

The 95 Theses – Background

In 1517, incensed at the abuses of indulgence salesmen such as Tetzels, Martin Luther penned 95 statements against the practice of selling indulgences. On October 31, he nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenburg, a common method of initiating scholarly discussion.

The actual title of the famous theses is Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences. Luther wrote them in Latin with an intended audience of his university colleagues, and could not have imagined the impact they would have on Christianity and on Europe.

The 95 Theses – English Translation

1. When Jesus said "repent" he meant that believers should live a whole life repenting
2. Only God can give salvation - not a priest.
3. Inwards penitence must be accompanied with a suitable change in lifestyle.
4. Sin will always remain until we enter Heaven.
5. The pope must act according to canon law.
6. Only God can forgive -the pope can only reassure people that God will do this.
7. A sinner must be humbled in front of his priest before God can forgive him.
8. Canon law applies only to the living not to the dead.
9. However, the Holy Spirit will make exceptions to this when required to do so.
10. The priest must not threaten those dying with the penalty of purgatory.
11. The church through church penalties is producing a 'human crop of weeds'.
12. In days gone by, church penalties were imposed before release from guilt to show true repentance.
13. When you die all your debts to the church are wiped out and those debts are free from being judged.
14. When someone is dying they might have bad/incorrect thoughts against the church and they will be scared. This fear is enough penalty.

15. This fear is so bad that it is enough to cleanse the soul.
16. Purgatory = Hell. Heaven = Assurance.
17. Souls in Purgatory need to find love - the more love the less their sin.
18. A sinful soul does not have to be always sinful. It can be cleansed.
19. There is no proof that a person is free from sin.
20. Even the pope - who can offer forgiveness - cannot totally forgive sins held within.
21. An indulgence will not save a man.
22. A dead soul cannot be saved by an indulgence.
23. Only a very few sinners can be pardoned. These people would have to be perfect.
24. Therefore most people are being deceived by indulgences.
25. The pope's power over Purgatory is the same as a priest's.
26. When the pope intervenes to save an individual, he does so by the will of God.
27. It is nonsense to teach that a dead soul in Purgatory can be saved by money.
28. Money causes greed - only God can save souls.
29. Do we know if the souls in Purgatory want to be saved ?
30. No-one is sure of the reality of his own penitence - no-one can be sure of receiving complete forgiveness.
31. A man who truly buys an indulgence (ie believes it is to be what it is) is as rare as someone who truly repents all sin ie very rare.
32. People who believe that indulgences will let them live in salvation will always be damned - along with those who teach it.
33. Do not believe those who say that a papal indulgence is a wonderful gift which allows salvation.
34. Indulgences only offer Man something which has been agreed to by Man.
35. We should not teach that those who aim to buy salvation do not need to be contrite.
36. A man can be free of sin if he sincerely repents - an indulgence is not needed.
37. Any Christian - dead or alive - can gain the benefit and love of Christ without an indulgence.
38. Do not despise the pope's forgiveness but his forgiveness is not the most important.
39. The most educated theologians cannot preach about indulgences and real repentance at the same time.
40. A true repenter will be sorry for his sins and happily pay for them. Indulgences trivialise this issue.

41. If a pardon is given it should be given cautiously in case people think it's more important than doing good works.
42. Christians should be taught that the buying of indulgences does not compare with being forgiven by Christ.
43. A Christian who gives to the poor or lends to those in need is doing better in God's eyes than one who buys 'forgiveness'.
44. This is because of loving others, love grows and you become a better person. A person buying an indulgence does not become a better person.
45. A person who passes by a beggar but buys an indulgence will gain the anger and disappointment of God.
46. A Christian should buy what is necessary for life not waste money on an indulgence.
47. Christians should be taught that they do not need an indulgence.
48. The pope should have more desire for devout prayer than for ready money.
49. Christians should be taught not to rely on an indulgence. They should never lose their fear of God through them.
50. If a pope knew how much people were being charged for an indulgence - he would prefer to demolish St. Peter's.
51. The pope should give his own money to replace that which is taken from pardoners.
52. It is vain to rely on an indulgence to forgive your sins.
53. Those who forbid the word of God to be preached and who preach pardons as a norm are enemies of both the pope and Christ.
54. It is blasphemy that the word of God is preached less than that of indulgences.
55. The pope should enforce that the gospel - a very great matter - must be celebrated more than indulgences.
56. The treasure of the church is not sufficiently known about among the followers of Christ.
57. The treasure of the Church are temporal (of this life).
58. Relics are not the relics of Christ, although they may seem to be. They are, in fact, evil in concept.
59. St. Laurence misinterpreted this as the poor gave money to the church for relics and forgiveness.
60. Salvation can be sought for through the church as it has been granted this by Christ.
61. It is clear that the power of the church is adequate, by itself, for the forgiveness of sins.
62. The main treasure of the church should be the Gospels and the grace of God.
63. Indulgences make the most evil seem unjustly good.

