

The Protestant Reformation: Erasmus and Luther

Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536)

- He was a leading “religious humanist;” known as the “Prince of the Humanists”
 - Humanism was an offshoot of the Renaissance, emphasized human learning and human interests (including the study of the classics)
 - Represented a challenge to the reigning scholasticism of the medieval period; humanism first arose around 1350 in Italy
 - As humanism influenced religious studies, there was an increasing emphasis on the need to study the Bible and the Church Fathers
 - Also, an emphasis on the need to reform certain emphases within the church—including an emphasis on proper conduct, learning, and nature rather than theology.
- Studied in Paris and then in 1499 went to England. In England, he studied Greek classics under John Colet and Thomas More.
- Taught at the University of Cambridge (from 1509–1515), where he mastered the Greek New Testament.
- Wrote several important works:
 - *The Praise of Folly* was a satirical work that attacked Roman Catholic traditions and popular superstitions of the day (written in 1509)
 - *Novem Instrumentum* (1516) and *Novem Testamentum* (1518) – Greek New Testament with translation and notes, exposed errors in the Vulgate; his New Testament texts would become important in theological debates that ensued during the Protestant Reformation
- Wanted to reform the Church through scholarship and self-criticism. His satirical writings were intended to cause the church to evaluate itself. He desired to reform the church from within, and therefore never officially broke with Rome.



- Did not teach justification by faith alone, and disagreed with the Reformers on other points as well. He and Luther initially shared a level of respect and admiration for one another. But when Erasmus did not wholeheartedly join Luther's movement, Luther called him a "viper," "liar," and "the very mouth and organ of Satan."

Selections from *The Praise of Folly*

(translated by John Wilson in 1668; online at:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/8efly10.txt>)

[On the general foolishness of men's self-perceptions:]

But what do I speak of any one or the other particular kind of men, as if this self-love had not the same effect everywhere and rendered most men superabundantly happy? As when a fellow, more deformed than a baboon, shall believe himself handsomer than Homer's Nereus.

. . . Or to what purpose is it I should mind you of our professors of arts? Forasmuch as this self-love is so natural to them all that they had rather part with their father's land than their foolish opinions; but chiefly players, fiddlers, orators, and poets, of which the more ignorant each of them is, the more insolently he pleases himself, that is to say vaunts and spreads out his plumes. . . . the more foolish anything is, the more 'tis admired, the greater number being ever tickled at the worst things, because, as I said before, most men are so subject to folly. And therefore if the more foolish a man is, the more he pleases himself and is admired by others, to what purpose should he beat his brains about true knowledge, which first will cost him dear, and next render him the more troublesome and less confident, and lastly, please only a few?

And now I consider it, Nature has planted, not only in particular men but even in every nation, and scarce any city is there without it, a kind of common self-love. And hence is it that the English, besides other things, particularly challenge to themselves beauty, music, and feasting. The Scots are proud of their nobility, alliance to the crown, and logical subtleties. The French think themselves the only well-bred men. The Parisians, excluding all others, arrogate to themselves the only knowledge of divinity. The Italians affirm they are the only masters of good letters and eloquence, and flatter themselves on this account, that of all others they only are not barbarous. In which kind of happiness those of Rome claim the first place, still dreaming to themselves of somewhat, I know not what, of old Rome. The Venetians fancy themselves happy in the opinion of their nobility. The Greeks, as if they were the only authors of sciences, swell themselves with the titles of the ancient heroes. The Turk, and all that sink of the truly barbarous, challenge to themselves the only glory of religion and laugh at Christians as superstitious. And much more pleasantly the Jews expect to this day the coming of the Messiah, and so obstinately contend for their Law of Moses. The Spaniards

give place to none in the reputation of soldiery. The Germans pride themselves in their tallness of stature and skill in magic.

And, not to instance in every particular, you see, I conceive, how much satisfaction this Self-love, who has a sister also not unlike herself called Flattery, begets everywhere; for self-love is no more than the soothing of a man's self, which, done to another, is flattery. .

