

Name: _____

Modern European History

Date: _____

Unit 2 – Reformations Martin Luther After the Diet of Worms

I am Finished!

After he left the negotiations room at Worms, Luther said, “I am finished.” And he was for the time finished; Luther was dismissed, and not arrested because he had a letter of safe conduct, which guaranteed him 21 days of safe travel through the land. He headed home on April 25.

When Luther and the princes who supported him left Worms, Emperor Charles V imposed an Imperial Act: Luther was declared an outlaw (he may be killed by anyone without threat of punishment). On the trip home, Elector Friedrich the Wise allowed Luther to be kidnapped on May 4 (Luther knew about it beforehand). This took place on the one hand to guarantee Luther’s safety and on the other hand to let him disappear for a short while; there were even rumors of Luther’s death. This action also helped the Elector not to endanger himself because he could have been held liable for protecting an outlaw and heretic. Luther was taken to the secluded Wartburg and the Reformation had time to stabilize and strengthen itself.

Luther as Junker Jörg at the Wartburg

On May 4, 1521 Elector Friedrich the Wise allowed Luther to be brought to the Wartburg near Eisenach. The powerful Elector hoped that taking Luther out of the limelight would weaken the constant attacks against the Reformation.

Luther lived incognito at the Wartburg; he called himself Junker Jörg (Knight George) and “grew his hair and a beard.”

Luther suffered from the exile “in the empire of outlaws” and complained of various physical ailments. In addition the many fights with Satan, recounted both by himself and friends, like the proverbial Throwing of the Inkwell must have been difficult times for him to work through.

Since his childhood Luther was pestered by devils, evil spirits, and demons. He reported about such occurrences during his later life as well, these fears of being attacked increased especially during his time of seclusion at the Wartburg. Luther ascribed his depressions and mood swings to these ‘evil spirits.’ This constant fear of Satan is normal for the late-Middle Ages and rooted in the religious upbringing within his home and at school.

Luther defended himself against this constant hostility through prayer, ‘happy song’ or more rigorously: by throwing his inkwell. Luther, awakened by the devil during the night, supposedly courageously defended himself against Satan by throwing an inkwell at him.

Luther reported that he was often pestered by the devil during his stay at the Wartburg. His statement that he had ‘driven the devil away with ink’ is usually ascribed to his translation of the Bible rather than nightly fights at the Wartburg.

Translation of the New Testament

Luther devoted himself to a new task. He translated the New Testament from its original Greek into German within eleven weeks; the work was later edited by Melanchthon and other specialists and printed in 1522. This so-called “September Testament” was tremendously popular in Protestant areas and as a result made a large contribution to the development of a standardized written German-language.

Later, parts of the Old Testament were also translated. In 1534, a complete German language Bible was printed and also had a large circulation.

Happenings in Wittenberg during Luther’s Absence

Reformation theories were put into practice in Wittenberg which had become the center of the Reformation. In protest, three priests married in 1521 and the worship service was also altered. Luther watched these changes favorably from a distance, however, he stayed in close contact with his supporters in Wittenberg through letters.

It is important to emphasize the influence of Philipp Melanchthon and his work “Loci communes” (1521) which was the first formulation of Luther’s teachings and was also a foundation for the theological works of the Reformation.

Luther Returned to Wittenberg and took over the ‘Scepter of the Reformation’

After the first iconoclastic movement in Wittenberg, Luther returned from exile. He even annulled some of the reformatory changes that he saw as dangerous because they would force people into a new belief which he did not want to do.

Luther returned to Wittenberg on March 6, 1521 and with his ‘fasting sermons’ brought the Reformation movement of which he thought had gotten too radical back to his moderate line.

The outlaw’s return was dangerous, but the reformers achieved partial success as far as Luther’s safety was concerned: the Second Imperial Diet of Nuremberg declared the banishment of Luther as unenforceable. In 1524, however, at the Third Imperial Diet of Nuremberg the banishment was renewed, but the Reformation had rooted itself so deeply by then, that it seemed unlikely that Luther would be arrested. In the years that followed, Luther concentrated on spreading his beliefs through writings and sermons.

In the work *Of the Worldly Authorities, and How Much Obedience One Owes Them*, Luther formulated the basis for his political ethics. Luther’s moderate outlook comes to the foreground once again.

From 1522-1524 Luther’s preaching duties receive priority; he went on preaching trips throughout central Germany and during the fall of 1522 even preached in Erfurt and Weimar. Luther felt it was important to proclaim and illuminate the Gospel to the people. With his writings *On the Order of Worship* and *Formula missae* Luther carried out his reforms in the worship service.

