



Martin Luther and the Reformation of Five Hundred Years Ago Beginning of the Modern World

Decisions that one makes, teachings that are promulgated, actions that are taken, all have consequences for the times that follow. Ideas, the ways people think, influence change in the times. Certain moments in history have been noted for such that had great impact on later times. The 16th century was one of those hinge times when the course of human events took a new direction. The Middle Ages were dead. A new era was coming on. Some historians see the birth of the Modern world in the times of Reformation, and the Reformation era itself was a significant part of the Renaissance movement that marked the end of the Middle Ages. Indeed, in our time it seems that the 500 years of the Modern world are coming to an end. Now it's Postmodern, and that is yet to be defined and adequately described. Some features will be listed in this review.

God governs the course of this world's events. Our God is the Lord of history. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one. To this God we attribute creation, redemption and the saving of the world (John 3:16). God raises up influential people as he will. Here is one line of such movers and shakers to consider as we celebrate again the Lutheran Reformation of October 31, 1517, the eve of the observance of All Saints' Day, November 1. (Hence, Hallowe'en, or All Hallows Eve.)

1. The Beginnings of the New Testament Christian Church

Jesus came and changed the world. The Gospels tell his story. The Christ, Son of God, became incarnate to take on atonement for a fallen race. He lives as Lord of the church and will come again as Lord of all when he has created a new heaven and a new earth. He has dispatched his redeemed, his elect saints, to make disciples and to be "salt of the earth," "lights for the world," a refuge "city" where the lost can find safety and salvation. The Gospels, and the church's creeds, tell us that Jesus suffered in this world. He said that his followers would also suffer, as he did, in a hostile world where sin, Satan and death rule, while God invades it with the truth, his kingdom, and his faithful ones.

Saint Peter took lead of the first generation of the Christian church. His First Epistle presents instruction for the newly baptized. This is the Christian life that makes an impact for good on a pagan culture, to transform it. 1 Peter 2:9-10. The Table of Duties, 2:1-3:12, trains for life in our ordinary time.

Saint Paul was called by the Lord, in the middle of the first century, to be his chief theologian and his missionary to carry the Gospel to the nations. His letters give practical guidance to the churches of his generation. His Epistle to the Roman Christians lays out the doctrines of the Christian faith, instructions for personal spiritual growth and for the life that Christians have together in the churches.

Saint John left a highly spiritual Gospel and inspiring teachings in his letters and the Revelation at the end of the first century.

2. When the Christian faith became the official Roman religion.

Augustine was born 354 in what is today Algeria, son of a pagan father and a devout Christian mother Monica. His heritage is said to have been Berber, Latin, and Phoenician, and the family were Roman citizens. He grew up pagan, despite his mother's efforts at teaching him the Christian faith. He lived an unbounded early life, and later said that he would pray, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet!" He met Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Under his influence he was converted and baptized in 387. (That man was also a great teacher of the church.) He combined classical philosophy with Christian orthodoxy, especially Saint Paul. He was ordained a priest in 391. He

founded a monastic order. A powerful teacher and bishop, he shaped how the European world looked at everything in the world for a thousand years. Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk. Augustine defined the sacraments as God's word put together with physical elements and they could convey God's grace, established the doctrine of original sin, which he described as man turned in on the self (*incurvatus in se*), salvation by the grace of God alone, the doctrine of just war when that became necessary, etc. He died in 430.

3. The Age of Reformation.

John Wycliffe 1328-1384, in Yorkshire, England, was hailed as, "The morning star of the Reformation." He studied at Oxford University, was brilliant in all fields of learning. He taught and was head at several colleges, as well as parish priest and preacher. He opposed papal authority and monasticism. He translated, together with others, the Latin Vulgate Bible into English. For this he was sternly opposed by church authorities.