[On the follies of the Roman Catholic religious corruption:]

And next these come those that commonly call themselves the religious and monks, most false in both titles, when both a great part of them are farthest from religion, and no men swarm thicker in all places than themselves. . . . [B]y reason of these fooleries they not only set slight by others, but each different order, men otherwise professing apostolical charity, despise one another, and for the different wearing of a habit, or that 'tis of darker color, they put all things in combustion. And among these there are some so rigidly religious that their upper garment is haircloth, their inner of the finest linen; and, on the contrary, others wear linen without and hair next their skins. Others, again, are as afraid to touch money as poison, and yet neither forbear wine nor dallying with women. In a word, 'tis their only care that none of them come near one another in their manner of living, nor do they endeavor how they may be like Christ, but how they may differ among themselves. . . .

In like manner cardinals, if they thought themselves the successors of the apostles, they would likewise imagine that the same things the other did are required of them, and that they are not lords but dispensers of spiritual things of which they must shortly give an exact account. . . . And for popes, that supply the place of Christ, if they should endeavor to imitate His life, to wit His poverty, labor, doctrine, cross, and contempt of life, or should they consider what the name pope, that is father, or holiness, imports, who would live more disconsolate than themselves? or who would purchase that chair with all his substance? Or defend it, so purchased, with swords, poisons, and all force imaginable? so great a profit would the access of wisdom deprive him of--wisdom did I say? nay, the least corn of that salt which Christ speaks of: so much wealth, so much honor, so much riches, so many victories, so many offices, so many dispensations, so much tribute, so many pardons; such horses, such mules, such guards, and so much pleasure would it lose them. You see how much I have comprehended in a little: instead of which it would bring in watchings, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, good endeavors, sighs, and a thousand the like troublesome exercises. Nor is this least considerable: so many scribes, so many copying clerks, so many notaries, so many advocates, so many promoters, so many secretaries, so many muleteers, so many grooms, so many bankers: in short, that vast multitude of men that overcharge the Roman See--I mistook, I meant honor --might beg their bread.

A most inhuman and economical thing, and more to be execrated, that those great princes of the Church and true lights of the world should be reduced to a staff and a wallet. Whereas now, if there be anything that requires their pains, they leave that to Peter and Paul that have leisure enough; but if there be anything of honor or pleasure, they take that to themselves. By which means it is, yet by my courtesy, that scarce any kind of men live more voluptuously or with less trouble; as believing that Christ will be well enough pleased if in their mystical and almost mimical pontificality, ceremonies, titles of holiness and the like, and blessing and cursing, they play the parts of bishops. To work miracles is old and antiquated, and not in fashion now; to instruct the people, troublesome; to interpret the Scripture, pedantic; to pray, a sign one has little else to do; to shed tears, silly and womanish; to be poor, base; to be vanquished, dishonorable and little becoming him that scarce admits even kings to kiss his slipper; and lastly, to die, uncouth; and to be stretched on a cross, infamous. . . .

As if the Church had any deadlier enemies than wicked prelates, who not only suffer Christ to run out of request for want of preaching him, but hinder his spreading by their multitudes of laws merely contrived for their own profit, corrupt him by their forced expositions, and murder him by the evil example of their pestilent life.

Nay, further, whereas the Church of Christ was founded in blood confirmed by blood, and augmented by blood, now, as if Christ, who after his wonted manner defends his people, were lost, they govern all by the sword. And whereas war is so savage a thing that it rather befits beasts than men, so outrageous that the very poets feigned it came from the Furies, so pestilent that it corrupts all men's manners, so unjust that it is best executed by the worst of men, so wicked that it has no agreement with Christ; and yet, omitting all the other, they make this their only business. . . . Nor are they destitute of their learned flatterers that call that palpable madness zeal, piety, and valor, having found out a new way by which a man may kill his brother without the least breach of that charity which, by the command of Christ, one Christian owes another. . . .

