

The Wittenberg Times

1526-1550



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

1532 – Sugar Cane Cultivated in Brazil

Refined sugar is replacing honey in our jellies and jams. Although sugar, 'white gold,' has been available for the rich, the mass production in the new colonies is making this commodity available for everyone for the first time.

Sugar cane is grown in Crete and Cyprus and refined in Venice. Many of us in Germany prefer honey to sugar. In Wittenberg, the *Reinheitsgebot* prohibits cane sugar along with wheat malt and yeast in the production of beer. The new sugar from the colonies is less expensive than the Mediterranean brands because of the slave laborers and the new sugar mills in the Americas.

The demand for sugar is spreading so rapidly that the Dutch are also shipping raw sugar to Amsterdam for refinement. The sugar in the local markets is sold as a sugar loaf or in a cone. It is very hard and requires a small axe or pliers to break it into smaller pieces.

The use of slave labor to produce sugar is opposed by many Protestants in the Netherlands. It is the Lutherans from Salzburg who appear the most vocal in their opposition to slaves in the production of sugar in the Americas.

It is clear that sugar is changing the world economy through slavery, addiction, and high profits and will likely provide another cause for a future war.

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1532 – Lucas Cranach Paints “The Payment”



The popularization of this painting of a greedy young woman with the sexual desires of an older man are a reminder of two of the seven deadly sins. Many see this painting and its symbols of fertility in the grapes and pomegranate as upsetting. Cranach is one of Europe's most distinguished artists and he recently hosted King Christian II of Denmark in his home. He is convinced the new religious teachings of Martin Luther represent the truth of the Christian faith.

Martin Luther commented in a published letter to Lucas Cranach, *“And you should not be ashamed of your portrayal of women in these sinful states. After all, it was the unclothed Eve who has fallen prey to the cunning seductions of the Serpent and yielded to the Forbidden Fruit. No one will be made the wiser before the Original Sin, and we have our women to thank for that!”*

Cranach, who is not married, made the following reply to Martin Luther. *“I could never understand the attitudes held by common men towards that of the other gender. How could a gender with such grace, softness of voice, slender of curvature, fineness of appearance and exquisiteness of manners have been termed the seducer of Adam and be blamed for humanity's ultimate downfall from Eden, but alas, my mind is wandering on the dangerous fringe of hypocrisy and I must not allow this discourse to proceed any further.”*

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1532 – October 4 Calvin Speaks in France

John Calvin published his first commentary, *De clementia of Seneca*, which includes his position on political ethics. Calvin advances the thesis that the church and the state are distinct and yet they both serve and glorify God. The idea that the government must guarantee people the right to worship God is progressive. The document makes a specific argument on the teaching of the Trinity and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord. This basic doctrine becomes the basis for the spiritual authority of the Church to teach morality. The faith of the people supports the civil order of society as do the roles of pastors, teachers, and elders. Calvin advances the idea that governments need to care for the less fortunate and enforce moral behaviors.

The document appears to provoke debate as to whether the commentary supports a democratic community based on faith, order, and service or if authority needs to enforce moral discipline and church attendance. It is not clear how either the church or the local government will handle public drinking, cursing, gambling, and sexual conduct. In the past the responsibility for good behavior was with the Church. People in Europe have not had discussions of this importance since Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*, in 1513.

In a rare public statement about his sudden conversion from Roman Catholicism to an evangelical faith based on the simple truths of the Bible (this will happen in 1534), Calvin told our reporter: "*There is no religion without faith, and no true piety without the love for God.*" The strength of Calvin's theology is the importance of the Word of God and his commitment in leading people to faith in Jesus Christ. In this area, he is directly influenced by the writings of Martin Luther.

John Calvin was born in Noyon in the northern province of Picardy in 1509. He was educated at the University of Paris where he studied theology, politics, and law. He received his Bachelor of Arts and Master's Degree by 1528 at the age of 21. He continued to study law at Orleans and Bourges.

After his father had a conflict with the Roman Catholic Church in Noyon Calvin moved to Geneva with his parents. Here he met the fiery French Protestant preacher, Guillaume Farel. After the death of his father last year, he returned to France as a member of the Roman Catholic faith.

Calvin will return to Basel, Switzerland in 1534 and convert to Protestant beliefs.