

The Wittenberg Times

1526-1550



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

1534 January - John of Leiden Establishes a 'communist state' at Munster

Reports from Westphalia are that in the village of Munster, on the Dutch border, the members of the City Council have been removed by an armed revolt led by John Matthys and John Leiden. The Roman Catholic bishop has also fled the city.



Map of Muenster - located on the north Rhine, near the Netherlands border.

The first acts of Mr. Leiden, the illegitimate son of the mayor of the Dutch town of Leiden, include renaming this city as the Kingdom of God and forcing all unbelievers out of the city without their property. "King" Leiden represents an extreme group of Christians who only support adult Baptism.

Initial reports are that all property is shared by the community. All private property has been confiscated by Mr. Leiden. The teaching of the equality of all people and the communal sharing of property is appealing to the peasants of Germany, especially after their defeat in the violent rebellion just eight years before.

There have also been three polygamous marriages in the past week that were approved by John Leiden. Evening prayer meetings include the reading of Scripture from the Old Testament and the use of the sword to convert nonbelievers to the Christian faith.

Bernhard Rothmann, a Lutheran pastor in Munster, is supporting this new community. He has been vocal in his denunciations of Roman Catholic teachings. Martin Luther has publicly condemned this movement as extreme and for not representing Jesus as the “lamb of God” who came to bring peace rather than violence.

Reverend Luther publicly stated in a letter that *‘God has given you fine preachers, especially Bernhard Rothmann; yet they need to be admonished, for the devil can lead astray good, pious, and scholarly preachers.’*

[Eventually, John Leiden and other supporters of the Anabaptist community will be captured, imprisoned, and executed. The prison cages still hang from the steeple outside St. Lambert’s Church in Munster.]



St. Lambert's Church

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1534 Confession of Basel Adopted

It has been three years since Ulrich Zwingli's death at the Battle of Kappel and the adoption of the Confession of Basel represents a compromise between the teachings of Martin Luther and Johannes Oecolampadius, two prominent German theologians. Oswald Myconius headed the committee writing this statement for the Swiss congregations.

The Basel Confession was initially supported by the clergy and congregations of Basel, Bern, Zurich and Strasbourg. The key principles in this doctrinal statement appear to agree with those of Martin Luther that Jesus Christ is the head of the Christian Church as stated in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Article 5: "We believe one holy, Christian Church, the fellowship of the saints, the spiritual assembly of believers which is holy and the one bride of Christ . . ."

There is also agreement with the Lutherans on the teachings of the justification of faith, that individuals are saved by grace alone, and the authority of the Scriptures as the source of truth. The First Confession of Basel, drafted in 1534 by Oswald Myconius, quoted the Apostles' Creed and referred to it in a marginal note as "the universal faith."

Even though differences remain over the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist between this confession and the teachings of Luther, the spirit of this confessional statement is for agreement and a universal statement of faith for all Christians. The Basel Confession is one of the foundational doctrines of the Methodists.

The Basel Confession comes at a critical time as the Parliament of England recently adopted the Act of Supremacy and the new Anglican Church of England.

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1534 August 15 - Jesuit Order Founded

Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier who became a priest, is converting Jews and Muslims to the Christian faith.

Before becoming a priest, Loyola faced the Inquisition on Spain for his outward display of religious zeal. Fr. Loyola has been working with former prostitutes and charitable organizations in Rome. He currently has a following of 60 priests in his organization, the Society of Jesus.

Before converting to the Christian faith, Ignatius Loyola was fighting in the Basque territory of Spain. In the battle against the French in Pamplona, his right leg was broken by a cannon ball. During his recovery in a castle he read books about St. Francis and St. Dominic and converted to the Christian faith.

In an interview with Martin Luther, the former priest said, "*Father Loyola and I agree on the importance of evangelism and bringing the Word of Jesus Christ to the people. Unfortunately, Loyola and his Jesuit priests are teaching obedience to the pope instead of Jesus Christ and that good works are the means of salvation. According to Ephesians 2:4, we read that "by grace ye are saved. Good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance."*

With renewed fighting in the area around Buda (now Budapest), travel to the Holy Land by the Jesuits has been postponed because of the security risks of the fighting with the Turks.

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1534 October 1 - Construction Begins on St. Basil's Cathedral

Tsar Ivan Grozny IV (The Terrible) announced victory over the Muslims in Kazan ending the threat of violence and terror on the outskirts of Moscow. With each smaller victory in the past two years, the Russians have erected small white churches made of wood as an expression of thanks to God for these victories.

With the final defeat of the oppressive Kazan rulers, the Tsar announced construction today of a magnificent church to honor the Holy Trinity and Moscow's patron saint, Basil. The new church will include the seven wooded churches previously erected. The new cathedral will be made of stone with eight tall domes.

In a prepared statement, Ivan announced the spiritual significance of the intercession of the Virgin Mary in the historic victory of October 1. This date marked the victory of the defeat of the Muslims in their vicious attack on Constantinople in 910. Constantinople was the capital city of the Roman Empire at this time.

During the siege of Constantinople, the people gathered in the Vlakhern Church and prayed to God for deliverance. As they were praying angels appeared along with the Virgin Mary in a bright light. Andrei, often called 'God's fool' was also present. As Mary's veil covered the congregation, they heard her prayer for peace to her son, Jesus Christ. As a result, the Muslim invaders retreated and the people were saved from slavery and death.

St. Basil was the bishop of Caesaria in the 4th century and one of the authors of the Nicene Creed. He is known for his defense of the Holy Trinity in defeating the Arian heresy. January 2 is the Festival of St. Basil.

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1534 October 13 - Pope Paul III Elected

Alessandro Farnese was unanimously elected pope today at the age of 68. He is highly educated and a pupil of the famous Pomponius Laetus. He is a member of the de Medici family. Before his service to the Roman Catholic Church he fathered four children and currently has two grandsons.

He was appointed cardinal by Pope Julius II in 1509, even though he was not an ordained priest. After becoming a cardinal he ended his relationship with his mistress, Giulia, and studied to become a priest. He was ordained in 1519.

His election as Pope Paul III comes at a critical time as the Roman Catholic Church is faced with many joining the new Protestant churches, the conflict with the Turks, the wars with France, poor relations with Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire and division within the leadership of the Vatican.

The new pope said that one of his first actions would be to meet with Dr. Luther in Wittenberg. He stated that he would likely send his liberal theologian, Pablo Vergerio to Saxon within the year to meet with Martin Luther.

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1534 *Cathedral of Regensburg Completed*

The finest cathedral in Bavaria was completed today. Construction began in 1260 and the cathedral has been used for worship since 1276. The first cathedral was built around 700 and the Roman Catholic diocese was officially established in 739 by St. Boniface. The majestic Cathedral overlooks the Danube River.

The Cathedral is named for St. Peter and there are more than 100 pictures of Peter throughout the cathedral. The large window in the South portico includes the largest image of St. Peter. The cathedral is known for its majestic stained glass windows and Nativity altar.



