Reformation Theology

and the

Myth of Faust
Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Augustinian monk and
Professor of Biblical Studies at University of Wittenberg, Germany

Medieval Bible:
Latin Vulgate: St. Jerome 4th C AD (Doctor Faustus, Act I)
translates Greek New Testament and
Hebrew Old Testament into Latin

Renaissance humanism: revival of Latin and Greek learning

1516 Erasmus (Dutch humanist) publishes
edition of Greek New Testament based on Greek manuscripts
Luther uses this text to re-interpret NT & translate it to German
Luther’s revolt against Rome

1517 95 Theses against Indulgences

**Indulgences:** time off in Purgatory
   for one’s self or for dead relatives

**Purgatory:** intermediate place between Heaven & Hell
   emerged in 12 C. theology

Indulgences first granted to Crusaders in 12\textsuperscript{th} C, then
to people who financed a Crusader,
gradually become an income source for Rome
The Ptolemaic or Geo-centric Universe

(pre-Copernicus)

Dante's version
Early 14th C
THE MEDIEVAL COSMOS
In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*

Map of world
with Jerusalem at top
and
Mount of Purgatory
at polar south

Dante’s
Journey from
Hell through
Earth to
Mountain of
Purgatory

J: Jerusalem  P: Mount of Purgatory
G: Gibraltar  G*: Mouth of the river Ganges
F: Florence  E: Mouth of the river Ebro
S: South Pole
Hell as cone reaching to center of the Earth
Dante’s universe
Spheres of the planets bounded by the sphere of the fixed stars and the *primum mobile*
Indulgence Sale
Launched in 1517 by Pope Leo X
First Medici Pope
To rebuild Basilica of St. Peter’s
The nave and aisles serve both a place of worship and a funeral hall and cemetery for those desiring burial near St. Peter's shrine.

The narthex, or porch, gives access to the church through two doors opening into the nave and the four aisles.

The atrium, in which stood a caupöneum or fountain, was approached by a flight of 32 steps.

The transept opened centrally in a western aisle, from which the bishop and high clergy emerged to officiate at services.

The homa, or transept, contained St. Peter's shrine, beneath a baldachino.
St. Peter’s Basilica

Burial Church of St. Peter, first Bishop of Rome

Built by Emperor Constantine in early 4th C
New St. Peter’s built between 16-17th Centuries
Luther against Catholic Church

On Indulgences: denies existence of Purgatory
    Pope has no jurisdiction over the afterlife

Luther’s Central Theological Themes
    Human nature as fallen: original sin as corrupting
    Salvation by faith alone: not by effort or good works
    Scripture as only source of religious authority
    Rejection of Catholic hierarchy (Pope, Bishops, priests)
        of Catholic "works righteousness" (earning salvation)

All of these themes are central to the Faust legend
Reformation attack on Catholic doctrines

Attack on Mass and transubstantiation;
role of priest in turning bread and wine into
body of Christ seen as magical;
words of the consecration seen as incantation:
Latin: "Hoc Est Enim Corpus Meum" ("This is my Body")
source of "HOCUS POCUS" as magical formula

Rejection of devotion to saints, shrines, rosaries, statues
ICONOCLASM: breaking of statues, religious objects
Rejection of Catholic protections and remedies against misfortune

"ECCLESIASTICAL MEDICINES" offered by church as protection against misfortune, demons and witches:

  e.g. holy water, images, relics, exorcism--
  all now classified as "superstition" and rejected by Protestants

Why does the witch panic occur in 16th-17th C. after Reformation?

One factor:
  Issue of availability of remedies vs. fear of the witch
FAUST LEGEND
Image of scholar as sorcerer from Renaissance magic
interest in "occult" topics at universities
George Faustus of Heidelberg 1540
real scholar with reputation for magic

1587: **FAUSTBUCH (Faust Book)** first published in Germany

1588-92: Marlowe's play **Doctor Faustus** in England
Role of the devil is expanded by Reformation

Polemical attacks on Pope as Anti-Christ
all enemies as agents of the devil

New literary genre: TEUFELSBUCHER ("Devil books")
personification of vices as demonic
e.g. Sauffteufel = devil of drunks
1550's to 1590's: multiple editions
English Faust Book Illustrations
English Faust Book

16th C. Illustrations
From
1616
Edition of
Marlowe’s
Doctor Faustus
Political Setting: Marlowe’s Doctor FAUSTUS 1588

1534  England’s break with Rome under Henry VIII

1558  Elizabeth I succeeds Mary Tudor

1588  Spanish Armada sails against England sent by King Phillip II of Spain – Catholic son of Charles V Hapsburg Emperor

Faustus visits courts of Charles V and Roman Pope