

Heroes of the Faith

MONDAY, MAY 26, 2014

HEROES OF THE FAITH

Most Christian believers are blithely unaware of their spiritual heritage.

They haven't got a clue about Church history, and **what it took to bring the written Word and the Message of the Word Incarnate (Jesus) to each of us who are saved.**

Most of our heroes, and there were many, have been all but forgotten.

They've been relegated to obscurity, mentioned only in some dusty manuscript, hidden in some remote library in Europe or the Middle East.

I've determined, by the Grace of God, to change that before we leave this earth.

There are many saints that need to be REMEMBERED and HONORED for the great sacrifices they made.

Hebrews chapter 11 mentions the heroes of the Judeo-Christian faith.

Some refer to this chapter as the "hall of faith".

I love Hebrews 11, but that was written 2,000 years ago.

A LOT has transpired in Christendom since then, and **new heroes have emerged that deserve our eternal gratitude and recognition.**

They weren't perfect and they were not 100% doctrinally correct.

After all, they'd been subjected to many centuries of religious brainwashing that tolerated NO OPPOSITION.

THEY WERE CORRECT, however, about the three most important and consequential doctrines: Christology (the doctrine of Christ), Soteriology (the doctrine of Salvation), and Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the Christian Church).

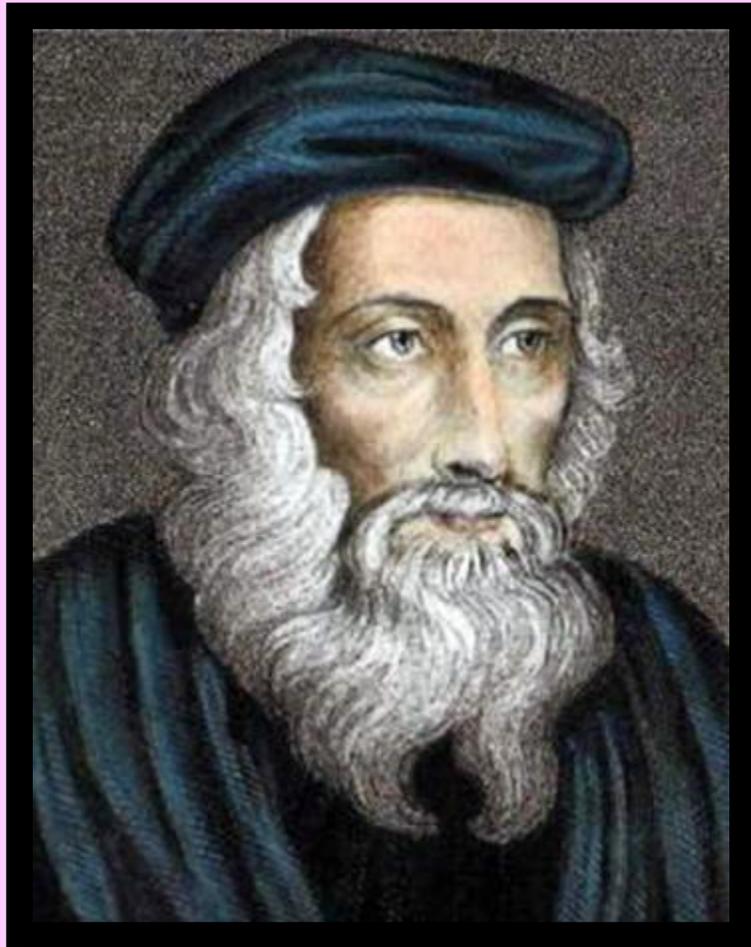
Just like WE SHOULD honor those faithful Old Testament pioneers in Hebrews 11, **we need to honor those that have exercised and exemplified faith in the NEW Testament.**

From time to time, as the Spirit leads and time permits, we will be talking about some of those trailblazers THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU AND ME, and SO MANY OTHERS, **TO HEAR the true Message of Salvation through Jesus.**

In a world that is spiritually and morally bankrupt, whose "heroes" are the likes of Kim Kardashian, that thug named West, Miley Cyrus, Justin Bieber and JZ, **believers and unbelievers alike desperately need some LEGITIMATE role models.**

We remember and honor all the heroes, past and present, who have served our country.