A new order of social service was achieved with the use of a community moneybox: the social and educational responsibilities of the community were taken over by the income from the old church.

The reform of the school system was one of the most important of Luther’s duties. Some of the professors and students with their interpretations of Luther’s teachings had almost shut down schools completely. The Reformation, however, needed well-educated pastors, teachers and civil servants. In his work “To the Councilmen of all Cities within German Territories; Christian Schools Ought to be Kept Up” Luther stated that authorities are obligated to guarantee a good education for the youth.

Luther and the Peasants War

Once again the Reformation found new enemies, this time radicals within its own ranks, called Swarmers and Mobbing Spirits by Luther.

Thomas Münzer, priest and former follower of Luther became a leader of peasant uprisings in Central Germany in 1525 which had already flared up in southwest Germany in 1524. The peasants, who called on the power of Luther’s teachings, demanded more just (economical) conditions, even if that meant the downfall of the authorities.

In his sermons, which he also held in the areas of unrest, Luther stood firm against using force; he only received refusals from the peasants who had hoped for his support. Luther nevertheless encouraged them to free themselves from the spiritual despotism of the authorities not from their economic or political influence.

From these experiences came the desolate work “*Against the Murderous and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*”, which is still a controversial work. The peasants were defeated on May 15 at the battle of Frankenhausen.

Luther’s Role in Religious Discussions and his Relationship to Reformers in Other Movements.

Luther’s moderate approach, his attitude towards the insurgent peasants and his compromises with sovereigns caused him to be accused by all sides. On the other hand, Luther was constantly under pressure to defend the Reformation politically and theologically against the Roman Catholic faction. Many of his ex-supporters did not want to help bear the burden of this thin line Luther was walking.

Already in 1524-26 Luther had fought with the Dutch humanist Erasmus von Rotterdam which caused lots of stress to the reformation and ended in a split among humanists who had previously welcomed Luther’s reforms.

The difference of opinion between Luther and Karlstadt or between Luther and the Swiss reformer Zwingli about the role of communion in the worship service led to the Marburg Religious Discussions of 1529, where only one partial agreement was reached.

Luther and Melancthon were critically opposed to the Baptist movement; however, when the Baptist's empire in Münster was overthrown in 1534-1535, the two condemned the treatment of the Baptist.

Luther's Last Years of Life (1540-46)

During his last years of life Luther fought against many physical ailments. The death of his daughter Magdalena, in 1542, was also very difficult for him.

Luther's relationship to people with different beliefs, especially the Jews, deteriorated drastically during these years. His 1523 work *Jesus was born a Jew* showed a conciliatory attitude; however, in later years the aging reformer sentenced all who did not want to convert to his beliefs. The strongly anti-semitic work *Jews and their Lies* (1543) came out during this period.

Luther continued to lead the Reformation in its fight against its enemies even in the last years of his life. With his 1545 work *Against the Papacy at Rome Founded by the Devil!* he performed his last blow against the Roman Church.

Luther continued his preaching duties despite his various disappointments and ailments. Luther continued to teach at Wittenberg University until the end of his life; his last lecture ended with the words: "*I am weak, I cannot go on.*"

Luther set off on his last trip on January 17, 1546, to his birthplace Eisleben (only in German). Although he was drawn with illness, he went to settle a dispute among the Mansfeld Counts. The negotiations ended successfully.

Luther did not have the energy to return to Wittenberg. He died on February 18, 1546 in Eisleben. On his deathbed, he prayed, "Into your hands, I command my spirit. You have saved me, Father, you faithful God."

After the coffin was displayed for two days in Eisleben, Luther's body was transported through Halle and Bitterfeld back to Wittenberg.

On February 22 Luther was laid to rest in the Castle Church in Wittenberg; Johannes Bugenhagen held the funeral oration.

Analysis of Excerpts from Luther's 95 Theses

33. Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him;

36. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.

43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons;

47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of pardons is a matter of free will, and not of commandment.

62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God. 66. The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.

67. The indulgences which the preachers cry as the "greatest graces" are known to be truly such, in so far as they promote gain.

75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God -- this is madness.

76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar on another sheet of paper.

1. What does Luther say is the true treasure of the church?
2. What does Luther say about buying pardons (indulgences)?
3. Judging from these excerpts, what is Luther's opinion on the position of the pope?
4. Rather than buying pardons, what does Luther believe people should spend their money on?
5. What does Luther believe a Christian must have for a sin to be forgiven?
6. What can papal pardons do (or not do) according to Martin Luther?
7. After reading these excerpts, what does Luther's motivation seem to be after reading excerpts from his controversial text?
8. After reading these excerpts, do you feel the pope had just cause to excommunicate Luther? Why or why not?