And as to the common herd of priests, they account it a crime to degenerate from the sanctity of their prelates. Heidah! How soldier-like they bustle about the *_jus divinum_* of titles, and how quick-sighted they are to pick the least thing out of the writings of the ancients wherewith they may fright the common people and convince them, if possible, that more than a tenth is due! Yet in the meantime it least comes in their heads how many things are everywhere extant concerning that duty which they owe the people. Nor does their shorn crown in the least admonish them that a priest should be free from all worldly desires and think of nothing but heavenly things. Whereas on the contrary, these jolly fellows say they have sufficiently discharged their offices if they but anyhow mumble over a few odd prayers, which, so help me, Hercules! I wonder if any god either hear or understand, since they do neither themselves, especially when they thunder them out in that manner they are wont [accustomed]. But this they have in common

with those of the heathens, that they are vigilant enough to the harvest of their profit, nor is there any of them that is not better read in those laws than the Scripture. Whereas if there be anything burdensome, they prudently lay that on other men's shoulders and shift it from one to the other, as men toss a ball from hand to hand Again, the priests that call themselves secular, as if they were initiated to the world, not to Christ, lay the burden on the regulars; the regulars on the monks; the monks that have more liberty on those that have less; and all of them on the mendicants; the mendicants on the Carthusians, among whom, if anywhere, this piety lies buried, but yet so close that scarce anyone can perceive it. In like manner the popes, the most diligent of all others in gathering in the harvest of money, refer all their apostolical work to the bishops, the bishops to the parsons, the parsons to the vicars, the vicars to their brother mendicants, and they again throw back the care of the flock on those that take the wool.

Martin Luther (1483–1546)¹

Early Life

- Born in Eisleben, Germany on Nov. 10, 1483
- Family moved to Mansfeld for economic reasons; Luther's father (Hans) was successful and served on the town council
- Luther was well-educated in Mansfeld; received typical late-medieval Catholic education (Latin grammar and classics)
- At age 13, sent to Magdeburg to study rhetoric and logic; introduced to humanism
- Completed his early education at Eisenach in 1498
- Sent to University of Erfurt in 1501 because his father wanted him to become a lawyer; Erfurt was one of the most prestigious German Universities of its day.
- In 1505, Luther entered law school at his father's request.
- On July 2, while traveling home for a visit, Luther was nearly struck by lightning, and called upon St. Anne to save his life. In return, he promised to enter a monastery, which he did on July 17, 1505 (though much to his father's chagrin)



- The monastery in Erfurt was of the Augustinian order, under the leadership of Johann von Staupitz who was a spiritual father to Luther for many years.

Conversion and Spiritual Development

- After entering the monastery, Luther became consumed with the question of his own salvation; preoccupied with the fact that his sins deserved divine wrath
- Though he followed monastic life to the letter, Luther could not abate the guilt he felt. He would later write, “If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I would have gotten there.” But in spite of the fasting, prayers, self-mortification, and confession, Luther continued to feel the heavy burden of his sin.
- As Luther studied the book of Romans, specifically the “righteousness of God” in Romans 1:17, he came to understand that justification is a single act of God (declaring the sinner righteous) rather than a gradual process of faith mixed with good works. He likewise came to understand that justification is by grace through faith in Christ, and not the result of works.
- Luther described his conversion as being led out of a dark prison house of self-inflicted penance into the daylight and fresh air of God’s redeeming love.
- Around this time (in 1510), Luther was sent to Rome where he stayed for a month. He came with great expectations, and left deeply disillusioned by the corruption. (Julius II was the pope at the time, St. Peter’s Basilica was under construction, and the Sistine chapel was being completed.)

Transition to Wittenberg

- In 1511, Luther went to Wittenberg to prepare for the Doctor of Theology degree which he received in 1512. He subsequently became Professor of Biblical Literature at the university there.
- He lectured through Psalms (1513–15), Romans (1515–16), Galatians, Hebrews, Titus (1516–19) and Psalms again (1519). During this time, he clarified his views on justification and began to develop an evangelical theology.
- In 1515 Luther began preaching at the city church of Wittenberg—a position he would hold for the rest of his life.
- Though he was becoming more and more disgusted with Roman Catholic corruption, he had not yet purposed to split from the Catholic system.