And we also honor Christ's martyrs and saints, past and present, **which stood for Gospel Truth and never sold out their Master.**



Friday May 30, 2014

John Wycliffe

“TRUST WHOLLY IN Christ; rely altogether on his sufferings; BEWARE OF SEEKING TO BE JUSTIFIED IN ANY OTHER WAY THAN BY HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ IS SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION.” John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

In the 14th century, 150 years before Martin Luther, God raised John Wycliffe, who some consider **THE GREATEST** among the reformers.

Martin Luther's reliance **on Scripture alone** was not a novel idea.

A fact not well known in Christian circles is that even before Luther, there had already been a long line of Bible believers, who opposed false doctrine that was **NOT** based on God's written Word.

John Wycliffe stands tall among them and **is often called the Morning Star of the Reformation** because **he was THE FIRST PERSON to publicly prefer the Word of God ABOVE the dictates of religious despots in Rome.**

He was a prominent theologian at Oxford University in England, from which he was expelled in 1381 for his criticism of the religious institution in Rome.

He was **THE FIRST TO TRANSLATE** the Bible into English in 1382-84 and his eponymous translation, known simply as Wycliffe's Bible, is still with us today.

That fact, alone, makes him a **BIG HERO** in my eyes.

His followers were known as the Lollards.

His two most important contributions were the teaching of **Salvation BY FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE**, and that **the Church is a SPIRITUAL body of believers and NOT a religious institution.**

Wycliffe, like Luther after him, also **denounced the sale of indulgences and the corrupt system into which the religion of Rome had deteriorated.**

He wrote many books and tracts exposing that corruption and **calling for reform.**

His teachings cost him his position at Oxford, temporary imprisonment, and temporary excommunication.

His fate, like that of most that were branded “heretics” by the religious establishment, would have been much worse, had he lived longer, and had he not enjoyed great favor with the British court and Parliament.

His teachings influenced many others, most notably John Hus.

Wycliffe died of a stroke on December 28, 1384, shortly after completing his English translation of the Bible.

On May 4, 1415 the Council of Constance **declared Wycliffe a heretic and banned his writings.**

They would have never bothered to make such declaration had Wycliffe’s teachings NOT impacted the consciousness of many believers who earnestly sought Truth.

Their religious hatred could not forgive Wycliffe for preaching the Truth, and not compromising God’s Word.

They didn’t just ban his writings they also decreed **THEY SHOULD BE BURNED.**

Not satisfied with his death 30 years earlier, they also decreed that his corpse be exhumed, and then burnt to ashes.

This revolting, vindictive and desecrating act was carried out in 1428, **at Pope Martin V's command.**

But what unsaved religious hierarchy tried to destroy, God's Holy Spirit has miraculously preserved.

Jesus knows where every particle of Wycliffe's mortal body is and will raise him in a glorious, immortal body when He appears.

It's those who condemned and vilified Wycliffe who are in hell today.

Despite being banned by religious decree, his teachings have influenced many generations of TRUE Christians.

We are the beneficiaries of his spiritual convictions, his public stand for Truth, and his singlehanded opposition to the totalitarian religious hierarchy of his day.

We thank Jesus for causing His Light to shine in the midst of medieval darkness.

And we honor John Wycliffe and his enduring legacy to the Church at large.

Wycliffe's works, and his stalwart, resolute stand for the Gospel, were not in vain.



Friday, June 27, 2014

John Hus, HERO OF THE FAITH

“God MOVES NO MAN to believe WHAT IS FALSE” John Hus

“Alas, drag my poor carcass to death, **so that you cannot sin any longer against** an innocent victim! Leave the mercy or punishment of my soul to Him who is a just judge and not like you unfortunate blind ones. **My trust is in the Almighty God and in my Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me and has called me to preach His Gospel to the last breath of life... HE WILL HAND ME THIS CUP TODAY, OUT OF WHICH I SHALL DRINK BLISS AND MY SALVATION IN ETERNITY. HIS BLESSED NAME BE PRAISED BY ALL!**” John Hus

"Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee TO HAVE MERCY ON MY ENEMIES." John Hus (1369-1415)

Jan Hus was a Czech priest, and Master at Charles University in Prague, who also preceded Luther as a reformer.

He was a key contributor to what became known as Protestantism.

He is known to us by the anglicized version of his name, John Hus.

Hus was greatly influenced by John Wycliffe and his teachings mirrored, in large part, those of his predecessor.

He would pay A MUCH HIGHER PRICE for them: MARTYRDOM.

Jan Hus's life and teachings, in turn, would greatly influence Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation.