John Hus, 1371-1415 in Bohemia, now the Czech Republic. He was a priest, a teacher of theology, head of the University in Prague, which was established in 1349, the first one in central and eastern Europe. The Chapel of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem was established there in 1391, especially for preaching in the Czech language. He was appointed rector there 1402. During this time there were three popes competing for the church's recognition, a political mess. John spoke against various kinds of corruption in the church and its practices. Indulgences were issued to fund one pope's battle against his opponents. John was horrified and spoke out against it. He was seized and burned at the stake. His followers were called the Moravian Brethren which are still an active confession. (Note the church in Bethlehem PA.) Hus was a national hero. He was strongly influenced by John Wycliffe. When Luther became famous, cartoons and graffiti hailed him as the spiritual heir of John Hus.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, November 10, 1483 and died February 18, 1546, back in Eisleben. His father Hans Luther left the family farm, that he would not inherit, for Mansfeld. There he worked his way up in the mines. He came to rent his own copper mines and smelting furnaces, employing a number of people. The townsfolk elected him to the governing council. He bought his own home where he and Margaret raised a family of seven children.

Martin was enrolled at the unusually early age of four and a half in the Latin school. He learned to speak, read and write in Latin, which was the standard language of schools and the church. Martin got what we would think of as a well-rounded education by age fourteen. Then Hans sent him with a school friend to the cathedral school in Magdeburg. In the Middle Ages education was provided by the church. Indeed, some universities had begun to spring up – Oxford (before 1100), Paris (remains as part of the Sorbonne, 12th century), Saint Andrews (early 1400s) – at cathedral schools.

Everyone in Europe was registered Catholic at their baptism. There were movements though within the church. Several of his teachers were mystics and they belonged to the Brethren of the Common Life. They believed in much reading in the Bible, which was not common. They also believed in living simple, pious lives. Martin saw his first complete Bible, and it was chained to the desk so that it would not be taken away and lost. He was invited to study at the university in Erfurt where he was one of almost 2,000 students. At age nineteen, after one year, they awarded him the Bachelor of Arts degree. Three years later he got his Master of Arts degree, ranking second in a class of seventeen. His father wanted him to go on to law school. Martin started, changed his mind, sold all his books and the next day celebrated with his closest friends. The day after, he left the university, walked down the block and around the corner, and entered the cloister of Saint Augustine in Erfurt.

Martin had a keen sense of divine justice. His church and his teachers had taught him well to fear purgatory and hell and the God who casts sinners there. True, the church had also taught Luther how to escape those terrors and to gain the joys of heaven. In that age people knew the fear of God, that is, a fearful kind of fear. A fear of offending a just God. The church taught confession and repentance, indeed the people were required to go to confession. There was the promise of forgiveness. But how was the repentant sinner to find a merciful Father? Jesus is the Savior. He will also be the terrible judge whom everyone will have to face at the Last Day. They learned to pray to Mary, the mother of our Lord, to Anne her mother, and to other saints who had already achieved their peace in heaven. Luther had a very active conscience. On the streets of Magdeburg he had once seen a ragged, barefoot, dying prince begging, begging because he believed that this lowering himself would help him earn

forgiveness. Later in life he said, "Whoever looked at him was deeply moved and felt ashamed of his worldly way of life." Another time a close friend died unexpectedly. His death deeply troubled Martin. "What if I should die? Would I be ready for heaven? Would I be able to stand before the terrible Judge?" Then at an eventful moment early in July 1505, Luther was on his way from a visit to his home. As he walked along, he saw the sky fill with black, racing clouds. Before long he felt raindrops, then a violent storm came. Lightning bolts and thunder fill the sky with light and noise. Luther was terrified. In his mind he saw visions of raging devils, an angry God, and the terrors of hell prepared for the unforgiven sinner. He fell to the ground and cried, "Saint Anne, mother of Mary, save me! I promise to become a monk." And so he did.