The 95 Theses

- Around this time, Pope Julius II (1503–1513) and Leo X (1513–21) began selling indulgences to fund the construction costs associated with St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.
- In Northern Germany, Albert of Hohenzollern was given charge of selling indulgences on Rome’s behalf.
- Albert appointed Johann Tetzel (d. 1519), a Dominican, to preach sermons that encouraged the people to purchase indulgences.
- Luther posted his 95 theses (in Latin, not German) on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg to protest what was an obvious abuse of indulgences. (This door would have been a common place to put announcements and to offer documents for academic debate.)
- The theses themselves were primarily aimed at corruption within the Roman Catholic system; they were not Protestant or evangelical, *per se*.
- “These are not a protest against the pope [the office of the papacy in general] and the Roman Church, or any of her doctrines, not even against indulgences, but only against their abuse” (Philip Schaff, 7:151).
- But some evangelical views are implied:
 - Concern with sin, repentance, and forgiveness
 - Doctrine of papacy begins to be undermined
 - Remission of guilt can only come from God
 - The true treasury of the church is the gospel
- The 95 Theses were quickly translated into German and distributed throughout all of Germany (thanks to the printing press)
- The pope was directly attacked in the document, making it very shocking
- Albert of Hohenzollern was also attacked in the document; in fact, Albert had Tetzel prepare 94 theses to support indulgences, which is why Luther chose 95.

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The Ninety-Five Theses

Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences by Dr. Martin Luther (1517)

Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in Ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us, may do so by letter.

In the Name our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said *Poenitentiam agite* [*Repent ye*], willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, i.e., confession and satisfaction, which is administered by the priests.
3. Yet it means not inward repentance only; nay, there is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work divers mortifications of the flesh.
4. The penalty [of sin], therefore, continues so long as hatred of self continues; for this is the true inward repentance, and continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope does not intend to remit, and cannot remit any penalties other than those which he has imposed either by his own authority or by that of the Canons.
6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God's remission; though, to be sure, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in such cases were despised, the guilt would remain entirely unforgiven.
7. God remits guilt to no one whom He does not, at the same time, humble in all things and bring into subjection to His vicar, the priest.
8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to them, nothing should be imposed on the dying.

9. Therefore the Holy Spirit in the pope is kind to us, because in his decrees he always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.
10. Ignorant and wicked are the doings of those priests who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penances for purgatory.
11. This changing of the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory is quite evidently one of the tares that were sown while the bishops slept.
12. In former times the canonical penalties were imposed not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.
13. The dying are freed by death from all penalties; they are already dead to canonical rules, and have a right to be released from them.
14. The imperfect health [of soul], that is to say, the imperfect love, of the dying brings with it, of necessity, great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater is the fear.
15. This fear and horror is sufficient of itself alone (to say nothing of other things) to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near to the horror of despair.
16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ as do despair, almost-despair, and the assurance of safety.
17. With souls in purgatory it seems necessary that horror should grow less and love increase.
18. It seems unproved, either by reason or Scripture, that they are outside the state of merit, that is to say, of increasing love.
19. Again, it seems unproved that they, or at least that all of them, are certain or assured of their own blessedness, though we may be quite certain of it.
20. Therefore by "full remission of all penalties" the pope means not actually "of all," but only of those imposed by himself.
21. Therefore those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope's indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved;
22. Whereas he remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to the canons, they would have had to pay in this life.
23. If it is at all possible to grant to any one the remission of all penalties whatsoever, it is certain that this remission can be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to the very fewest.

24. It must needs be, therefore, that the greater part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.
25. The power which the pope has, in a general way, over purgatory, is just like the power which any bishop or curate has, in a special way, within his own diocese or parish.
26. The pope does well when he grants remission to souls [in purgatory], not by the power of the keys (which he does not possess), but by way of intercession.
27. They preach men who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].
28. It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.
29. Who knows whether all the souls in purgatory wish to be bought out of it, as in the legend of Sts. Severinus and Paschal.
30. No one is sure that his own contrition is sincere; much less that he has attained full remission.
31. Rare as is the man that is truly penitent, so rare is also the man who truly buys indulgences, i.e., such men are most rare.
32. They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon.
33. Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him;
34. For these "graces of pardon" concern only the penalties of sacramental satisfaction, and these are appointed by man.
35. They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary in those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessionals.
36. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.
37. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.