64. Therefore evil seems good without penance or forgiveness.
65. The treasured items in the Gospels are the nets used by the workers.
66. Indulgences are used to net an income for the wealthy.
67. It is wrong that merchants praise indulgences.
68. They are the furthest from the grace of God and the piety and love of the cross.
69. Bishops are duty bound to sell indulgences and support them as part of their job.
70. But bishops are under a much greater obligation to prevent men preaching their own dreams.
71. People who deny the pardons of the Apostles will be cursed.
72. Blessed are they who think about being forgiven.
73. The pope is angered at those who claim that pardons are meaningless.
74. He will be even more angry with those who use indulgences to criticise holy love.
75. It is wrong to think that papal pardons have the power to absolve all sin.
76. You should feel guilt after being pardoned. A papal pardon cannot remove guilt.
77. Not even St. Peter could remove guilt.
78. Even so, St. Peter and the pope possess great gifts of grace.
79. It is blasphemy to say that the insignia of the cross is of equal value with the cross of Christ.
80. Bishops who authorise such preaching will have to answer for it.
81. Pardoners make the intelligent appear disrespectful because of the pope's position.
82. Why doesn't the pope clean feet for holy love not for money ?
83. Indulgences bought for the dead should be re-paid by the pope.
84. Evil men must not buy their salvation when a poor man, who is a friend of God, cannot.
85. Why are indulgences still bought from the church ?
86. The pope should re-build St. Peter's with his own money.
87. Why does the pope forgive those who serve against him ?
88. What good would be done to the church if the pope was to forgive hundreds of people each day ?
89. Why are indulgences only issued when the pope sees fit to issue them ?
90. To suppress the above is to expose the church for what it is and to make true Christians unhappy.

91. If the pope had worked as he should (and by example) all the problems stated above would not have existed.

92. All those who say there is no problem must go. Problems must be tackled.

93. Those in the church who claim there is no problem must go.

94. Christians must follow Christ at all cost.

95. Let Christians experience problems if they must - and overcome them - rather than live a false life based on present Catholic teaching.

The 95 Theses - Latin

“Disputatio pro Declaratione Virtutis Indulgentiarum.”

by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

D. MARTIN LUTHERS WERKE: KRITISCHE GESAMMTAUSGABE.

Amore et studio elucidande veritatis hec subscripta disputabuntur
Wittenberge, Presidente R. P. Martino Lutther, Artium et S.
Theologie Magistro eiusdemque ibidem lectore Ordinario. Quare
petit, ut qui non possunt verbis presentes nobiscum disceptare
agant id literis absentes. In nomine domini nostri Hiesu Christi.
Amen.

1. Dominus et magister noster Iesus Christus dicendo ‘Penitentiam agite &c.’ omnem vitam fidelium penitentiam esse voluit.
2. Quod verbum de penitentia sacramentali (id est confessionis et satisfactionis, que sacerdotum ministerio celebratur) non potest intelligi.
3. Non tamen solam intendit interiorem, immo interior nulla est, nisi foris operetur varias carnis mortificationes.
4. Manet itaque pena, donec manet odium sui (id est penitentia vera intus), scilicet usque ad introitum regni celorum.
5. Papa non vult nec potest ullas penas remittere preter eas, quas arbitrio vel suo vel canonum imposuit.
6. Papa non potest remittere ullam culpam nisi declarando, et

approbando remissam a deo Aut certe remittendo casus reservatos sibi, quibus contemptis culpa prorsus remaneret.

