



THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE

June 25, 2017

First Article

Why did the Lutheran Reformation happen? There is much more to it than to just say---Martin Luther wanted to correct the non-Scriptural teachings of the church in his day.

During the period known as the dark ages, the Catholic Church became the dominant force in society. Kings couldn't be crowned unless the Pope said ok. Church teaching did not center on salvation by grace through faith in Jesus but rather on things you were required to do to earn salvation.

A merchant in Lyons, France, Peter Waldo, about the year 1160 had parts of the Bible translated into the French language and gained many followers but they were persecuted by Rome and Pope Lucius III because they believed that not only priests, but all Christians had the right to teach, admonish and comfort. They denied the teaching of purgatory and refused to attend the Catholic confession. They were driven from their homes, and many were cruelly tortured, and murdered.

In early 1300, an English professor, John Wyclif, had the courage to expose false teachings of the Catholic Church. He had the Bible translated into English. He also sent out preachers, two by two, in course robes, barefoot, to explain the Word of God. Pope Gregory was furious but could do nothing. Wyclif was called before Church tribunals but could not be silenced, openly stating that Christ is the head of the Church, not the pope and he also said that the pope was the antichrist of whom Scripture speaks. John Wyclif is often called the "Morning Star of the Reformation."

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John Hus was a professor at the University of Prague in Bohemia. The teachings of Wyclif had been brought to Bohemia by students at the University of Oxford. Hus was a popular preacher whom the people gladly listened to. He spoke out against miracle cures at various catholic shrines, the collection of fees by priests for Baptisms, hearing of confessions, for the administration of the Lord's Supper, and for funerals. He was hated by the clergy. He said that indulgences were useless, that Christ, not the pope is the head of the church, that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, and that the Bible is higher than all the doctrines of the Church.

Hus was imprisoned and treated most shamefully. His trial was held in conjunction with the Council of Constance in 1415. They demanded that he recant everything he had taught. This he refused to do. They burned him at the stake on July 6, 1415, his 46th birthday.

Savonarola did most of his work in Florence, Italy, attacking the sinful lives of all, including the clergy and the pope. Pope Alexander VI tried to quiet him by offering to make him a cardinal. Savonarola could not be bribed and he was condemned to death by burning at the stake. On May 23, 1498, he was martyred. But, before he died, he prophesied: "the reformation of the Church will come soon; already the light begins to dawn."

Martin Luther, in 1498, was 14 years old. God was preparing the general he wanted as His instrument to put the teachings of grace, faith and the Savior back into the teachings of the Church. There were many others before Luther who spoke out against the abuses of the catholic church of the day.

It was becoming clear to many people that a change was needed to bring the church back to the teachings of the Apostles. The church had become too secularized, with an emphasis on money.

When Luther's father Hans was very sick, a priest was called and he urged Hans to make his peace with God by assigning all his money to the clergy. Hans said he would leave it to his family who needed it more.

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The clergy also charged money for their services in spite of the words of Scripture in Matthew 10 where Jesus says to His disciples: “Freely you have received, freely give.” And Jesus also says in Luke 12: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.” Peter also warns us in his first letter, chapter 5: “Be not greedy for money, but be eager to serve.”

After 1450 it became easier for Martin Luther and others to make their views known about a need for reform in the church because of an invention in Germany. Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press which made it easier and less expensive to spread ideas. That was the email of its day.

Many more people were becoming aware of the state of affairs in the church and the conditions became ripe for reformation.

The Small catechism, printed in 1529, became the teaching tool in the soon to be called Lutheran Church. Countless numbers of 7th and 8th graders have learned the 6 chief parts in the Catechism, all drawn from the Bible: the 10 Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession and the Sacrament of the Altar.

Students learn that salvation is by faith in Jesus, not by your works. Works are a sign of faith.

It’s an instruction book of questions and answers drawn up by Dr. Martin Luther so that the students could say with confidence-----this is what we believe.

Many public schools are teaching evolution to our youngsters today, expecting the kids to believe that our world came into existence thru a big bang; that man evolved from a simple organism to a human being with a very complex makeup. Not that God made man from dust and woman from man’s rib.

NASA sends up space vehicles to other planets to see if they can find the building blocks of life, thinking that if all the elements are there, life can spring up. We teach that God is the creator of life; it doesn’t just happen if the conditions are suitable.

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This is what we believe.

THE FIRST ARTICLE

I BELIEVE IN God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.