

THE REFORMATION'S ROOTS ARE IN THE GOSPEL

Hear again the Word of God for this Reformation Festival:

And I saw another angel continually flying in mid-heaven, continually having (the) eternal Gospel to proclaim upon the ones continually sitting upon the earth - and upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people - continually saying in (a) great voice: "All of you fear God, and all of you must have given to Him glory, because it has come - the hour of His judgment. Also, all of you must have worshipped the One having made the heavens and the earth and seas and springs of water!"¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

This red Feast in the life of the Church Year holds its roots deep in the rich soil of the Good News of Jesus Christ. That Gospel is simply that which you have heard so repeatedly proclaimed in so many ways in this building over the years: Jesus the Christ has paid the price for sin; He has taken away God's wrath at sin. Sinners who believe in the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins have that which the Word of God promises: forgiveness of sins and eternal life now!

The Heart and Center of the Reformation Feast is this: Christ is crucified to grant you the ability to sorrow over and will to turn from your sins, and to actually receive the forgiveness of all your sins. That is the message of the heavenly angel "*All of you fear God, and all of you must have given to Him glory, because it has come - the hour of His judgment.*"² God's judgment at sin, and upon sinners, was poured out upon His sinless Son. Jesus bore our sins, He carried your sins, into death and the grave that we, that you, do not have to live and die in them.

¹ Revelation 14:6-7.

² Revelation 14:7b.

That is why tonight, after the Lord's Service to His people in this place began with the Invocation, though Dr. Luther's reform of the Mass did not hold such a rite, we publicly confessed our sins and received public forgiveness by a man called and ordained to publicly pronounce God's Word over, and into God's people. While the years that followed the reformation of the Church brought many controversies, it may be stated that that with which the Holy Spirit began the sixteenth century AD Reformation involved, first and foremost, biblical, over traditional and rational understandings, foundations about God's forgiveness of sins, both in time and in eternity.

In the year of our Lord 1517, on either late October 31 or early November 1, an ordained priest in the Roman Catholic Church nailed 95 these on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg.³ (For those who are interested in them, and to see how I have reached the conclusion that the initial chief points of the monk's dispute with the teachings and practices of the Church of his day dealt with God's granting His forgiveness of sins and sinners, an English translation of them is found after the

³ Luther had repeatedly warned people of the danger of being misled by indulgences and of the necessity of sincere repentance. * In the *Ninety-five Theses* he organizes all his arguments with reference to Albrecht's instructions and the claims of the indulgence sellers, not in his usual logical arrangement. He begins with the thesis which embodies the core of all the others, namely, that penance is not a mechanical act but a permanent inner attitude. On the same day that he posted the theses, he sent a copy to Archbishop Albrecht with an accompanying letter advising him to stop the sale of indulgences. He hoped that no copies would be circulated among the people at this time, for he did not want to involve his prince, Frederick the Wise, in difficulties, since Frederick had already spoken against the indulgence preached by Tetzel and had forbidden its sale in his lands.

The first printing of the *Ninety-five Theses* was made for Luther by Johann Grüenberg of Wittenberg on a folio sheet for posting on the door of the Castle Church and distribution among his friends and opponents. Only a few reprints made by Hieronymus Hölzel in Nürnberg, Jacob Thanner Herbipolensis in Leipzig, and Adam Petri in Basel are extant. The following translation is a revision of C. M. Jacob's translation in *PE* 1, 25–38. It in turn was made from the Latin in *WA* 1, 233–238. There is another English translation in *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*, Vol. I, translated and edited by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York, 1953), pp. 32–43. *MA*³ 1, 31–38, contains a recent revision of the German translation made by Luther's colleague Justus Jonas. It is included in *St. L.* 18, 72–81.