Later he returned to the university and took an education in theology, and he got the doctor's degree. He always said that it was his most prized gift. Martin wrestled with his conscience and a sense of being unfit before God. As he taught Scripture at the University of Wittenberg, and with the caring counsel of his prior, Johann von Staupitz, the Gospel of free forgiveness in the sacrifice of Jesus opened up to him and set him free. When Luther journeyed to Rome in 1510 on business for his order, he came back deeply disturbed and frightened by the decline of spirituality he had seen there. When the campaign of indulgences (for building Saint Peter's in Rome and to pay off a bishop's debt!) came into the area, he was incensed that people were told they could pay money for their guilt, even for family and friends in purgatory. He posted the 95 Theses for debate at the university. They were about contrition and repentance, punishment of sin, and indulgences. True repentance means a Christian's earnest reflection on daily sins, pleading for forgiveness and believing in the grace offered because of Jesus Christ.

These theses, or statements asserting a catalog of truths about the church's practices, were posted for the University of Wittenberg only. It was the day before All Saints' Day, which was observed on November 1, when relics were on display and worshipers could secure indulgences simply by looking at them and performing meditations and prayers before them. The theses were not printed, but copies were sent to the bishop and archbishop to make them aware of the intended event. To Martin's surprise, within two months three editions in Latin were all over Europe, sent as far away as Switzerland and also to Rome. Contemporaries were saying, "It's the beginning of reformation of the church!" Luther assumed it was restoring and clarifying the true teaching of the church. In fact, the Lutheran party insisted throughout that the teachings they were putting forward were consistent with historic church doctrine and practice.

He translated the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, along with the Apocrypha, into the language of the common people. He wrote the Small Catechism for families and children and the Large Catechism for priests and teachers. He made reforms in the traditional Latin liturgy and set a German version with music and hymns accessible to the common people. He was an able poet and musician himself, and he gathered others of his generation to provide music resources for the churches. His hymn, A Mighty Fortress, based on Psalm 46, has come to be known as the battle hymn of the Reformation. He counseled church and government leaders. He wrote commentaries on many books of the Bible. Opening up the Scriptures was perhaps his most important contribution as a university professor. His writings are voluminous!

Further study in Martin Luther's career may be found in books in our church library for adults and also for children. Several films are available. Concordia Publishing House is a fine resource. Go on line for an abundance of resources. Martin Luther and the Lutheran Reformation have been much researched in the last century and a half, and the influence on the past five hundred years has come ever more clear. There is a fine American Edition of Luther's works.

Philipp Melancthon (Greek for the German name Schwartzerd) was born February 16, 1497. He studied at Heidelberg University and at Tuebingen, where he also taught. He became involved with Martin Luther when he came on the faculty at Wittenberg in 1518. Philipp was a brilliant scholar in the humanism of the day. He was recognized for his knowledge of education. He opened a gymnasium (high school) in Nuremberg for the purpose of preparing youth for university studies. Henry the Eighth tried for years to get him to England to reform the schools there, but his prince refused to let him go. He worked with Luther on the Saxon Visitation, that is, examining parishes and priests and providing for reforms. He wrote the Augsburg Confession, the document that presented the basic Lutheran positions, with which they appeared before Emperor Charles V in 1530. He answered the official church's condemnation of that confession with the lengthy Apology of the Augsburg Confession. He died April 19, 1560.

Ignatius Loyola, 1491-1556, was born in the castle of Loyola in Spain, youngest of thirteen. His early life of dissipation was abruptly changed when he was wounded in war with France. He was treated kindly by the French who returned him to Loyola. Reading lives of Jesus and the saints during recovery brought new, surprising peace. After extensive time of spiritual formation, he wrote *Spiritual Exercises* and taught others about prayer and the spiritual life. He founded the Society of Jesus, to serve at the pope's discretion. Their purpose was foreign missions, at the pope's bidding; the education of youth of all classes; the instruction of the ignorant and the poor; ministering to the sick, to prisoners, etc. First and most famous of the missionaries associated with Ignatius was Saint Francis Xavier, who traveled to the Orient and won many converts there.

