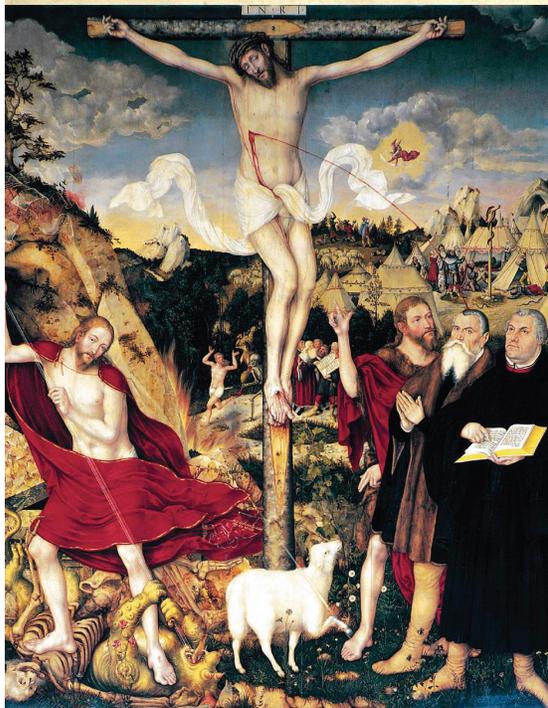
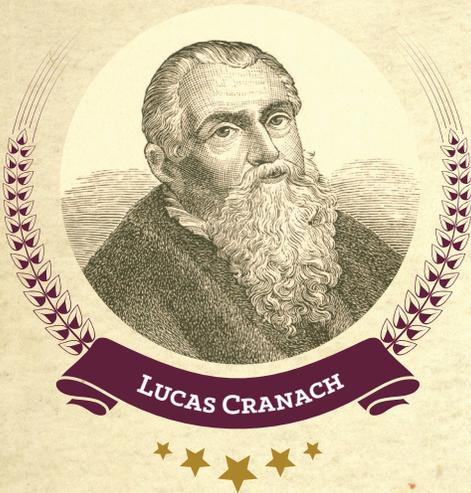


FACES OF THE REFORMATION

LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER

Born: 1472 | Kronach, Germany

Died: 1553 | Weimar, Germany



REFORMATION
2017 It's *Still* All About
Jesus

LutheranReformation.org

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Artist, businessman and friend of Luther

IN 1520 LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER WAS, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, A SUCCESS. He had been serving the court of Frederick the Wise for 14 years. His works of art had become so famous that he moved his personal studio, with several apprentices, into the town of Wittenberg. He had expanded into pursuits of real estate and small business. Cranach was active in local politics, having just been elected to Wittenberg's city council the previous year. Things were, however, about to change for the artist-entrepreneur. In the wake of the death of Emperor Maximilian, which made the political climate for reformers more dangerous, Frederick and Court Secretary George Spalatin decided that Martin Luther's face needed to be presented before the people so that he might become a household name. Cranach was the man who brought Luther's face to the people. Most of the images we have of the reformer came from his brush.

While some reformers, like Zwingli, mistakenly believed that religious art and paintings were against the Ten Commandments, Luther embraced the responsible use of the arts in the church. While Luther, Melancthon and others led the charge of the Reformation with their writings, Cranach aided the cause through the use of images, specifically paintings and woodcuts. Cranach and Luther grew close when they became colleagues in the publication of Luther's writings and pamphlets, most notably his Small Catechism and German translation of the Bible. Be it children's textbooks or scathing propaganda against the papacy, Cranach provided visual representations of Luther's thought.

More than just a colleague, Cranach became an important part of Luther's personal life. When Luther required homes for refugee nuns, Cranach provided housing. Later, when Luther married one of the escaping nuns, Katherina von Bora, Cranach was a witness at the wedding. As time went on, Luther and Cranach served as godparents for each other's children.

Cranach's lasting appeal is multifaceted. Not only is he remembered for his pictorial contribution to the Lutheran Reformation, but he is also lauded by the art community for his late-Renaissance "Wittenberg" style of painting. He painted, for many patrons, a variety of subjects including Catholic saints and Greek myths. Today his paintings and altar pieces grace museums all over the world. He accomplished all of this while engaged in politics and enterprise. In addition to working under Frederick the Wise he also served the Saxon Court under John the Steadfast and John Frederick the Magnanimous. His loyalty was unquestionable; he followed John Frederick into exile in 1547. Painter, businessman and friend, Cranach was a man who exemplified Luther's doctrine of vocation: that all stations in life are necessary for society and are God-pleasing.