

ON THE BOOKSHELF

“Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World”

By Eric Metaxas (Viking Books)

Modern concepts of the individual, the democratic impulses of the people, came from the Reformation. Luther is known principally for two iconic events: in 1517 his posting of the 95 Theses on the great doors of the Wittenberg Castle Church; and his unyielding courage at the imperial diet in Worms in 1521. He was the “unwitting harbinger of a new world”; the “midwife of the irrevocably divided world”. Luther was a celebrity, largely due to the communication revolution known as the movable type press which made possible disseminating Luther’s writings across the continent.

Martin Luther was born into a prosperous family, his father an owner of mines and entrepreneur. He was smart and had great plans for his son. Martin was deep, devout, brilliant, and well-educated from an early age. He went to Erfurt University at age 17; earned a baccalaureate in 3 semesters, then a master’s degree; studied for the law, as per his father’s wishes, but became a monk, then an ordained priest. He continued to earn degrees and became a Bible professor at the new Wittenberg University.

But Martin Luther struggled mightily with the late medieval Catholic theology that one was brought to a knowledge of one’s sinfulness only to be told to try harder to be worthy of avoiding God’s wrathful judgment. No matter how hard he tried he could not escape a sense that he was unworthy of Heaven and therefore doomed. A trip to Rome only exposed him to the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. And then the light broke through.

Luther read The NT Book of *Romans* and realized that our righteousness is not what counts; it is our faith that the righteousness of Christ is sufficient on our behalf. This changed everything. “We are not sick and in need of healing; we are dead and in need of resurrecting!” All the trappings of the church were merely a monument to mankind’s efforts to be as God. The final straw was the spurious practice and doctrine of indulgences, which particularly incensed Luther because ignorant peasants gave of their tiny resources to obtain “freedom from purgatory” for loved ones, which were totally unnecessary.

His challenge of papal authority concerning indulgences became the tip of the iceberg. Soon it would fall on the German elector Prince Frederick to rescue Luther from the church that sought his martyrdom, like reformers that preceded him. Martin’s life would change in ways he never could have imagined: he would change Europe and the world; he would marry an ex-nun and raise a loving family with her; he would survive trials and dangers to die in his sixties of natural causes. The revolution he began continues to affect Christians of all kinds to this day.

In honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we welcome back Eric Metaxas to ON THE BOOKSHELF on WTBF-AM/FM to discuss his new book,

“Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World” from Viking Books.

The interview is published in its entirety on the Interview Page located on the website: www.onthebookshel.biz.