Indispensable for the study of the Ninety-five Theses and the indulgence controversy are Walther Köhler, *Dokumente zum Ablassstreit von 1517*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1934), and *Luthers 95 Theses samt seinen Resolutionen sowie den Gegenschriften von Wimpina-Tetzel, Eck und Prierias und den Antworten Luthers darauf* (Leipzig, 1903), and Theodor Brieger, *Das Wesen des Ablasses am Ausgange des Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1897). Hans Volz, in his *Martin Luthers Thesenanschlag und dessen Vorgeschichte* (Weimar, 1959), argued that the posting of the Ninety-five Theses took place November 1, 1517, not October 31, since Luther subsequently referred to All Saints Day as the date. The Catholic historian Erwin Iserloh, in his *Luthers Thesenanschlag—Tatsache oder Legende?* (Wiesbaden, 1962), published in English translation as *The Theses Were Not Posted: Luther between Reform and Reformation* (Boston, 1968), stated that Luther did not post the Theses but only sent them to Archbishop Albert of Mainz and Bishop Jerome Schulz of Brandenburg, the appropriate representatives of the church, for their approval. Iserloh's contention was supported by Klemens Honselmann in his *Urfassung und Drucke der Ablassthesen Martin Luthers und ihre Veröffentlichung* (Paderborn, 1966). Among the scholars who challenged the views of Volz, Iserloh, and Honselmann are Franz Lau, in "Die gegenwärtige Diskussion um Luthers Thesenanschlag," *Luther Jahrbuch*, 34 (1967), Heinrich Bornkamm, in *Thesen und Thesenanschlag Luthers* (Berlin, 1967), and Kurt Aland, whose *Martin Luthers 95 Thesen* (Hamburg, 1965) was published in English translation as *Martin Luther's 95 Theses* (St. Louis and London, 1967).³

conclusion of these sermon notes) Eleven years later, while that monk turned Reformer still lived, the Church orders in the city of Brunswick were amended to include a Feast of the Reformation. Some six years before Dr. Luther died; the Collect prayer offered here today in your stead was added to the Saxon order of service. About 102 years after Dr. Martin Luther died, the Elector of Saxony appointed October 31 as the day in the Church Calendar for the Feast of the Reformation.

From that time on, dark days were upon the minority in the Church who actually publicly held to the pure confession of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of sins. That is one reason why the reformers who follow Dr. Martin Luther chose today's first reading for use during Reformation Festival Divine Services. They found encouragement that, even as they were living in the tribulations of the Last Days, God's eternal Good News was still being proclaimed. After all, this report of the Elder John's vision had been circulating for some fourteen centuries before the Reformation, even as it is heralded tonight after nineteen centuries!

And I saw another angel continually flying in mid-heaven, continually having (the) eternal Gospel to proclaim upon the ones continually sitting upon the earth - and upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people - continually saying in (a) great voice: "All of you fear God, and all of you must have given to Him glory, because it has come - the hour of His judgment. Also, all of you must have worshipped the One having made the heavens and the earth and seas and springs of water!"⁴

That message is needed in all the years of the Church, and even in this congregation which holds fast to the right teachings which have flowed out of the

⁴ Revelation 14:6-7.

Reformation of the Church. The eye-witness report you have heard repeated tonight, and at previous Reformation Festivals, begins by declaring a reality that existed when God first opened John's eyes to the eternal truth. Its internal record is testified to by none other than God Himself, the risen and ascended Lord who places His imprimatur, His seal, on the text at the beginning and ending of the *Revelation to St. John*. That means that the vision of is true because God says it is true!

In addition, we have the external witnesses to this text being that which has been faithfully handed down from generation to generation. Multiple copies, over multiple centuries, hand-written, and compiled, add to the bulk of the witnesses of the text. The fathers of the Church, when weighing their copies of this text, took into account its teachings, compared them to the rest of the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, and were led to the conclusion that this text is the Word of God. The record of the visions given by God to St. John are reliable, true, and worthy of study. Hear one of them again:

And I saw another angel continually flying in mid-heaven, continually having (the) eternal Gospel to proclaim upon the ones continually sitting upon the earth - and upon every nation and tribe and tongue and people - continually saying in (a) great voice: "All of you fear God, and all of you must have given to Him glory, because it has come - the hour of His judgment. Also, all of you must have worshipped the One having made the heavens and the earth and seas and springs of water!"⁵

John sees one heavenly messenger flying in mid-heaven. That means the message-bearer is reported existing between heaven and earth. The language of the text indicates that this ambassador of God continually flies between mortal, fallen, sinful,

⁵ Revelation 14:6-7.

humans and the immortal, risen, sinless God. His flight continually remains between the realm of the Devil – the earth – and God – the heavens. The angel’s message then serves to span the gulf between fallen mankind and the ascended God. What is His message? And to whom is it given? Our inspired text proclaims the answers as the angel is continually saying in (a) great voice: *“All of you fear God, and all of you must have given to Him glory, because it has come – the hour of His judgment. Also, all of you must have worshipped the One having made the heavens and the earth and seas and springs of water!”*⁶

The message is for all who are on earth who would have the gulf between them and God bridged, and it is: 1) fear God; 2) give God glory. You fear and love God when you hear of His holy Commands, posted there, and will to keep them, confessing when you have not kept them, and believe that Jesus has fulfilled them for you. You give God glory when you stop rejecting the forgiveness Jesus died to grant you, when you believe He has granted you forgiveness. All of that has been done for you in the death of Jesus, which is the Hour of God’s Judgment.