7. Nulli prorsus remittit deus culpam, quin simul eum subiiciat humiliatum in omnibus sacerdoti suo vicario.

8. Canones penitentiales solum viventibus sunt impositi nihilque morituris secundum eosdem debet imponi.

9. Inde bene nobis facit spiritussanctus in papa excipiendo in suis decretis semper articulum mortis et necessitatis.

10. Indocte et male faciunt sacerdotes ii, qui morituris penitentias canonicas in purgatorium reservant.

11. Zizania illa de mutanda pena Canonica in penam purgatorii videntur certe dormientibus episcopis seminata.

12. Olim pene canonice non post, sed ante absolutionem imponebantur tanquam tentamenta vere contritionis.

13. Morituri per mortem omnia solvunt et legibus canonum mortui iam sunt, habentes iure earum relaxationem.

14. Imperfecta sanitas seu charitas morituri necessario secum fert magnum timorem, tantoque maiorem, quanto minor fuerit ipsa.

15. Hic timor et horror satis est se solo (ut alia taceam) facere penam purgatorii, cum sit proximus desperationis horri.

16. Videntur infernus, purgatorium, celum differre, sicut desperatio, prope desperatio, securitas differunt.
17. Necessarium videtur animabus in purgatorio sicut minni horrorem ita augeri charitatem.
18. Nec probatum videtur ullis aut rationibus aut scripturis, quod sint extra statum meriti seu augende charitatis.
19. Nec hoc probatum esse videtur, quod sint de sua beatitudine certe et secure, saltem omnes, licet nos certissimi simus.
20. Igitur papa per remissionem plenariam omnium penarum non simpliciter omnium intelligit, sed a seipso tantummodo impositarum.
21. Errant itaque indulgentiarum predicatorum ii, qui dicunt per pape indulgentias hominem ab omni pena solvi et salvari.
22. Quin nullam remittit animabus in purgatorio, quam in hac vita debuissent secundum Canones solvere.
23. Si remissio ulla omnium omnino penarum potest alicui dari, certum est eam non nisi perfectissimis, i.e. paucissimis, dari.
24. Falli ob id necesse est maiorem partem populi per indifferentem illam et magnificam pene solute promissionem.
25. Qualem potestatem habet papa in purgatorium generaliter, talem habet quilibet Episcopus et Curatus in sua diocesi et parochia

specialiter.

1. [26] Optime facit papa, quod non potestate clavis (quam nullam habet) sed per modum suffragii dat animabus remissionem.

2. [27] Hominem predicant, qui statim ut iactus nummus in cistam tinnierit evolare dicunt animam.

3. [28] Certum est, nummo in cistam tinniente augeri questum et avariciam posse: suffragium autem ecclesie est in arbitrio dei solius.

4. [29] Quis scit, si omnes anime in purgatorio velint redimi, sicut de s. Severino et Paschali factum narratur.

5. [30] Nullus securus est de veritate sue contritionis, multominus de consecutione plenarie remissionis.

6. [31] Quam rarus est vere penitens, tam rarus est vere indulgentias redimens, i. e. rarissimus.

7. [32] Damnabuntur in eternum cum suis magistris, qui per literas veniarum securos sese credunt de sua salute.

8. [33] Cavendi sunt nimis, qui dicunt venias illas Pape donum esse illud dei inestimabile, quo reconciliatur homo deo.

9. [34] Gratie enim ille veniales tantum respiciunt penas satisfactionis sacramentalis ab homine constitutas.