Ulrich Zwingli, 1484-1531, was a reformer in Zurich, Switzerland. He had a very ambitious father who sent him to a number of schools. A brilliant student, he studied broadly in the humanities and theology. He idolized Erasmus of Rotterdam, leading humanist of the age. When Erasmus' new edition of the Greek New Testament appeared, he memorized the epistles of Paul in the Greek. (Luther also used this edition for his German translation.) He took in the spirit of reform that characterized the times. He was an accomplished musician, played numerous instruments. He taught in a school that he founded. He was ordained at age twenty-two and was given a parish. He served as army chaplain, a priest ultimately in Zurich. After a turning point in his life, when he nearly died of the plague, he preached that the Bible alone governs the practices of the church, not tradition. He rejected indulgences and relics, forbade veneration of saints, removed images and statuary, abolished pilgrimages, destroyed altars and organs, costly sacramental vessels were melted down to make coins, at his instigation the state took over church properties, he emptied cloisters and convents, had monks and nuns marry and had priests marry (many had concubines already in those days, and children, he had himself had an affair with a woman and likely fathered her child). He abolished the mass and declared the Lord's Supper not a sacrament but merely an ordinance and a memorial service only of the Last Supper. As lay people read the Bible and found no words about taxes, they stopped paying, resulting in quite a fray.

A scholar has shown that Zwingli was greatly influenced by his study of Luther's writings, and that his emphasis on salvation by faith alone, and by grace alone, deepened markedly. He insisted however that the only thing he learned from Luther was his boldness and strength of asserting leadership. They met at Marburg by invitation of Landgrave Philipp of Hesse, who was a political activist and hoped the further peace among the regions. They could not agree on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It has been said that Zwingli's arrogance ruined the day. Luther came away saying to a colleague, "They are of a different spirit!" Zwingli is said to have come away saying, "There are no people on earth with whom I would rather be at one than the Wittenbergers." By his strong personality, he came to be called "burgomaster, secretary and council all in one." He involved himself ever more in secular politics, even battle, and died on the battlefield October 11, 1531. His innovations in doctrine and especially in church practices continue in the Reformed Protestant traditions, along with the influence of John Calvin.

John Calvin was a reformer in Geneva, Switzerland, 1509-1564. He was born in France and trained in France as a humanist lawyer. He broke from the Roman Catholic Church in 1530. When persecution arose in France, he fled to Basel, Switzerland. Six years later he published his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which he several times revised during his life time. He read Luther, learned much from him and valued him highly. Though they disagreed on a number of key issues, especially the Lord's Supper, Calvin praised Luther. He wrote to a colleague of Luther's "greatness as a man and his outstanding gifts: the stoutheartedness and steadfastness, the skillfulness and the effectiveness of teaching with which he has labored to destroy the kingdom of antichrist and spread abroad the doctrine of salvation... If he should call me a devil, I should still pay him the honor of acknowledging him has an illustrious servant of God." (Quoted in *Concordia Journal*, summer 2009.)

Calvin was a gifted Scriptural scholar, especially in the Old Testament. Together with William Farel, he reformed the church in Geneva and resolved order out of political chaos in the city. He wrote commentaries on most books of the Bible, as well as many other writings. His influence continues in the tradition known as Calvinism. His students came from far and wide, and they carried his ideas with them. Immigrants from England brought those Calvinistic ideas to the Colonies and influenced American values. He taught that all of life comes under God's sovereign rule. The Christian should not be of the world, but he should be living his Christian life immersed in the affairs of the world. He should bring all things under the rule of Christ. Work is part of the Christian's calling under God. All work has

religious significance, and all of life is to be lived before God. The "Protestant ethic." He taught double predestination. As influenced by Zwingli, he also saw the Lord's Supper as a memorial of the Last Supper and called it an ordinance rather than a Sacrament with power to nourish the soul. (Pastor Ed Seely corrects me on this: "In his Institutes and elsewhere Calvin typically refers to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament, and he is closer to Luther than Zwingli in his understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper; it is much more than a memorial." I agree with him in this distinction. Here is the danger of oversimplification in making a short summary of a large story!)

