula of Concord, under the leadership of Martin Chemnitz, who forged numerous compromises between the strict Lutherans and the followers of Melancthon. While these disputes were raging, the Reformed branch of Protestantism was making steady gains in southern Germany under the leadership of Martin Bucer, Zacharius Ursinus, and Caspar Olevianus.

In 1618 the Thirty Years' War broke out, and the Protestants stopped fighting one another theologically long enough to join against the Catholics on the battlefield. The war started with the infamous Defenestration of Prague, when Bohemian Protestants, unhappy with their treatment by the emperor's Catholic counselors, threw several of them from a window into a moat eighty feet below. Though no one was seriously hurt, the insult was enough to start one of the most devastating wars in the history of Europe. By the time it was over, as much as half the

population of central Europe had perished, and the countryside had been so badly devastated that Georgia after General Sherman got done with it would have looked relatively unscathed. The war originally pitted Protestants against Catholics, but soon political considerations overwhelmed the religious issues. At first, things went badly for the Protestants, and the Jesuits nearly succeeded in eradicating Protestantism in Austria, Hungary, and Bavaria. Then Cardinal Richelieu, the power behind the French throne, brought France in on the Protestant side to prevent the German emperor from gaining too much power and territory. Later, the tide was turned by the entrance into the war of the Lutheran King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, whose military genius won battle after battle for the Protestants. The war finally ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, which redrew the map of Europe along the same basic lines it retains today, and gave legal recognition to the Reformed Church alongside Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Thus the fiction of a united Europe was dead, and the fiction of a united organizational church along with it. Protestantism became a political reality that the Catholic Church could not deny, no matter how strongly it continued to refuse to grant it recognition.

MAKING DRY BONES LIVE

There are many important lessons to be learned from church history, but perhaps now is the time to pause for a moment to consider what we should *not* learn from our study of the subject. A good illustration of my point is found in the following statement by John Eck (not the same Eck of the Leipzig debate), addressed to Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521:

"Your plea to be heard from Scripture is the one always made by heretics. You do

nothing but renew the errors of Wycliffe and Huss. How will the Jews, how will the Turks, exult to hear Christians discussing whether they have been wrong all these years! Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith, instituted by Christ the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the world by the apostles, sealed by the red blood of the martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the Church in which all our fathers believed until death and gave to us as an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden by the pope and the emperor to discuss lest there be no end of debate."

Eck, in short, used the history of the church to attempt to prove that Luther was wrong, not because he contradicted the Bible, but because he contradicted the great Christians of the past. History is valuable, and can be a great aid in ascertaining truth. It is not, however, infallible. Only God is infallible, along with the Word He has revealed to us. That Word is the only standard by which we may judge truth.

It is this principle that is both the glory and the Achilles' heel of Protestantism. Because the Word is infallible, all human judgments must be tested against it. But because man is a fallible interpreter, there will always be debates about what the Word means. History cannot settle those debates, though it can shed light on them. As Christianity enters its twenty-first century, it must do so with firm adherence to what the Bible says - not to what someone in the history of the church said it meant. The study of the history of the church should not make us followers of men, but convince us that the only way for the church to prosper is as its people become followers of Christ.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

1. What teachings did Luther share with the pre-reformers?
2. What teaching of Luther set him apart from those who had preceded him?
3. Why did Luther find monastery life unsatisfactory?
4. Why was Luther's visit to Rome a significant turning point in his life?
5. How did Luther's understanding of justification differ from that of the Catholic Church?
6. When Johann Tetzel sold indulgences in Germany, for what was he trying to raise money?
7. According to Catholic teaching, what could an indulgence accomplish?
8. In what ways was Tetzel deviating from Catholic teaching on indulgences?
9. What were the Ninety-five Theses?
10. In what ways did Frederick the Wise protect Luther between 1517 and 1525?
11. Why did the Ninety-five Theses stir up such a fuss?
12. In what way did Eck trap Luther during the Leipzig debate of 1519?
13. What were the main topics addressed by Luther in the pamphlets he wrote in 1520?
14. Which of Luther's three pamphlets do you think the Catholic Church found most objectionable, and why?
15. Why was Charles V unsuccessful in putting a stop to the spread of Lutheranism?
16. In what sense was the Diet of Worms a triumph for Luther, and in what sense was it a disappointment?
17. Why did Frederick the Wise kidnap Luther after the Diet of Worms?
18. How did Luther's followers almost destroy the Reformation while he was in hiding?
19. Why was Luther's translation of the Bible into German important?
20. What were the major contributions of Melancthon to the development of Lutheranism?
21. Who were the Zwickau Prophets, and what did they teach?
22. How did the Lutheran and Reformed Protestants differ on their views of worship?
23. Why did Adrian VI fail in his efforts to reform the abuses in the Roman curia?

24. Why did Luther lose the support of many European humanists?
25. Why did Luther oppose the Peasants' Revolt despite sympathizing with the desire of the peasants to rid themselves of their yoke of oppression?
26. What was accomplished at the two Diets of Speier and the Diet of Augsburg?
27. How did the followers of Luther come to be called Protestants?
28. What was the Marburg Colloquy?
29. How did the Lutheran and Reformed Protestants differ in their views of the Lord's Supper?
30. What was the League of Smalcald?
31. Why did Luther agree to the polygamous marriage of Philip of Hesse?
32. What is the meaning of *cuius regio, eius religio*?
33. Why did Luther favor state control of the church?
34. Why did Melanchthon turn out to be an ineffective leader after the death of Luther?
35. What was the Defenestration of Prague?
36. In what senses were the opponents in the Thirty Years' War not strictly divided along religious lines?
37. Why can church history never be used as an infallible guide to the truth?