

## Lecture 30: Martin Luther and the Indulgence Controversy

April 3, 2020

**Martin Luther** – German Protestant reformer (1483-1546)

Influential Writer – ¼ books, hands in writing position at death

Controversial Leader – as with the claims of the papacy, the stakes are high!

Luther himself felt the weight of his position:

Imperial Diet at Worms, Germany

“Are these your books?”

“Do you defend them, or do you care to reject a part?”

Second Day (April 18, 1521): *Well-known boldness!* “*Here I stand.*”

Three Kinds – clear gospel, Roman abuses, attacks on private individuals

“How can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture?”

“Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason...my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

First Day (April 17, 1521): *Stage Fright!* *Not toward men, but God.*

Characteristic fear of God: first Mass (1507)

Characteristic sense of sin: “...more caustic than comports with my profession” (1521)

Luther’s antisemitic statements – not racist, but religious

### Background to the Indulgence Controversy

Martin Luther: Augustinian monk – Doctor of Sacred Scripture – parish priest in Wittenberg, Electoral Saxony

Frederick the Wise: growing relics collection – available on All Saints Day (November 1<sup>st</sup>)

Leo X and Albert of Brandenburg: plenary indulgence for St. Peter’s Basilica – Johann Tetzel

*Ninety-Five Theses* (October 31, 1517) – not doctrinal, but moral attack on greed

### Significance to the Indulgence Controversy

***Calls for Reform*** (*tam in capite quam in membris*)

Traditional Ways:

Mystics – e.g. Savonarola

Councils – e.g. Lateran V (1512-17) – *no solutions, no analysis, no will to reform!*

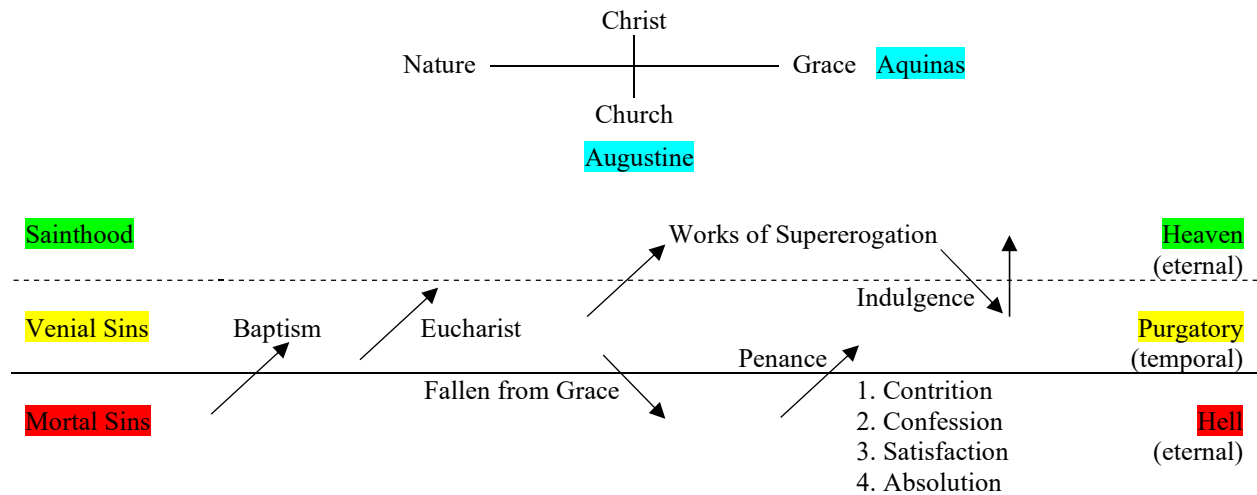
New Ways:

Humanists: *pietas* and *paideia* – e.g. Erasmus, *Enchiridion* (1503) and his Greek NT (1516)

Protestants: problem with morals, due to problem with doctrine (“Antichrist”)

### ***Late Medieval Catholic Theology***

Sacrament: a ritual that confers grace *ex opere operato* (1205)



**Sum:** Salvation through the *church* in a process of *merit*, even from the treasury of the saints (indulgence).