Hus tried to reform the Church (actually, THE RELIGION that called itself "the Church") by delineating the moral failings of clergy, bishops, and the papacy, from his pulpit.

Archbishop Zbyněk Zajíc tolerated this, and even appointed Hus as preacher to the clergy's biennial synod, UNTIL the Pope chose to intervene.

Pope Innocent VII (who was "innocent" ONLY IN NAME) ordered the Archbishop to "counter Wycliffe's heretical teachings".

Having little choice on the matter, the archbishop complied by issuing a decree against Wycliffe, as well as **FORBIDDING ANY FURTHER ATTACKS ON THE CLERGY.**

Since greed and lust for power seldom go on vacation, **in 1408 there was division in Catholic ranks caused by the Western Schism**, in which Gregory XII in Rome and Benedict XIII in Avignon **BOTH CLAIMED THE PAPACY.**

In 1409, the Council of Pisa tried to end the schism by electing Alexander V as Pope.

Since neither Gregory nor Benedict would renounce their claims to the papacy, Alexander would eventually be declared "antipope" by the Council of Constance in 1418.

On December 20, 1409 Alexander V issued a papal bull (it was "bull", alright) **demanding that all copies of Wycliffe's writings be burned and that his doctrines be repudiated.**

He also **BANNED FREE PREACHING.**

Hus appealed to Alexander V, but his appeal was rejected. **Alexander then PROCEEDED TO EXCOMMUNICATE John Hus and his followers, known as Hussites.**

Like other reformers Hus decried **THE CORRUPTION IN RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY, THE SALE OF INDULGENCES, and the infamous Crusades saying that "no Pope or bishop HAD THE RIGHT TO TAKE UP THE SWORD in the name of the Church".**

Like Jesus, he taught that, **RATHER, the Pope or ANY bishop should “PRAY FOR HIS ENEMIES AND BLESS THOSE THAT CURSE HIM”** (Matthew 5:44) and that **“man OBTAINS FORGIVENESS OF SINS BY TRUE REPENTANCE, NOT BY MONEY”**.

Hus was subsequently and **FALSELY** accused of **“heresy”** and lured to the **Council of Constance WITH a FALSE PROMISE** of **“safe conduct”**.

When he reached the Council, **HE WAS IMMEDIATELY IMPRISONED, TRIED, CONDEMNED, AND BURNED AT THE STAKE** on **Saturday, July 6, 1415**, for his faith in the **Gospel of Jesus Christ**.

As the official executioner was about to light the pyre at the feet of the reformer, he said **“Now we will cook the goose.”** (Huss in Bohemian means goose.) **“Yes”, replied Huss, “but THERE WILL COME AN EAGLE IN A HUNDRED YEARS THAT YOU WILL NOT REACH.”**

That prophecy clearly points to Martin Luther, who began his reform precisely **A CENTURY LATER**.

Hus' martyrdom horrified the people of Bohemia galvanizing them, even more rapidly, against Papal teachings.

Pope Martin V countered by issuing **ANOTHER** Papal bull (more “bull” from organized religion, who would have thought?) **that ALL REFORMERS like Hus and Wycliffe, and all their followers, BE SLAUGHTERED.**

WHATEVER your denominational persuasion, or lack thereof, **IT'S UTTERLY REVOLTING THAT THESE HORRENDOUS AND DESPOTIC ACTS REALLY TOOK PLACE (SUPPOSEDLY) "in the Name of Christ", the Prince of Peace.**

Or that they were ordered by His supposed "vicar" on earth.

But **THEY DID.** It's a matter **OF RECORD.**

The Crusaders **LOST ALL THREE** of the infamous "Crusades" that followed.

A century later, as much as **NINETY PERCENT** of the Czech Crown lands still followed Hussite teachings. Glory to Jesus!

Despite Rome's opposition, Hus's teachings profoundly influenced all of Europe, including Martin Luther himself, culminating eventually on the much needed Reformation.

In 1999, nearly **SIX CENTURIES LATER**, Pope John Paul II expressed "deep regret for the cruel death inflicted" on Hus.

Although "late", and certainly better than "never", if the phrase "**TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE**" was ever apropos, **THIS WAS IT.**

John Paul II **could have stated that Hus was NO HERETIC**, and that, with regards to Salvation, **he spoke the Truth.**

John Paul SAID NOTHING about Hus' UNJUST "excommunication" or about HOW CORRECT AND BIBLICALLY ACCURATE His doctrine was.