10. [35] Non christiana predicant, qui docent, quod redempturis animas vel confessionalia non sit necessaria contritio.
11. [36] Quilibet christianus vere compunctus habet remissionem plenariam a pena et culpa etiam sine literis veniarum sibi debitam.
12. [37] Quilibet versus christianus, sive vivus sive mortuus, habet participationem omnium bonorum Christi et Ecclesie etiam sine literis veniarum a deo sibi datam.
13. [38] Remissio tamen et participatio Pape nullo modo est contemnenda, quia (ut dixi) est declaratio remissionis divine.
14. [39] Difficillimum est etiam doctissimis Theologis simul extollere veniarum largitatem et contritionis veritatem coram populo.
15. [40] Contritionis veritas penas querit et amat, Veniarum autem largitas relaxat et odisse facit, saltem occasione.
16. [41] Cautè sunt venie apostolice predicande, ne populus false intelligat eas preferri ceteris bonis operibus charitatis.
17. [42] Docendi sunt christiani, quod Pape mens non est, redemptionem veniarum ulla ex parte comparandam esse operibus misericordie.
18. [43] Docendi sunt christiani, quod dans pauperi aut mutuans egenti melius facit quam si venias redimereet.

19. [44] Quia per opus charitatis crescit charitas et fit homo melior, sed per venias non fit melior sed tantummodo a pena liberior.

20. [45] Docendi sunt christiani, quod, qui videt egenum et neglecto eo dat pro veniis, non indulgentias Pape sed indignationem dei sibi vendicat.

21. [46] Docendi sunt christiani, quod nisi superfluis abundant necessaria tenentur domui sue retinere et nequaquam propter venias effundere.

22. [47] Docendi sunt christiani, quod redemptio veniarum est libera, non precepta.

23. [48] Docendi sunt christiani, quod Papa sicut magis eget ita magis optat in veniis dandis pro se devotam orationem quam promptam pecuniam.

24. [49] Docendi sunt christiani, quod venie Pape sunt utiles, si non in cas confidant, Sed nocentissime, si timorem dei per eas amittant.

25. [50] Docendi sunt christiani, quod si Papa nosset exactiones venialium predicatorum, mallet Basilicam s. Petri in cineres ire quam edificari cute, carne et ossibus ovium suarum.

1. [51] Docendi sunt christiani, quod Papa sicut debet ita vellet, etiam vendita (si opus sit) Basilicam s. Petri, de suis pecuniis

dare illis, a quorum plurimis quidam concionatores veniarum pecuniam eliciunt.

2. [52] Vana est fiducia salutis per literas veniarum, etiam si Commissarius, immo Papa ipse suam animam pro illis impigneraret.

3. [53] Hostes Christi et Pape sunt ii, qui propter venias predicandas verbum dei in aliis ecclesiis penitus silere iubent.

4. [54] Iniuria fit verbo dei, dum in eodem sermone equale vel longius tempus impenditur veniis quam illi.

5. [55] Mens Pape necessario est, quod, si venie (quod minimum est) una campana, unis pompis et ceremoniis celebrantur, Euangelium (quod maximum est) centum campanis, centum pompis, centum ceremoniis predicetur.

6. [56] Thesauri ecclesie, unde Pape dat indulgentias, neque satis nominati sunt neque cogniti apud populum Christi.

7. [57] Temporales certe non esse patet, quod non tam facile eos profundunt, sed tantummodo colligunt multi concionatorum.

8. [58] Nec sunt merita Christi et sanctorum, quia hec semper sine Papa operantur gratiam hominis interioris et crucem, mortem infernumque exterioris.

9. [59] Thesaurus ecclesie s. Laurentius dixit esse pauperes ecclesie, sed locutus est usu vocabuli suo tempore.

10. [60] Sine temeritate dicimus claves ecclesie (merito Christi donatas) esse thesaurum istum.

11. [61] Clarum est enim, quod ad remissionem penarum et casuum sola sufficit potestas Pape.

12. [62] Verus thesaurus ecclesie est sacrosanctum euangelium glorie et gratie dei.

13. [63] Hic autem est merito odiosissimus, quia ex primis facit novissimos.

14. [64] Thesaurus autem indulgentiarum merito est gratissimus, quia ex novissimis facit primos.

15. [65] Igitur thesauri Euangelici rhetia sunt, quibus olim piscabantur viros divitiarum.

16. [66] Thesauri indulgentiarum rhetia sunt, quibus nunc piscantur divitias virorum.

17. [67] Indulgentie, quas concionatores vociferantur maximas gratias, intelliguntur vere tales quoad questum promovendum.

18. [68] Sunt tamen re vera minime ad gratiam dei et crucis pietatem comparate.

