MEDITATION

'Here I stand. I can do no other'

One name that holds a significant place in the history of Christianity is Martin Luther. There are many reasons for Luther's fame, but one of the most significant ones has to do with his response to a preacher named Johann Tetzel.

It started on All Saints' Eve in 1517, when Luther publicly objected to Tetzel's act of selling indulgences. Now indulgences were documents prepared by the Church, which were then bought by individuals either for themselves or on behalf of dead loved

These documents represented the grace of God that was believed to be provided through the Church for the forgiveness for sins. In essence, Tetzel was playing on the people's fear by telling them that they could buy their way out of hell, and he poetically promised, "Once the coin into the coffer clings, a soul from purgatory heavenward springs!"

Martin Luther challenged this trafficking in indulgences and called for a public debate on this and many other issues when he went to Wittenberg and

Meditation

tacked his 95 the-

ses on the church

door. Those 95

theses then be-

came a call for re-

form in the

Church. This call

to reform led to

the questioning of

the Church's au-

thority. For exam-

ple, Luther asked,

"Does the Pope

have the authority

to sell forgive-



Dr. Jeff Hensley Pastor Kings Mountain Baptist Church

From this point forth, the Reformation quickly began to unfold. It was just two years later, during a public debate in Leipzig, that Luther announced that "a simple layman armed with the Scriptures" is superior to the Pope without them. For this belief that the Bible is superior to Church tradition Luther was threatened with excommunication.

Luther replied to that threat with his three most important treatises: "The Address to the Christian Nobility", "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" and "On the Freedom of a Christian". In the first composition, he spoke of the priesthood of the believer. In the second work, he said that the sacraments should be reduced from seven to two (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and in the third book, he wrote of how Christians are free from the law (especially Church law) but called to love to their neighbors as themselves.

In 1521 Luther was called to an assembly at Worms, Germany, so that he might appear before Charles V, who was the Holy Roman Emperor. Luther arrived expecting another debate, but he quickly discovered that it was a trial instead, and that he was going to be asked to recant his views.

It was at this trial that Luther spoke those now famous words: "Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures... I cannot and will not recant." To which he then added, "Here I stand. I can do no other."

I wonder how our lives might change, if more believers were courageous enough to speak as openly for their faith as Martin Luther did. Perhaps more of us need to follow Luther's example, and say with love in our hearts: "Here I stand. I can do no other.'

CHURCH BRIEFS

Sunday Cookin' at Bynum Chapel

In celebration of Black History Month, Bynum Chapel AME Zion Church will sponsor "Sunday Cookin" on Sunday. Feb. 21, from 12 noon-4 p.m., dine in or carry out. Plates are \$8 per plate and \$4 for children under 12 years. The menu will feature fried/baked chicken and pigs feet with all the trimmings. Proceeds are earmarked for the building fund.

Red and White Ball

The second annual Red and White Ball will be held Saturday, Feb. 13, from 7 p.m. until midnight at Bynum Chapel Family Life Center under sponsorship of Board of Evangelism. A prize will go to the best dressed couple and a rose for the first 25 ladies in attendance. Worship, fun, laughs, dancing and food will be featured. Tickets are donation \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door; proceeds benefit the church.

Haiti survivor to speak Sunday

Michelle Remy, a survivor of the Haiti earthquake, will talk about how God spared her life for a purpose at Sunday morning worship services at 11 a.m. at Dixon Presbyterian Church on Dixon School Road.

Remy, 36, was born of missionary parents to Haiti and was working on the third floor of the Port-Au-Prince Capital Bank on Jan. 12 when the 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti's capital leaving staggering of numbers dead and massive destruction.

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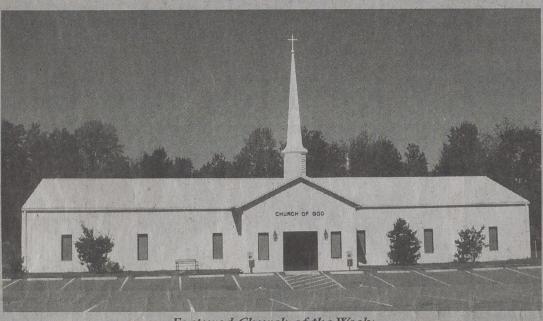
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