

# *The Wittenberg Times*

1526-1550



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

## **1543 Feb. 10 - Johann Eck Dies – Debated Luther at Leipzig**

The Reverend Johann Eck died in his home today in Ingolstadt, Bavaria at age 57. He studied at the Universities of Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Freiburg. After receiving his Doctor of Theology degree in 1510, he became a professor of theology at the University of Ingolstadt. His doctoral thesis opposed the Roman Catholic Church's position against usury, the charging of interest on money.

Johann Eck represented the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the primacy of the pope and good works at the Leipzig Debate with the Reverend Martin Luther. Reverend Eck wrote the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine* (June 1520) announcing the excommunication of Reverend Luther. The bull condemned 41 of Luther's theses. He also refuted the Augsburg Confession, the first doctrinal statement of the Lutheran Church.

Eck's treatise, *Enchiridion Against the Lutherans* (1525) defended all of the Roman Catholic beliefs the Protestants opposed. His treatise was widely read throughout Europe. Prior to his death he engaged in a public debate with Philipp Melancthon in Worms over the statements about the sacrament and mass in the Augsburg Confession.

Martin Luther commented, "*Father Eck was a brilliant scholar and theologian. We lived at the same time and had many of the same interests in religion, philosophy, and law. Although he is with our eternal Father in heaven, he believed that additional good works would be needed before he would see the face of God. How unfortunate, that he did not accept the teachings of Jesus Christ in Scripture that he was saved by God's grace. Yes, God loves Johann Eck and our God also loves you and calls you to faith in His Son Jesus Christ.*"

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## **1543 *First Protestants Executed by Spanish Inquisition***

The first execution of Protestants in Spain for following the teachings of Martin Luther were reported today. Pope Paul III approved the appointment of six cardinals as Inquisitor-Generals to the Inquisition last year in conjunction with his plans at the Council of Trent to stop the spread of Protestant ideas. The Spanish government's stand on the unity of Christians as Roman Catholics is likely a response to the spread of Protestant ideas in the Spanish Netherlands and England.

Francisco de San Roman was burned at the stake. It was a shocking execution because the flames were extinguished prematurely when the executioner thought that the movement of his head was a sign of his confession. He was then set on fire again. San Roman was a merchant who traveled to Germany and was influenced by Martin Luther's teaching on justification by faith. He was accused of writing a catechism in which he claimed Jesus Christ was the only mediator, that God's sacrifice on the cross was all that mattered, and that believers in Jesus Christ went to heaven and not purgatory.

The Inquisition is feared because the accused are presumed guilty and both they and their witnesses are allowed to be tortured. There are few Protestants in Spain as the Roman Catholic faith dominates. Spain's population also includes Jews and Muslims.

Martin Luther commented, "*I can only hope that Christians can worship freely and read the Holy Bible. God gives us rulers and we must respect their authority, even when we privately disagree with their position. The killing of Christians for their beliefs in England is outrageous and my prayer is for the pope to stop the Inquisition and allow people to read the banned books on the Index of Prohibited Books*".

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## 1543 June 17 - *Design for a Steamboat (Blasco da Garay)*

Emperor Charles V approved the trial of the latest invention of Blasco de Garay, captain of the Spanish navy, of a way to propel ships by paddles instead of oars. The experiment involved a large copper of boiling water to move the 200 ton ship *Trinidad* in calm waters. Captain Peter de Scarza will steer the *Trinidad* a distance of two leagues (about 7 miles or 11 kilometers).

There are about 300 gathered on the shore of the harbor. There is no wind and the sea is calm. It is a bright sunny day with clear blue skies. The hills in the background make this a scenic view on an historic summer day. Many are expecting failure while others have confidence in the captain's skills.

The *Trinidad* moved about three miles in the first hour of the experiment. Although critics feared the boiler would burst, Emperor Charles V approved of the invention and ordered the payment of two hundred thousand maravedis to Captain de Garay. Although it is difficult to calculate the value of these gold coins, it is about \$275,000 in today's currency of the dollar.

Other inventions of the creative de Garay include:

1. A way to recover vessels underwater, even if they were submerged a hundred fathoms deep, with only the aid of two men.
2. An apparatus by which anyone could be submerged under water indefinitely
3. Another device to detect objects on the seabed with the naked eye.
4. A way to keep a light burning underwater.
5. A way to sweeten brackish water.



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## **1543 May 24 - Nicolaus Copernicus Dies (b.1473)**

Nicolaus Copernicus died today of a stroke at the age of 70 in Frombork (Frauenberg), Poland. He had experienced epileptic seizures for the past months. He was the first scientist to propose that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun. He published his major work, *Six Books Concerning the Revolution of the Heavenly Orbs*, just a few weeks ago. His argument was that the Earth turned daily on its axis and that the gradual change of its axis is the reason for changing seasons.

His funeral and burial were at St. John's Cathedral in Frombork. After the death of his father in 1483, Copernicus was raised by his uncle, a priest. He provided Copernicus with a good education by enrolling him in Krakow Academy. In 1496 at the age of 23 he studied law in Italy at the University of Bologna. He was mentored by Professor Domenico Maria deNovara who encouraged him to study geography and astronomy.

He served the Roman Catholic Church in Poland faithfully as an administrator and in 1514 advised Pope Leo X on ways to improve the accuracy of the calendar.



We interviewed Martin Luther in Wittenberg who replied, *"This would be as if somebody were riding on a cart or in a ship and imagined that he was standing still while the earth and the trees were moving. So it goes now. Whoever wants to be clever must agree with nothing that others esteem. He must do something of his own. This is what that*

*fellow does who wishes to turn the whole of astronomy upside down. Even in these things that are thrown into disorder I believe the Holy Scriptures, for Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth [Jos. 10:12]."*

Rev. Luther confirmed that although he was a geocentrist, he did not agree with the traditionalist that God lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> heaven because God is everywhere. He further confirmed that Professor Georg Rheticus, a Lutheran, was in discussions with Copernicus on his new theory and that he encouraged it to be printed by Rev. Andras Osiander, a theologian and pastor, with a comment that the statement in the Bible is properly interpreted as the sun appeared to be still and that this is not a matter of truth but only one based on mathematical calculations.

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## **1543 Portuguese Land in Japan – Bring Firearms**

Initial reports to our newsroom in Wittenberg are that three shipwrecked Portuguese traders, Antonio Mota, Francisco Zeimoto, and Antonio Peixoto have found safety on the island of Tangeshima off the southern coast of Japan. They have met with the local daimyo warlords and sold them two guns and have given them lessons as to how to use these weapons. The most advanced weapon currently in Japan is the bow. The matchlock rifle has an effective range of up to 500 meters and the bow is limited to 30 meters. In addition to firearms, the Portuguese presented clocks, sweet potatoes, and tobacco.

The Portuguese sailors dominate both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans with their two deck merchant ships and the ability to carry up to 2,000 tons of cargo. They are able to take advantage of the trade winds and strong currents with four masts, overlapping sails, and the use of both triangular and square sails.

With their arrival in the Far East, the Portuguese control all the trade markets in both hemispheres. As information is being received from this important discovery, there are reports that St. Francis Xavier will leave from Goa in West India to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Japanese. There are reports that the Japanese produce silks finer than the ones we import from China.

