

The Wittenberg Times

1526-1550



All the news that's fit to print with some editorializing by Martin Luther
Editor: Hank Bitten

1538 Melanchthon Publishes “*Ethica doctrinae elementa*”

Professor Philip Melanchthon of the University of Wittenberg published his views on the distinction between the faith of a Christian and ethical and moral behavior. Martin Luther's insight that faith is a creative source of life and a gift from God is the basis for Melanchthon's new revelation about the behavior of people. Melanchthon's position is that faith in God is different from the way individuals conduct their lives morally and ethically. Melanchthon argues that a liberal arts education is essential because people are born into sin and by their human nature are corrupted. His philosophy in *Ethica doctrinae elementa* is clearly stated in a way people can understand it.

His views were published in *Ethica doctrinae elementa* and state that faith in Jesus Christ empowers individuals to think and live ethically. Melanchthon's understanding of the influence of faith and grace on how people live together in a community is a revolutionary breakthrough in Renaissance intellectual thinking. The revelations of Melanchthon in the "*Ethica doctrinae elementa*" demonstrate his maturity of Luther's earlier writings on the free will of man and God's plan for our lives.

In natural philosophy, people are bound by laws in shaping their behavior. Melanchthon's understanding is that people are freely justified by their faith but that education can influence their obedience in following God's law and accepting their faith. His understanding of this explains why King David repented of his sin of adultery and the death of Uriah and why King Saul resisted repentance by justifying his actions and blaming others for his sins. The intellectual importance of the Reformation is that faith in Jesus Christ motivates people to be virtuous. The call to faith has greater influence on behavior than the laws of the church and government.

Melanchthon presents the importance of a liberal arts education that is integrated with the teachings of God in the *Holy Bible*. His philosophical contribution has clearly advanced the teachings of the Lutheran faith as a significant breakthrough in Renaissance philosophy and thinking. Melanchthon argues in his publication that the fear of punishment cannot change a person but that education reinforces good character. When Melanchthon writes, "*We ought now to set out education and discipline. For habit can make it such that it is not painful.*" we can understand the importance of discipline, education, and knowledge of the Ten Commandments.

Our reporter interviewed the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther, who stated: "*If one becomes a Christian to be happy, the heart of religion is not yet grasped. The heart of religion is with one's faith in Jesus Christ, which leads to a vision of love and service. God is the one who changes our lives through His Holy Spirit. As St. Paul said centuries ago, "So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* Although Luther is a close friend of Melanchthon and agrees with his theology, they do not completely agree on the amount of free will each of us has in making decisions about our behaviors and faith.

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1538 *John Calvin Expelled From Geneva*

It has been less than two years since William Farel and John Calvin began their religious reforms in Geneva. There has been a division over church worship ceremonies between the pastors in Bern and Geneva. When the pastors in Bern declared that all churches must consecrate unleavened bread, Calvin refused to consecrate the bread and wine for the members of his congregation at St. Peter's church in Geneva on Easter Sunday. During worship, the members of the congregation rioted forcing Calvin to flee from Geneva. The people want God's grace and forgiveness through the sacrament.

Calvin and Farel left for Bern yesterday to negotiate a settlement over the consecration question of the Eucharist but after they left the Council in Geneva refused to allow Calvin and Farel to return to their home and congregation. They took refuge in Basel and Calvin has been invited to go to Strasbourg. We have reports that Pastor Farel went to a church in Neuchatel.

Note: Calvin's ministry will flourish at the St. Nicolas Church in Strasbourg and in 1541 he will marry a widow, Idelette de Bure, with two children.

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St. Peter's Church (Cathedral of St. Pierre) in Geneva.



Calvin's church in Geneva