38. Nevertheless, the remission and participation [in the blessings of the Church] which are granted by the pope are in no way to be despised, for they are, as I have said, the declaration of divine remission.
39. It is most difficult, even for the very keenest theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the abundance of pardons and [the need of] true contrition.
40. True contrition seeks and loves penalties, but liberal pardons only relax penalties and cause them to be hated, or at least, furnish an occasion [for hating them].
41. Apostolic pardons are to be preached with caution, lest the people may falsely think them preferable to other good works of love.
42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend the buying of pardons to be compared in any way to works of mercy.
43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons;
44. Because love grows by works of love, and man becomes better; but by pardons man does not grow better, only more free from penalty.
45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a man in need, and passes him by, and gives [his money] for pardons, purchases not the indulgences of the pope, but the indignation of God.
46. Christians are to be taught that unless they have more than they need, they are bound to keep back what is necessary for their own families, and by no means to squander it on pardons.
47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of pardons is a matter of free will, and not of commandment.
48. Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting pardons, needs, and therefore desires, their devout prayer for him more than the money they bring.
49. Christians are to be taught that the pope's pardons are useful, if they do not put their trust in them; but altogether harmful, if through them they lose their fear of God.
50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the pardon-preachers, he would rather that St. Peter's church should go to ashes, than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep.

51. Christians are to be taught that it would be the pope's wish, as it is his duty, to give of his own money to very many of those from whom certain hawkers of pardons cajole money, even though the church of St. Peter might have to be sold.

52. The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain, even though the commissary, nay, even though the pope himself, were to stake his soul upon it.

53. They are enemies of Christ and of the pope, who bid the Word of God be altogether silent in some Churches, in order that pardons may be preached in others.

54. Injury is done the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or a longer time is spent on pardons than on this Word.

55. It must be the intention of the pope that if pardons, which are a very small thing, are celebrated with one bell, with single processions and ceremonies, then the Gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.

56. The "treasures of the Church," out of which the pope grants indulgences, are not sufficiently named or known among the people of Christ.

57. That they are not temporal treasures is certainly evident, for many of the vendors do not pour out such treasures so easily, but only gather them.

58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the Saints, for even without the pope, these always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outward man.

59. St. Lawrence said that the treasures of the Church were the Church's poor, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.

60. Without rashness we say that the keys of the Church, given by Christ's merit, are that treasure;

61. For it is clear that for the remission of penalties and of reserved cases, the power of the pope is of itself sufficient.

62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.

63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last.

64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.

65. Therefore the treasures of the Gospel are nets with which they formerly were wont to fish for men of riches.
66. The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.
67. The indulgences which the preachers cry as the "greatest graces" are known to be truly such, in so far as they promote gain.
68. Yet they are in truth the very smallest graces compared with the grace of God and the piety of the Cross.
69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of apostolic pardons, with all reverence.
70. But still more are they bound to strain all their eyes and attend with all their ears, lest these men preach their own dreams instead of the commission of the pope.
71. He who speaks against the truth of apostolic pardons, let him be anathema and accursed!
72. But he who guards against the lust and license of the pardon-preachers, let him be blessed!
73. The pope justly thunders against those who, by any art, contrive the injury of the traffic in pardons.
74. But much more does he intend to thunder against those who use the pretext of pardons to contrive the injury of holy love and truth.
75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God -- this is madness.
76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.
77. It is said that even St. Peter, if he were now Pope, could not bestow greater graces; this is blasphemy against St. Peter and against the pope.
78. We say, on the contrary, that even the present pope, and any pope at all, has greater graces at his disposal; to wit, the Gospel, powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written in I. Corinthians xii.
79. To say that the cross, emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up [by the preachers of indulgences], is of equal worth with the Cross of Christ, is blasphemy.