For, you see, the image of the message-bearer hanging between heaven and earth simply reflects the Message-Bearer who once, for all time, hung between heaven and earth. The eternal Good News is that Jesus the Christ has, in Himself, in His sinless death bearing the sins of the whole world, bridged the gap between God and man. God came to earth, took on your flesh, and in it, paid the price for your sins. He alone could do that, and, for your sake, He did. Behold the visual Image of the Messenger of God,

⁶ Revelation 14:6-7.

“see” the Hour of His Judgment, and rejoice that in Him, God comes to you, with the proclamation that for His sake, your sins are forgiven.

The text declares that that angel’s flight and his message will not end until the hour of God’s judgment is completed. There is a promise in that revealed mystery. It is that the messenger and his message will continue despite all who reject the Word. God will not give up sending His Good News, even when false teachers and false churches seem to have gained all power and sway over those of the Faith.

Make no mistake; people will remain lured away from the angel’s eternal Good News. They remain dead in trespasses and sins, on this night which has been given other meanings since the descendants of the Celts had enough free time in our Eastern cities a couple of centuries ago to celebrate their ancient feast. Such are the true, “Walking Dead” among us. They are not as the television zombies. They are the genuine terrors, for they appear alive for a time while remaining dead for all time.

Many of them will not realize that God’s Final Judgment is upon them, as they continue to reject that which God has done for them in Christ. When their last hour shall come, they shall behold their life’s error. Then, it will be too late to turn and to live eternally in the forgiveness that Jesus came to bring to them. God will exercise His justice on those who reject the Message which bridges heaven and earth. He will punish the unrepentant forever, for they have, in rejecting His Message – His Christ – chosen His wrath which Jesus died to take away from them.

Such an end is not God's will for you. The angel's message is called the "everlasting Gospel," it is meant to be, good news, not punishment. The purpose of the messenger's declaration is to move people to fear God and give Him glory - to view the coming judgment as having been completed for them in the judgment meted out upon the Christ.

God is truly feared and glorified by humans when we live in the forgiveness He has bought us through Jesus' Blood. When you truly receive, that is, live in the forgiveness granted to you by God the Father, won for you through the Son, and believed in you by the Holy Spirit working through the Word, you give Him true godly fear and glory. *The hour of His judgment has come* for you in the death of Jesus.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Reformation Feast (*LSB* One-year series)

Revelation 14:6-7; Romans 3:19-28; Matthew 11:12-19

October 31, 2013

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

NINETY-FIVE THESES
OR
DISPUTATION ON THE POWER AND EFFICACY OF INDULGENCES

Out of love and zeal for truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following theses will be publicly discussed at Wittenberg under the chairmanship of the reverend father Martin Lutter, ¹ Master of Arts and Sacred Theology and regularly appointed Lecturer on these subjects at that place. He requests that those who cannot be present to debate orally with us will do so by letter.²

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” [Matt. 4:17],³ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.

3. Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortifications of the flesh.

4. The penalty of sin⁴ remains as long as the hatred of self, that is, true inner repentance, until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

5. The pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.⁵

6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God; or, to be sure, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in these cases were disregarded, the guilt would certainly remain unforgiven.

7. God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time he humbles him in all things and makes him submissive to his vicar, the priest.

8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to the canons themselves, nothing should be imposed on the dying.

9. Therefore the Holy Spirit through the pope is kind to us insofar as the pope in his decrees always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.⁶

10. Those priests act ignorantly and wickedly who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penalties for purgatory.

11. Those tares of changing the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory were evidently sown while the bishops slept [Matt. 13:25].

12. In former times canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.

13. The dying are freed by death from all penalties, are already dead as far as the canon laws are concerned, and have a right to be released from them.