Today we have a statue of Jan Hus at the Union Cemetery in Bohemia, New York (on Long Island) erected by Czech immigrants to the New York area in 1893.

There are two churches in New York City, one in Brooklyn (153 Ocean Avenue), and another in Manhattan (351 East 74th Street), named for Hus: respectively the John Hus Moravian Church, the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church with its adjacent Jan Hus Playhouse.

Hus is also honored with a feast day on July 6 in the *Unitas Fratrum* or Moravian Church, which claims Hus as a spiritual forerunner.

In the Czech Republic, Jan Hus Day (*Den upálení mistra Jana Husa*) is observed on July 6, the anniversary of his martyrdom, as a public holiday.

In the United States Hus is honored with a feast day on the liturgical calendar of the Episcopal Church (USA) as well as in the Calendar of Saints of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Not only is he viewed as a hero in his native Czechoslovakia, but in Europe and even in the U.S.

More importantly, he is A GREAT HERO OF THE TRUE Christian FAITH.

John Hus is A HERO to EVERY true Christian.

If you get nothing else from this message, please GET THIS:
What RELIGION and RELIGIOUS DESPOTS tried to eradicate, Jesus HAS MARVELOUSLY PRESERVED.

His Truth is marching on.





Martin Luther

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2015

MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, is often blamed – UNJUSTLY – for “dividing” Christendom.

Unfortunately, the majority of Catholics, Protestants and Evangelicals, **are woefully uninformed about what really happened.**

Luther was born in Saxony, Germany. **He was a Roman Catholic priest, Doctor of Theology, and Professor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg.**

It all started in 1516 when Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar, **was sent by the Pope to Germany, TO SELL**

INDULGENCES, in order to raise money for the rebuilding St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

By the 16th century Roman theology had become terribly corrupted.

PARTICULARLY ABOMINABLE was its doctrine concerning the most important issue: Salvation.

Roman Catholic theology stated **that FAITH ALONE DOES NOT SAVE**, thus making Jesus' PERFECT work of Redemption **INSUFFICIENT TO SAVE US**.

According to Roman doctrine, justification **DEPENDS ON** faith **PLUS "good works"**.

The **BENEFITS** of "good works" **COULD BE PURCHASED** by **DONATING MONEY TO THE CHURCH**.

You want Salvation?

NO PROBLEM...

BUY IT!!!

Of course, since **NO ONE KNEW HOW MANY** "good works" they must do in order to **EARN** Salvation, **NO ONE could EVER BE CERTAIN OF salvation**.

This heresy **LOWERED** the incomparable, **SUPERIOR** Gospel Message to the inferior level of **ANY PAGAN** religion.

THEY CAN'T guarantee anyone salvation and, according to this heresy, **NEITHER CAN JESUS**.

Salvation is **PRESENT** reality. Thus, **PRESENT CERTAINTY**, and **ETERNAL security** (1 John 5:13).

On October 31, 1517 Luther, AS A GOOD CATHOLIC, and **being eminently qualified as a Catholic theologian**, wrote to his bishop **PROTESTING** THE SALE OF "indulgences".

His letter included a copy of "Arguments of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," which eventually became known as the "95 Theses".

Luther **HAD NO INTENTION OF DIVIDING** the Church, and **NO IDEA**, at the time that this would lead to division.

His document was merely **THE SCHOLARLY OBJECTION OF A CATHOLIC DOCTOR IN THEOLOGY**, to some of the practices of the Church.

Luther's basic arguments were:

1. Since only God can grant forgiveness, **THOSE WHO SAID THAT INDULGENCES ABSOLVED BUYERS FROM ALL PUNISHMENT AND THAT, THROUGH THEIR PURCHASE, SALVATION WAS ACHIEVED, WERE IN ERROR.**

2. That justification is **COMPLETELY God's work.**

That salvation is obtained **ONLY AS A GIFT of God's grace THROUGH FAITH in Christ** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Luther wrote: "This **UNIQUE AND FIRM ROCK**, which we call **THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION**, is **THE MAIN ARTICLE OF ALL Christian doctrine**" ...

3. That **justification ONLY** comes from **God**. That **Christians RECEIVE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR their OWN MERIT**, but by the merits of **Christ** (Hebrews 9:12; 10:14).

4. Justification comes from **Christ's OWN JUSTICE** being **imputed (credited)** to **Christians** through **faith** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

That is **WHY FAITH ALONE** saves and **FULFILLS** the law (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; 11:6; Galatians 3:6).