80. The bishops, curates and theologians who allow such talk to be spread among the people, will have an account to render.

81. This unbridled preaching of pardons makes it no easy matter, even for learned men, to rescue the reverence due to the pope from slander, or even from the shrewd questionings of the laity.

82. To wit: -- "Why does not the pope empty purgatory, for the sake of holy love and of the dire need of the souls that are there, if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a Church? The former reasons would be most just; the latter is most trivial."

83. Again: -- "Why are mortuary and anniversary masses for the dead continued, and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded on their behalf, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?"

84. Again: -- "What is this new piety of God and the pope, that for money they allow a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God, and do not rather, because of that pious and beloved soul's own need, free it for pure love's sake?"

85. Again: -- "Why are the penitential canons long since in actual fact and through disuse abrogated and dead, now satisfied by the granting of indulgences, as though they were still alive and in force?"

86. Again: -- "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?"

87. Again: -- "What is it that the pope remits, and what participation does he grant to those who, by perfect contrition, have a right to full remission and participation?"

88. Again: -- "What greater blessing could come to the Church than if the pope were to do a hundred times a day what he now does once, and bestow on every believer these remissions and participations?"

89. "Since the pope, by his pardons, seeks the salvation of souls rather than money, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons granted heretofore, since these have equal efficacy?"

90. To repress these arguments and scruples of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the Church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christians unhappy.

91. If, therefore, pardons were preached according to the spirit and mind of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved; nay, they would not exist.

92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace!

93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!

94. Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hell;

95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven rather through many tribulations, than through the assurance of peace.

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Rome's Response

- Pope Leo X was distracted with political concerns (specifically with France and Germany); and so slow to respond
- Luther under the protection of Frederick the Wise of Saxony; Frederick regarded the controversy at Wittenberg as a typical monkish quarrel



Pope Leo X

Attacks and Answers

- From the Augustinian Order – April 26, 1518
 - At a general council meeting in Heidelberg, Luther defended his views, refusing to recant
 - The older Augustinian monks attacked Luther; but the younger monks had a more favorable view toward him, including Martin Bucer (1491-1551), who would later become a significant reformer in his own right
- From Sylvester Prierias – June, 1518
 - As Luther's views began to spread, Leo X appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate. The commission was led by Prierias (1456-1527)—a professor of Thomistic metaphysics and theology
 - Luther was deemed a heretic; a charge to which Luther responded in writing with *Resolutions Concerning the Virtue of Indulgences*

- This resulted in a number of attacks and counter-attacks being published. Rather than weakening Luther's position, his contest with Prierias only strengthened his resolve.
- By now, Luther is elaborating his own theology and seriously questioning the primacy of Rome and the authority of the Pope
- From Cardinal Thomas de Vio Cajetan – August, 1518
 - On August 7, 1518, the pope summoned Luther to Rome with an order to recant
 - Frederick intervened, and convinced the pope that Luther should appear before an official legate (Cardinal Cajetan) at the Diet of Augsburg. That way, the investigation could take place on German soil.
 - Prince Frederick sought to have Luther appear before the Papal legate Cajetan at the diet of Augsburg. This would be a private interview and at least be on German soil.
 - Cajetan (1469–1534) was primarily concerned with Luther's denial of the Pope's power to forgive and the denial of the church's treasury of merit.
 - After meeting three times, Cajetan was not able to persuade Luther to recant, since he was not able to present any biblical reason as to why Luther was wrong
 - Luther, recognizing his life was in danger (since Cajetan wanted to arrest him and take him to Rome) fled in the night; Frederick refused to arrest or banish Luther until an impartial trial could be granted him in Germany.