14. Imperfect piety or love on the part of the dying person necessarily brings with it great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater the fear.

15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, to say nothing of other things, to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near the horror of despair.

16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation.

17. It seems as though for the souls in purgatory fear should necessarily decrease and love increase.

18. Furthermore, it does not seem proved, either by reason or Scripture, that souls in purgatory are outside the state of merit, that is, unable to grow in love.

19. Nor does it seem proved that souls in purgatory, at least not all of them, are certain and assured of their own salvation, even if we ourselves may be entirely certain of it.

¹ Luther spelled his name Lutter in this preamble.

² There was actually no debate, for no one responded to the invitation. The contents of the ninety-five theses were soon widely disseminated by word of mouth and by the printers, and in effect a vigorous debate took place that lasted for a number of years.

³ The Latin form, *poenitentiam agite*, and the German, *tut Busse*, may be rendered in two ways, “repent,” and “do penance.”

⁴ Catholic theology distinguishes between the “guilt” and the “penalty” of sin.

⁵ The canons, or decrees of the church, have the force of law. Those referred to here and in Theses 8 and 85 are the so-called penitential canons.

⁶ Commenting on this thesis in the *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses* (p. 114), Luther distinguishes between temporal and eternal necessity. “Necessity knows no law.” “Death is the necessity of necessities.” Cf. WA 1, 549.

20. Therefore the pope, when he uses the words “plenary remission of all penalties,” does not actually mean “all penalties,” but only those imposed by himself.

21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

22. As a matter of fact, the pope remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to canon law, they should have paid in this life.

23. If remission of all penalties whatsoever could be granted to anyone at all, certainly it would be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to very few.

24. For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.

25. That power which the pope has in general over purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese or parish.

26. The pope does very well when he grants remission to souls in purgatory, not by the power of the keys, which he does not have,⁷ but by way of intercession for them.

27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.

29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed, since we have exceptions in St. Severinus and St. Paschal,⁸ as related in a legend.

30. No one is sure of the integrity of his own contrition, much less of having received plenary remission.

31. The man who actually buys indulgences is as rare as he who is really penitent; indeed, he is exceedingly rare.

32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

33. Men must especially 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 the graces of indulgences are concerned only with the penalties of sacramental satisfaction⁹ established by man.

35. They who teach that contrition is not necessary on the part of those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessional privileges¹⁰ preach unchristian doctrine.

36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt,¹¹ even without indulgence letters.

37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.

38. Nevertheless, papal remission and blessing are by no means to be disregarded, for they are, as I have said [Thesis 6], the proclamation of the divine remission.

39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the bounty of indulgences and the need of true contrition.

40. A Christian who is truly contrite seeks and loves to pay penalties for his sins; the bounty of indulgences, however, relaxes penalties and causes men to hate them—at least it furnishes occasion for hating them.

41. Papal indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.

⁷ This is not a denial of the power of the keys, that is, the power to forgive and to retain sin, but merely an assertion that the power of the keys does not extend to purgatory.

⁸ Luther refers to this legend again in the *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses* below, p. 178. The legend is to the effect that these saints, Pope Severinus (638–640) and Pope Paschal I (817–824), preferred to remain longer in purgatory than they might have greater glory in heaven.

⁹ Satisfaction is that act on the part of the penitent, in connection with the sacrament of penance, by means of which he pays the temporal penalty for his sins. If at death he is in arrears in paying his temporal penalty for venial sins, he pays this penalty in purgatory. Indulgences are concerned with this satisfaction of the sacrament of penance—they permit a partial or complete (plenary) remission of temporal punishment. According to Roman Catholic theology, the buyer of an indulgence still has to confess his sins, be absolved from them, and be truly penitent.

¹⁰ These are privileges entitling the holder of indulgence letters to choose his own confessor and relieving him, the holder, of certain satisfactions.

¹¹ To justify the placing of absolution before satisfaction, contrary to the practice of the early church, theologians distinguished between the guilt and the penalty of sins.

42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend that the buying of indulgences should in any way be compared with works of mercy.

43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.

44. Because love grows by works of love, man thereby becomes better. Man does not, however, become better by means of indulgences but is merely freed from penalties.

45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.

46. Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences.

47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of indulgences is a matter of free choice, not commanded.

48. Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting indulgences, needs and thus desires their devout prayer more than their money.

49. Christians are to be taught that papal indulgences are useful only if they do not put their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.

50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.

51. Christians are to be taught that the pope would and should wish to give of his own money, even though he had to sell the basilica of St. Peter, to many of those from whom certain hawkers of indulgences cajole money.

52. It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters, even though the indulgence commissary, or even the pope, were to offer his soul as security.

53. They are enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.

54. Injury is done the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.

55. It is certainly the pope's sentiment that if indulgences, which are a very insignificant thing, are celebrated with one bell, one procession, and one ceremony, 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,¹² out of which the pope distributes indulgences, are not sufficiently discussed or known among the people of Christ.

57. That indulgences are not temporal treasures is certainly clear, for many [indulgence] preachers do not distribute them freely but only gather them.

58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, for, even without the pope, the latter always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outer man.

59. St. Laurence said that the poor of the church were the treasures of the church, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.

60. Without want of consideration we say that the keys of the church,¹³ given by the merits of Christ, are that treasure;

61. For it is clear that the pope's power is of itself sufficient for the remission of penalties and cases reserved by himself.

62. The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.

63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last [Matt. 20:16].

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 one formerly fished for men of wealth.

66. The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men.

67. The indulgences which the demagogues acclaim as the greatest graces are actually understood to be such only insofar as they promote gain.

¹² The treasury of merits is a reserve fund of good works accumulated by Christ and the saints upon which the pope could draw when he remitted satisfaction in indulgences.

¹³ The office of the keys: the preaching of the gospel, the celebrating of the sacraments, the remitting of sins to the penitent, and the excommunicating of impenitent sinners.

68. They are nevertheless in truth the most insignificant graces when compared with the grace of God and the piety of the cross.

69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of papal indulgences with all reverence.

70. But they are much more bound to strain their eyes and ears lest these men preach their own dreams instead of what the pope has commissioned.

71. Let him who speaks against the truth concerning papal indulgences be anathema and accursed;

72. But let him who guards against the lust and license of the indulgence preachers be blessed;

73. Just as the pope justly thunders against those who by any means whatsoever contrive harm to the sale of indulgences.

74. But much more does he intend to thunder against those who use indulgences as a pretext to contrive harm to holy love and truth.

75. To consider papal indulgences so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God is madness.

76. We say on the contrary that papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins as far as guilt is concerned.

77. To say that even St. Peter, if he were now pope, could not grant greater graces is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.

78. We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written in I Cor. 12[:28].

79. To say that the cross emblazoned with the papal coat of arms, and set up by the indulgence preachers, is equal in worth to the cross of Christ is blasphemy.

80. The bishops, curates, and theologians who permit such talk to be spread among the people will have to answer for this.

81. This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander or from the shrewd questions of the laity,

82. Such as: “Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and 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 funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continued and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded for them, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?”

84. Again, “What is this new piety of God and the pope that for a consideration of money they permit 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 the need of that pious and beloved soul, free it for pure love’s sake?”

85. Again, “Why are the penitential canons, long since abrogated and dead in actual fact and through disuse, 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 today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus,¹⁴ build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?”

87. Again, “What does the pope remit or grant to those who by perfect contrition already have a right to full remission and blessings?”¹⁵

88. Again, “What greater blessing could come to the church than if the pope were to bestow these remissions and blessings on every believer a hundred times a day, as he now does but once?”¹⁶

89. “Since the pope seeks the salvation of souls rather than money by his indulgences, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons previously granted when they have equal efficacy?”¹⁷

90. To repress these very sharp arguments 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, indulgences were preached according to the spirit and intention of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved. Indeed, they would not exist.

¹⁴ Marcus Licinius Crassus (115–53 B.C.), also called Dives (“the Rich”), was noted for his wealth and luxury by the classical Romans. Crassus means “the Fat.”

¹⁵ See Theses 36 and 37

¹⁶ The indulgence letter entitled its possessor to receive absolution once during his lifetime and once at the approach of death.

¹⁷ During the time when the jubilee indulgences were preached, other indulgences were suspended.

92. Away then with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, “Peace, peace,” and there is no peace! [Jer. 6:14].

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

94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell;

95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace [Acts 14:22].

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⁷ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 31: Luther's works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.) (25–33). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.