

## LUTHER



This past year, a movie was produced about Martin Luther.

Martin Luther was a theologian in Germany around the early 1,500's during the early part of the Reformation. Among his accomplishments was the publication of his Ninety-five Theses – a document that denounced the methods in which believers sought forgiveness and salvation through financial payments (indulgences) rather than by God's grace through Jesus Christ. The document was highly controversial as it opposed the power and theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Because he would retract his opposition, Martin became a criminal against the church; only by the mercy of a few, was his life spared for future writings to include a translation of the Bible from Latin to German.

Luther maintained that God interacts with human beings in two ways: through the law and through the Gospel. From Encarta, the following elaboration on his view of the law {from the Old Testament}:

The law represents God's demands—as expressed, for example, in the Ten Commandments and the golden rule. All people, regardless of their religious convictions, have some degree of access to the law through their consciences and through the ethical traditions of their culture, although their understanding of it is always distorted by human sin. The law has two functions. It enables human beings to maintain some order in their world, their communities, and their own lives despite the profound alienation from God, the world, their neighbors, and ultimately themselves that is caused by original sin. In addition, the law makes human beings aware of their need for the forgiveness of sins and thus leads them to Christ.

On the matter of the Gospel (or New Testament), the following elaboration from the same source:

God also interacts with human beings through the Gospel, the good news of God's gift of his Son for the salvation of the human race. This proclamation demands nothing but acceptance on the part of the individual. Indeed, Luther argued that theology had gone wrong precisely when it began to confuse law and Gospel (God's demand and God's gift) by claiming that human beings can in some way merit that which can only be the unconditional gift of God's grace.

Martin Luther was a person of strong conviction in regard to the interpretation of the Bible; in particular, the basis for salvation is by grace alone and the source of salvation is Christ alone. His conviction was of such depth as to place himself and other followers in grave danger; yet he remained steadfast in his place.

In a **WORD**