Luther Meets with Cajetan

- From Karl von Miltitz – January 1519
 - In a third attempt to reason with Luther, Leo sent Karl von Miltitz (1490–1529), a German nobleman and Papal treasurer
 - Miltitz met Luther in the home of George Spalatin (Jan 4–9, 1519) and treated him kindly (unlike Prierias or Cajetan)
 - As a result, Miltitz convinced Luther to remain silent as long as his enemies did also.
 - But, this silence did not last long since Luther’s views were attacked in Leipzig in June 1519 (by Johann Eck in his debates with Andreas Karlstadt)
 - But for a few months, there was something of a rest in the conflict
 - In the winter of 1518–19 Luther preached two sermons (*On Twofold Justice* and *On Threefold Justice*) which were key in the articulation of his belief in justification by faith alone (this doctrine would be more fully developed in his *Commentary on Galatians* [1535] and *The Disputation concerning Justification* [1536])

The Leipzig Debate – July 1519

- An initial debate took place between Dr. Johannes Eck (1486–1543), a German Catholic Scholar and Andreas Carlstadt (1480–1541), a German Protestant Reformer from Wittenberg. The debate went from June 27 to July 3, 1519.
- Eck emerged as the winner in the debate; because his rhetorical ability was better than Carlstadt
- This was followed by a debate between Eck and Luther. (Luther had been in attendance at the previous debate along with Melanchthon [1497-1560].) Luther entered the debate on July 4.
- Luther debated Eck on the topic of papal authority. He used the Bible and the early church fathers to make his case. Luther effectively argued against the infallibility of the pope, the primacy of the church at Rome, and the inerrancy of church councils. He also asserted the final authority of Scripture in all religious matters.



Johannes Eck

- Eck attempted to associate Luther with previous “heretics” like Wycliffe and Huss. Those in attendance were split between supporting Eck and supporting Luther.
- For Luther, the debate was significant because it helped solidify his convictions on several key issues, including the authority of Scripture, the invisible church, and the fallibility of the pope and church councils.
- After the debate, Luther went back to Wittenberg and continued to study; Eck returned to Rome and sought Luther’s condemnation. Not long after this, Pope Leo X would issue a Bull of Excommunication against Luther (in 1520).

Luther’s Excommunication – June, 1520

- At this point, Luther was calling the Pope the “antichrist” who oversaw a church that was “the most lawless den of robbers, the most shameless of all brothels, the very kingdom of sin, death, and hell.”
- On June 15, 1520, the church issued a Papal Bull of excommunication against Luther, giving an official response to the *95 Theses* and listing 41 errors ascribed to Luther; Luther was given 60 days to recant; Eck went to Germany to deliver the bull
- Luther responded by burning a copy of the bull on December 10, 1520, the last day of the 60 day period; as a result, the Pope officially excommunicated him on January 3, 1521

The Diet of Worms – Spring, 1521

- The Diet had already been called by Charles V (beginning in January) to address various religious issues
- Luther was granted safe passage, and went to defend his views at the Diet
- Luther’s trial was held on April 17–18, 1521; Alexander (the papal nuncio) represented the pope
- A stack of Luther’s books were presented to him; he was asked to recant what he had written in those books; Luther responded by requesting 24 hours to consider his response; so that he might answer “without detriment to the Word of God and danger to my salvation”
- The next day, Luther divided his books into three groups:

- Books addressing religious issues that everyone (including his enemies) agreed on, which he would not recant lest he deny the truth
 - Books addressing papal abuses and catholic corruption, which he would not recant lest he invite more corruption
 - Books defending the gospel over against his opponents, which he admitted were harsh but for which he would not recant lest he violate the Word of God
- When pressed for a simple recantation, Luther replied with these famous words: "I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the Word of God: I cannot and I will not recant anything, for it is neither safe nor honest to act against one's conscience . . . Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God, Amen."
 - On April 25, Luther left to return to Wittenberg; on the way he was "kidnapped" by the friendly forces of Frederick and taken to Wartburg Castle (where he would remain for a year, under the pseudonym "Knight George")
 - On May 26, 1521, Charles V issued the *Edict of Worms* which declared Luther to be a heretic and an outlaw who was worthy of death
 - During his time in Wartburg Castle (a time he referred to as his own Patmos experience), Luther translated the New Testament into German; over 100,000 copies were published before his death
 - While Luther was away from Wittenberg, more radical Anabaptists (Carlstadt and the even more radical, Zwickau Prophets) came and began to cause trouble in Wittenberg; news of the trouble would eventually motivate Luther to secretly return to Wittenberg in March, 1522 (at which time he preached his famous *Vocavit* sermons which restored order to the city)

