

THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

Primary Source

Historians date the beginning of the Protestant Reformation to the moment when Martin Luther wrote a public letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. The letter, which became known as Luther's 95 Theses, included a list of arguments against the Church's practice of selling indulgences. While the Church had made indulgences available for centuries, the practice had increased as papal finances worsened. Luther posted the 95 Theses on the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517. ♦ *As you read, think about how people of Luther's time may have reacted to his ideas. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

From the 95 Theses of Martin Luther, 1517

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; . . .
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. . . .
32. They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon. . . .
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. . . .
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; . . .
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. . . .
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. . . .
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. . . .
86. . . . "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today 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?"

Source: *Works of Martin Luther*, trans. and eds. Adolph Spaeth, L. D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et al. (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915).

Questions to Think About

1. What is Luther's attitude toward taking care of the poor?
2. **Recognize Sufficient Evidence** What evidence can you find that Germans of the time were angry because Church leaders forced them to buy indulgences?
3. **Activity** Write a first-person journal entry about Luther's theses, as though you were a German Christian in 1517. Include your view of his arguments and your impressions about the effects Luther's actions will have on the Church.

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Section 3 Quiz

Pages: 61-65

A. Terms, People, and Places

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the letter of a word, name, or phrase from the box. Not all the terms in the box will be used. Each can be used only once.

1. A _____ is a government run by religious leaders.
2. Martin Luther was called to a _____, or meeting of German princes.
3. The idea that God has already determined who will be saved is called _____.
4. Martin Luther first announced his opposition to the Catholic Church in the city of _____.
5. An _____ was a way of buying entry into heaven.

- | |
|-------------------|
| a. indulgence |
| b. Martin Luther |
| c. Wittenberg |
| d. Charles V |
| e. diet |
| f. John Calvin |
| g. predestination |
| h. Geneva |
| i. theocracy |

B. Main Ideas

Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank provided.

- _____ 6. Which of the following was a factor leading to the Reformation?
 - a. the belief that the Pope should support the Renaissance
 - b. anger at the worldliness of the Church
 - c. a desire to set up a theocracy in Wittenberg
 - d. the hope that the Church would sell more indulgences
- _____ 7. What is one belief Luther held that differed from Church practices?
 - a. He believed Christians could be saved only by faith.
 - b. He believed the Church should sell more indulgences.
 - c. He supported Johann Tetzel.
 - d. He opposed translating the Bible.
- _____ 8. Luther's ideas spread mostly in
 - a. France and Spain.
 - b. Italy.
 - c. northern Germany and Flanders.
 - d. Germany and Scandinavia.
- _____ 9. John Calvin believed the world was divided into
 - a. Catholics and Christians.
 - b. saints and sinners.
 - c. Huguenots and Protestants.
 - d. Calvinists and Lutherans.
- _____ 10. To escape religious persecution, some Calvinists
 - a. became Catholics.
 - b. moved to France.
 - c. became followers of Ulrich Zwingli.
 - d. sailed to the Americas.