Luther said what **GOD** had said – **ALL ALONG** – in His **Holy, immutable Word** for the previous **3,000 years**.

Luther's discovery of this great and marvelous Truth in **Scripture** – that **JESUS ALONE SAVES** – became the **BASIS** of what eventually was known as the Reformation.

His **PROTEST** AGAINST SELLING Salvation, or a shorter stay in "Purgatory", as papal "indulgences", was based on this **ETERNAL Truth**.

Consequently, he and his supporters would eventually be called "**PROTESTANTS**".

Archbishop Albert of Mainz **DID NOT ANSWER** Luther's letter with the 95 Theses. Instead, he sent it, to Pope Leo X, in December 1517.

The bishop, you see, **NEEDED THE MONEY RAISED BY THE SALE OF INDULGENCES TO PAY THE POPE** for granting him, by special **PAPAL** dispensation, dual **bishoprics**.

On his part, Pope Leo X ALSO NEEDED TO SELL INDULGENCES -- **NOT ONLY BECAUSE he would personally pocket HALF of the proceeds** -- but because the other half was already spent on the construction of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

The Pope's reaction was immediate: He commissioned several theologians to accuse Luther of heresy.

Most individuals **whom the Church ARBITRARILY classified as "heretics"** (only for TELLING THE TRUTH about Salvation) **were BURNED ALIVE.**

Luther was EXAMINED BY THE PAPAL REPRESENTATIVE, Cardinal Cajetan, in October 1518.

Cardinal Cajetan had orders to arrest Luther if he refused to recant.

His "arrest" would have led to the BONFIRE.

By Divine Providence, Luther secretly escaped during the night.

On June 15, 1520 the Pope decreed by a papal bull that Luther had 60 DAYS TO RETRACT THE 95 THESES, plus 41 other statements made in his other writings.

Luther STOOD HIS GROUND.

By then he had gained a large number of supporters who were fed up with Rome's imperial and dictatorial abuses.

Luther WAS EXCOMMUNICATED BY Pope Leo X, in another papal bull, *Decet Pontificem Romanum*, on January 3, 1521.

It was, therefore, THE POPE (Leo X) – NOT Luther -- WHO DIVIDED Christendom in 1521.

These are **undisputed, HISTORICAL FACTS.**

Luther appeared before the Imperial Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521 -- chaired by the Emperor Charles V.

He was again pressured to recant his teachings. Luther refused saying:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either the Pope or councils alone, SINCE IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THEY HAVE OFTEN ERRED AND CONTRADICTED THEMSELVES), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I CANNOT AND WILL NOT RECAT ANYTHING, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience: May God help me: Here I stand. I can do NO OTHER. Amen”.

The Emperor declared Luther A CRIMINAL (for teaching the Truth about Salvation) on May 25, 1521, banning his literature and ordered that he be arrested:

"We want him TO BE ARRESTED AND PUNISHED as a notorious heretic."

Under the edict, it was A CRIME for anyone in Germany to provide Luther food or shelter. **It also allowed ANYONE to murder Luther WITHOUT ANY CONSEQUENCE.**

Luther escaped by the grace of God and because Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, had him kidnapped during the night, and taken to the security of Wartburg Castle, which Luther would call his "Patmos".

That, dear friends, is THE TRUE STORY of what today is called "Protestantism".

Luther NEVER SOUGHT TO DIVIDE the Church.

Luther BELONGED TO the Church.

Luther simply wanted **TO REFORM** the sordid, fraudulent and despotic religion into which the Church of Rome, and its utterly corrupt hierarchy, had degenerated.

And for **SEEKING** Truth, and **OBEYING GOD** rather than **MEN**, as Peter commanded, he was **EXPELLED FROM** it (Acts 5:29).

It was the Roman Catholic church that DIVIDED CHRISTENDOM by obeying the Pope's DESPOTIC DICTATES OVER and ABOVE THE WORD OF GOD.

Luther, like any other human, **was not perfect. Neither was his doctrine concerning other matters**, including his flaming anti-Semitism.

But on Salvation, the MOST important doctrine of all, he was 100% correct, as proven first and foremost by the

Bible, and the fact that his teachings on Salvation have withstood the test of time, 500 years, to be exact.

Every born-again individual – regardless of denomination or lack thereof – owes Luther an eternal debt of gratitude:

Martin Luther, great hero of the faith.

www.christconnection.net

...**“BECAUSE RELIGION CAN’T SAVE”**

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