John Calvin emphasized the Christian's response of gratitude and obedience to a God who is "Wholly Other." Martin Luther however, because of his intense spiritual struggles and deep discovery of the Gospel of salvation by faith and the grace of God, looked at the inner change that is effected on the person.

The Anabaptists and other radicals were borderline individuals and groups who were freed up in the upheavals of the times and the loosening of authority to break with conformity. There were mystics and Unitarians and a wide variety of spiritual behavior. Many took literally certain Scripture texts, such as the communal sharing described among the first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles. Because of their irregular behavior, they were severely and brutally persecuted. That scattered them. Like-minded individuals and groups kept up a remarkable network of communication. Communal societies have sprung up frequently through the ages since then. Insistence on adult baptisms is still widespread among Protestants. Also charismatic experience. Millennialism in various forms keeps cropping up.

William Tyndale, born 1494 in Gloucester, England. Studied at Oxford and Cambridge. He could speak seven languages and was proficient in ancient Hebrew and Greek. He had one compulsion: to teach English men and women the good news of justification by faith. Tyndale had discovered this doctrine when he read Erasmus's Greek edition of the New Testament. What better way to share this message with his countrymen than to put an English version of the New Testament into their hands? This, in fact, became Tyndale's life passion, aptly summed up in the words of his mentor, Erasmus: "Christ desires his mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I would that (the Gospels and the epistles of Paul) were translated into all languages, of all Christian people, and that they might be read and known."

By 1523 his passion had been ignited; in that year he sought permission and funds from the bishop of London to translate the New Testament. The bishop denied his request, and further queries convinced Tyndale the project would not be welcomed anywhere in England.

To find a hospitable environment, he traveled to the free cities of Europe—Hamburg, Wittenberg, Cologne, and finally to the Lutheran city of Worms. There, in 1525, his New Testament emerged: the first translation from Greek into the English language. He moved to Antwerp, Holland, and for nine years he labored at translating the Old Testament and many other writings.

His translations, it would turn out, became decisive in the history of the English Bible, and of the English language. Nearly a century later, when translators of the Authorized, or King James Version, debated how to translate the original languages, eight of ten times, they agreed that Tyndale had it best to begin with. The influence of Luther's German translation is quite evident.

Tyndale was betrayed by a low-lifer, arrested and tried for translating the Bible into the people's language, which was sternly forbidden. On Friday, October 6, 1536, he was strangled and burned on a cross in the town square of Antwerp, Holland. (From *The Christian Century*, 8/08/2008.)

The film *God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale* was released in 1986.

4. Lasting effects of Luther's teachings and life.

The question in that era was this: how can I find a gracious God? In medieval times God was considered a wrathful God and Jesus an angry judge. The church emphasized good works to please God, and this included time spent before relics and especially purchase of indulgences. The indulgences, by the way, were promoted in order to raise funds for needs of the church. Luther discovered the truth that Christ came to save sinners and redeemed us at the cross. The righteousness of God is not something God demands from man, but he gives it as a gift because of the atonement of Christ. Thus, the three solas of the Reformation:

- *sola gratia*, that is, we have salvation by the grace of God alone, as a free gift; it is received
- *sola fidei*, that is, simply by faith, that is, by believing it; and we learn this

- *sola Scriptura*, that is all doctrine comes out of Scripture alone, without additions from tradition or church teaching.

(Note: John Calvin added *sola Christi*, just to make the point.)

The individual conscience is directly accountable to God, does not need priest or pope as Christ's Vicar on earth. This doctrine freed up individuals and independence of will and thought. This led to his notion of the priesthood of all believers.

Parenting is the highest calling, the family is where godliness and faith are learned. He prepared the Small Catechism for home and school. With his own marriage to Catharine he gave example and affirmation of the sanctity of marriage and family.