Return to Wittenberg

- Upon returning to Wittenburg, Luther insisted that religious reforms proceed with the support of Frederick. He restored the mass, fasting, etc that Carlstadt had removed. His position: *Let us retain all that the Bible is silent on.* Carlstadt's position: *Let us retain only what is mentioned in the Bible.* Luther continued to resist all efforts at radical reform and efforts to weaken the established church.
- Carlstadt left Wittenberg; other more radical reformers (like Thomas Munzer) led the peasants in other parts of Germany in revolt; Luther supported the right of the nobility to crush the rebellion with force

- Around this time (in 1524) Erasmus attacked Luther and the reformation specifically with regard to the doctrine of total depravity. (Erasmus had initially supported Luther but began to turn against him when he burned the Papal Bull in 1521). Erasmus taught that freedom of the will was necessary for man to be morally culpable before God; he wrote a work entitled *Freedom of the Will* in September 1524.
- Luther responded with *Bondage of the Will* in December 1525. Luther was very strong on predestination and in places makes even stronger statements than those associated with Calvin.
- In May 1525, Frederick the Wise died and was succeeded by John the Steadfast, who also supported Luther
- On June 13, 1525 Luther married Katharina von Bora, a former nun
- During these years, Luther established evangelical worship in Wittenberg. His reforms included an emphasis on preaching and on the religious instruction of children; a celebration of the Lord's Supper without Christ being sacrificed anew; services being performed in the language of the people; focus on Christ as the mediator (rather than the Virgin Mary); and so on
- In 1529, Luther met with Swiss Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli to discuss how the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. The two met at the invitation of Philip of Hesse (1504–1567) at a castle in Marburg, Germany. Luther espoused that the “real presence” of Christ was present in the elements at Communion. Zwingli taught that the elements were only symbolic. The two were unable to agree on this issue, causing a permanent split between the two. To quote Luther, “I would rather drink blood with the Papist than drink wine with Zwingli.”

The Diet of Augsburg – 1530

- Called by Charles V; needed Protestant support in order to effectively fight against the Turks
- Melancthon created the Augsburg confession with Luther's help; 28 articles that came from the 14 articles of Marburg and from his Schwabach Articles of 1529. In an effort to bring unity Melancthon compromised various doctrines in favor of the Catholics.
- The Catholics accepted 9 of the articles without comment; 6 of the articles with qualification; and condemned 13 of the articles
- The result became the authoritative confessional standard of Lutherans

- The first 21 articles focused on Lutheran and Roman Catholic doctrinal teachings; Melanchthon attempted to show unity of doctrine
 - Articles 22–28 pointed out various abuses in the Roman Catholic system
 - Weaknesses include baptismal regeneration (Article 9), consubstantiation (Article 10), administration of sacraments to the lost (Article 8), denial of eternal security (Article 12), no discussion of end times, attacks Anabaptism in an unfair way
 - Strengths include an affirmation (though a bit weak) of justification by faith alone (Article 4); individual right to interpret Scripture; the Church as an invisible group of saints (Article 8); strong statements on doctrines of God (Article 1), Christ (Article 3), and original sin (Article 2); and opposition to abuses of the Catholic Church (Articles 22–28)
- Lutheranism experienced great prosperity until Luther’s death in 1546.

Luther’s Later Years

- Luther became the dean of the theological college at Wittenberg; his authoritarianism grew as a result
- Translation of the German Old Testament completed in 1534; Luther esteemed all of Scripture but viewed some books as less valuable: Esther, Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation
- Luther’s intolerance for detractors increased after 1535, and got worse due to an almost fatal gallstone which plagued him constantly from 1537 until his death
- Luther was also deeply affected by the death of his daughter at age 13
- Luther died in Eisleben on February 18, 1546; he had traveled there from Wittenberg to help his siblings resolve a civil dispute regarding the mining business they had inherited from their father