19. [69] Tenentur Episcopi et Curati veniarum apostolicarum Commissarios cum omni reverentia admittere.

20. [70] Sed magis tenentur omnibus oculis intendere, omnibus auribus advertere, ne pro commissione Pape sua illi somnia predicent.

21. [71] Contra veniarum apostolicarum veritatem qui loquitur, sit ille anathema et maledictus.

22. [72] Qui vero, contra libidinem ac licentiam verborum Concionatoris veniarum curam agit, sit ille benedictus.

23. [73] Sicut Papa iuste fulminat eos, qui in fraudem negotii veniarum quacunque arte machinantur,

24. [74] Multomagnis fulminare intendit eos, qui per veniarum pretextum in fraudem sancte charitatis et veritatis machinantur,

25. [75] Opinari venias papales tantas esse, ut solvere possint hominem, etiam si quis per impossibile dei genitricem violasset, Est insanire.

1. [76] Dicimus contra, quod venie papales nec minimum venialium peccatorum tollere possint quo ad culpam.

2. [77] Quod dicitur, nec si s. Petrus modo Papa esset maiores gratias donare posset, est blasphemia in sanctum Petrum et Papam.

3. [78] Dicimus contra, quod etiam iste et quilibet papa maiores habet, scilicet Euangelium, virtutes, gratias, curationum &c. ut

1. Co. XII.

4. [79] Dicere, Crucem armis papalibus insigniter erectam cruci Christi equivalere, blasphemia est.
5. [80] Rationem reddent Episcopi, Curati et Theologi, Qui tales sermones in populum licere sinunt.
6. [81] Facit hec licentiosa veniarum predicatio, ut nec reverentiam Pape facile sit etiam doctis viris redimere a calumniis aut certe argutis questionibus laicorum.
7. [82] Scilicet. Cur Papa non evacuat purgatorium propter sanctissimam charitatem et summam animarum necessitatem ut causam omnium iustissimam, Si infinitas animas redimit propter pecuniam funestissimam ad structuram Basilice ut causam levissimam?
8. [83] Item. Cur permanent exequie et anniversaria defunctorum et non reddit aut recipi permittit beneficia pro illis instituta, cum iam sit iniuria pro redemptis orare?
9. [84] Item. Que illa nova pietas Dei et Pape, quod impio et inimico propter pecuniam concedunt animam piam et amicam dei redimere, Et tamen propter necessitatem ipsius met pie et dilecte anime non redimunt eam gratuita charitate?
10. [85] Item. Cur Canones penitentiales re ipsa et non usu iam diu in semet abrogati et mortui adhuc tamen pecuniis redimuntur per concessionem indulgentiarum tanquam vivacissimi?
11. [86] Item. Cur Papa, cuius opes hodie sunt opulentissimis Crassis crassiores, non de suis pecuniis magis quam pauperum

fideliū struit unam tantummodo Basilicam sancti Petri?

12. [87] Item. Quid remittit aut participat Papa iis, qui per contritionem perfectam ius habent plenarie remissionis et participationis?

13. [88] Item. Quid adderetur ecclesie boni maioris, Si Papa, sicut semel facit, ita centies in die cuilibet fideliū has remissiones et participationes tribueret?

14. [89] Ex quo Papa salutem querit animarum per venias magis quam pecunias, Cur suspendit literas et venias iam olim concessas, cum sint eque efficaces?

15. [90] Hec scrupulosissima laicorum argumenta sola potestate compescere nec reddita ratione diluere, Est ecclesiam et Papam hostibus ridendos exponere et infelices christianos facere.

16. [91] Si ergo venie secundum spiritum et mentem Pape predicarentur, facile illa omnia solverentur, immo non essent.

17. [92] Valeant itaque omnes illi prophete, qui dicunt populo Christi `Pax pax,' et non est pax.

18. [93] Bene agant omnes illi prophete, qui dicunt populo Christi `Crux crux,' et non est crux.

19. [94] Exhortandi sunt Christiani, ut caput suum Christum per penas, mortes infernosque sequi studeant,

20. [95] Ac sic magis per multas tribulationes intrare celum quam per securitatem pacis confidant.