Two kingdoms thinking: God's left hand rules the world with power and wisdom, God's right hand rules the hearts of the faithful with Word and Sacraments by grace. This distinguishes the operations of state and church, and it led to disestablishment of religion in the states in our history. Jesus: render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. No separation of church and state, but collaboration is to be expected.

Education of children. The government shall establish a system of schools for the education of all citizens from early childhood. Philip Melancthon established a preparatory school – high school – to prepare adolescents for university studies.

Vocation, living a responsible life in God's creation. God has fitted each person differently for various callings. Each is to be honored and each person is accountable to God for taking up a piece of the action as God governs the world. Luther wrote about three, and Lutheranism now sees four: accountability in family life, at work (and school), in citizenship where one lives, and participation in the church.

Spirituality. There is a spirituality from below and a spirituality from above. The human spirit reaches up to find God, but God is hidden from man. God reaches into the human heart with the invitation of grace, reveals himself in Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the truth and the life... Come to me all who are weak and overburdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11.

God's mission. "I have come to seek and to save that which is lost." Luke 19:10. He then sends out the believers: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18. And to the church: "As you travel the journey of your life (go), make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:16-20.

Original sin, helpless to save ourselves. "I know that I cannot by my own reason of strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctifies and keeps me with Jesus Christ in the true faith, even as he... the whole Christian church on earth." Explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism.

Two kinds of good works distinguished. Humans are made with the tendency to do good works. Faith produces good works out of love for God and others. The former earn nothing toward salvation, but make life good among humans. They make the doer feel good, and so they actually enhance self-awareness and pride. The good works that come from faith, hope and love please God as well as working good for all. These works also do not earn salvation, or make it more sure, but are the willing obedience God looks for in his faithful. People of faith know their own faults, failures and limitations, but rejoice in the glow of the grace and love of God who takes us as we are for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Theology of the Cross v. Theology of Glory.

This insight may be one of the most important that Martin Luther brought into the world. It is not enough to see the power and glory of God at work, but the true heart of God is to be found at the cross. It is not enough that we achieve honor and recognition for our works, but that we are brought to the foot of the cross.

We are stumped when cruel disasters happen. Why is God doing this, we ask, along with all the

world. Why does God let this happen? Isn't God good? Why is there suffering everywhere and at all times. We have no answers. This insight of Luther's gives us the key. We can believe that God's love is hidden in the midst of our pains, anxieties, defeats and times when hope leaves us. We can believe that God is working out his salvation, and that he is always faithful and relentless.

Jesus said, "He who has seen me (i.e., the man) has seen the Father." John 14:9. True theology and knowledge of God are to be found in the crucified Christ. Luther wrote, "He who does not know Christ does not know the God hidden in suffering."

Exodus 33:18ff, Moses asked to see God's face, that is, his glory; but God hid him in a cleft in the rock and covered Moses' eyes as he passed by; Moses saw only God's back.

Romans 1:20ff, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, etc." It is no longer possible to find God in his mighty works, as it was before sin. Now we need to find God in suffering – that of Jesus and our own.

1 Corinthians 1:21ff, "Since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe... We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." It was through these two Scripture texts - Romans 1:20ff and 1 Corinthians 1:21ff - that Luther discovered the insight into theology of glory and theology of the cross.

Luther: I prefer works to suffering and glory to the cross – both God's and mine!

Luther: It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his own but God's. Then God's mercy and salvation come clearly in view.

God's truth seems to be a lie, and the world's lies seem to be the truth.

All the world is scandalized by the assertion that the Crucified One is King. Recall the experience of the criminal crucified with him on Calvary: Today you shall be with me in Paradise!

Those who are called "blessed" by our Lord at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes – all are considered cursed and unfortunate, even losers, by the world.

God's Yes is hidden under a severe No. Recall Jesus and the Canaanite woman with a demon-possessed daughter. Matthew 15:21-28. She believed God's promise was there for her.

The Christian is always tempted to doubt God. For Luther, *Anfechtung* is a reality of the life of faith. It means enduring trials, temptations, assault, perplexity, doubt. Thus faith is not constant, but it is always slipping or it is growing. We survive and indeed grow by holding on to the Word of God and his promises. We doubt ourselves, but God is sure.

God shows that he is God precisely in the fact that he is mighty in weakness, glorious in lowliness, living and life-giving in death.

The Apostle Paul was Luther's predecessor in understanding the cross as the valid standard for the knowledge of God and for man's understanding of himself.

Drawn from *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Paul Althaus.

5. Postmodern culture has assumptions like these...

We no longer need to heed the expectations and restrictions or authority of those before us, as it was in the modern world.

For the first time in this world's history, we have learned to live without God or a higher authority or the need to rely on a higher resource. I will find a wealth of resource within myself. My duty to myself is to make the most of the resources with which I am endowed, in a life that satisfies me and that brings to the common good. E.g. Steve Jobs.

It is hard to find a consciousness of sin in our culture. Crime and violence are not seen as the results of sin, but as societal problems that can be solved, given enough research, problem solving, social and government programs. Lost is the sense of divine wrath and judgment on human sin. Any notion of God that remains has him patient, tolerant, forgiving and kindly in the face of human faults and failings.

I have the right to hold my own ideas, values, vision and convictions that I have discovered through my experiences and intuition. You have a right to yours; but neither of us has the right to foist beliefs and values on the other.

All exists by natural evolution. What is, is. Science has come to a comfortable recognition of nature's processes, including origins. There is no need or room for religious beliefs or imposed intelligent design, nor is there need for a deity, indeed, that would be redundant.

The right of individual choice in life decisions is the highest value, and that must be defended at all costs.

We have a duty to nature and to the well-being of the human race to safeguard our environment, Mother Earth.

Marriage and family are products of history and cultural patterning. These have taken many shapes and forms in the long history of the human race. Now we are reexamining our traditions and remaking these living arrangements to suit our times. There are many options, and we are free to form our own for these new times. We have no way of knowing what forms or shapes they will take. New economic and social conditions as well as personal needs will determine the way.

The political and social and economic structures and institutions of the past must be left behind as we create new ways to serve the needs and possibilities of new times. The old systems have proved to be corrupt and no longer serve. This includes religion, especially the institution of the Christian churches. This does not deny that many Christians have done marvelous good and charitable works. Such good philanthropic work must be valued and encouraged, and it will be done by individuals and caring associations.

Items from Wikipedia:

Postmodern: a general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism.

This worldview abhors clear distinctions and definitions, e. g., male and female, good and bad, etc. All is relative. No absolute truth, but all is subjective.

Modernism prefers principles such as identity, unity, authority, and certainty.

Postmodernism prefers difference, plurality, textuality (?), and skepticism.

6. Speaking to the spirit of our time...

We must introduce the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ to our contemporaries. How?

Personal witness and testimony. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the reason of the hope that is in you." 1 Peter 3:15. Speak about your faith. Let your life speak even louder. We are ordinary people wanting to share our joy with ordinary people whom we meet every day. Let them see our faith, hope and love.

An LCMS missionary said: "Walk with them until they open up their heart to you." To get a listening ear from those we want to save, we will need to give them an ear first. They need to know someone who cares, so that they may look for hope. A broken heart and a hopeless life will be open to mercy and comfort from one in whom they can put their confidence.

The way of apologetics = defense of the faith. Often this involves reasoning with people to show that their life will not work, and that the life of faith does work. The difficulty is that God's reasoning is difficult for sinners to grasp. However, many a defender of the faith has found the truth, because someone took the time to persuade. Dr. Paul Maier is one of those defenders of the faith who is out there in the wide world.

For further reading, I recommend:

The Reformation Era: a Short History of the Reformation, N. S. Tjernagel; Concordia Publishing House.

The Church of the Renaissance and Reformation, Decline and Reform from 1300 to 1600, Karl H. Dannenfeldt; Concordia Publishing House, 1970

Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, revised edition, Concordia, 1987.

Christian History Institute, *Reformation Overview*. Gateway Films. Video study. In Immanuel church library.

Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present*. Published in 2000 by Harper Collins when this Columbia U. professor was 92.

The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1580. Translated from the German and Latin under editorship of Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2000.

Martin Luther, Biography of a Reformer. Concordia Publishing House.

A recent film, *Luther*, stars Joseph Fiennes as Martin Luther and includes Peter Ustinov in the last role of his life as Luther's benefactor Elector Frederick of Saxony. Produced by Canadian film director Eric Till.

Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, and *The Ethics of Martin Luther*.

Luther's Works, American Edition, available on CD.

I own some of these, and the Immanuel Church library also has many resources for further reading and study.

Pastor Al Schroeder
Reformation 2011.

Postmodernism: An Overview

Dr. Edward Seely

Historical Background: Basic Tenets of Modernism

- Assumes knowledge is accessible to the human mind
- Assumes that knowledge is certain, objective and good
 - Searches for method of demonstrating the essential correctness of philosophic, scientific, religious, moral, and political doctrines
 - Structure necessary for obtaining meaning, e.g., *rules of grammar and commonly agreed upon definitions of words*
- Assumes the knowledge is objective
 - Knowers more than conditioned participants in the world they are observing
 - Can view the world as unconditioned observers, from a perspective outside the flow of history
 - Dispassionate pursuit of knowledge requires specialization
- Assumes knowledge is good
 - Absolute faith in human rational capabilities: reason the criterion for assessing reality
 - Discovery of knowledge always good
 - Inherent goodness of knowledge renders view of future as optimistic

Basic Tenets of Postmodernism

- Postmodernism marks end of a single and universal worldview: the one point of agreement of all scholars on what the term postmodern means
 - Postmodern ethos resists unified and universally valid explanations
 - Truth not limited to rational apprehension
 - Other valid paths to attaining truth exist including emotions and intuition
- Reject tenet of intrinsic goodness of all knowledge
- Reject assumption of autonomous and dispassionate, purely objective knower
 - Community-based understanding of truth
 - Knowledge cannot be objective because universe not mechanistic
 - Rejection of emphasis on rational discovery through scientific method
 - Rejection of modernist certainty in science
- No absolute truth possible; truth relative to the community in which we participate
 - Structure inhibits meaning, freedom

Postmodernism: An Overview

Dr. Edward Seely

- Progress inevitable; science and education will free mankind from vulnerability to nature and social bondage
- Suspicion of all beliefs which seem to curtail autonomy or are based on some external authority other than reason
- Timeframe: Enlightenment Period following the Thirty Years' War, but roots beginning in Renaissance
- Cultural illustration: *Star Trek*
- Deconstructionist approach yields meaning: meaning not inherent in text or art but emerges through interaction; thus many meanings possible, e.g., *disjunctive music videos, introduction of spirituality in the marketplace, mixing different styles of clothing.*
- Moral absolutes nonexistent
- Timeframe: 1970s but roots in late 19th century (Friedrich Nietzsche)
- Cultural illustrations:
 - *Star Trek: The Next Generation*
 - Bartender Mo, in *The Simpsons* episode where he redesigns his bar as “pomo,” explains that expression stands for postmodern, and he defines “pomo” as weird for the sake of weird.”

Postmodernism: An Overview

Dr. Edward Seely

Selected Sources

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Godawa, Brian. "Postmodern Movies: The Good, the Bad, and the Relative, Part II." *SCP Newsletter*. Summer 1999.

Grenz, Stanley. *Primer to Postmodernism, A*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Kwok, Kai H. *Brief History of Postmodernism* and other selected articles. Internet:
<http://www.vlsi.uwaterloo.ca/~khwok/postmodernism/node15.html>. 5/5/99.

Puig, Myriam. "Sexuality in the Postmodern Age." *The Family in America*, November, 1997.