

Martin Luther and the *Martin Luther Memorial*
(Excerpted from, *The Christian Heritage of our Nation History Book –*
Ten National Memorials © by Catherine Millard)

The Martin Luther Memorial

On the triangular promontory between Vermont and N Street, N.W., the statue of Martin Luther (1483-1546) stands out in originality and resolute muteness. His timeless message has been conveyed to passersby since the statue's inception, commemorating Luther's 400th birthday. Cast in Germany in 1884, it is a duplicate of the original by E. Reitschell, which stands in Worms, Germany. The eleven and a half-foot-tall bronze replica of one of the outstanding leaders of the 16th century Reformation holds a large leather-bound volume of the Scriptures in his left hand with his right, clenched fist resting upon its contents, as if to say "This is God's Word – God by it alone! Let it be your guide in life!"

Luther wears a long, beltless cloak draped around him. His face is set as a flint with his eyes looking straight ahead. The sculptor portrayed this great man of God in the act of oratory – of which he was a master.

Inauguration of Luther's Statue

Interestingly enough, upon the inauguration of the bronze replica of Luther's famous statue in front of the National Lutheran Church in Washington, D.C., an article dated November 10, 1883 appeared in the *Washington Evening Star*. Its contents refocus upon the main points of contention between Scriptural truth and Roman Catholic dogma, as outlined in Martin Luther's 95 Theses. The article is hereunder quoted:

The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation dates from the 31st October, 1517, the day on which Martin Luther nailed to the door of the church at Wittemberg his famous ninety-five theses. According to the historians of the Reformation, Pope Leo X in 1510 resorted to the plan of selling indulgences as a means of filling the empty treasury at Rome. This traffic was entrusted to monk named John Tetzel and others. Luther's first knowledge of this traffic was brought to him by some of his own parishioners, who, living in Wittemberg, had gone to a neighboring town to purchase some of the new merchandise. They came to him and confessed great irregularities, and even crimes, which they had committed, and on being rebuked by Luther, they replied that they did not intend to abandon their sins. Luther was shocked and would not absolve them unless they promised to change their habits. They then showed him their letters of indulgence, believing in their efficacy. The poor dupes returned to Tetzel with complaints against their confessors, and he threatened to excommunicate and bring the most dreadful maledictions to

bear against Luther and any others who dared question the efficacy of his indulgencies. Luther appealed to the bishops and to the pope. They would not interfere. Then he wrote out the ninety-five theses as subjects for discussion at the coming holyday of All Saints and nailed them to the door of the church. the principal points of these are as follows:

Martin Luther's Theses

1. Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, when He commands us to repent, intends that our whole lives shall be one of repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood of the sacrament of penance (i.e. confession and satisfaction) as administered by the priest.
3. Still the Lord does not mean to speak in this place solely of internal repentance, which is null if it produce not externally every kind of mortification of the flesh.
4. Repentance and sorrow that is true penitence lasts as long as a man is displeased with himself), that is, while he passes from this to eternal life.
5. The pope neither intends, nor can he remit any other punishment than that which he has imposed, according to his good pleasure, or in conformity with the canons – that is, to the papal ordinances.
6. The pope can forgive no debt, but can only declare and confirm the forgiveness which God Himself has given, except in cases that refer to himself. If he does otherwise, the debts remain unremoved and unforgiven.
7. God forgives the sins of no one whom He does not at the same time humble, and who is not willing to obey his confessor.
8. The laws of ecclesiastical penance ought to be imposed solely on the living, and and have no regard to the dead.
21. Therefore, the preachers of indulgences are in error when they say that in consequence of the pope's indulgences, men are liberated from all sin and saved.
25. The same power that the pope has over purgatory throughout the church, each Bishop possesses individually in his own diocese and each priest in his own parish.
27. They preach mere human folly who maintain that as soon as the money tinkles, avarice and love of gain arrive, increase and multiply. But the support and prayers of the church depend on God's will and good pleasure.
32. Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.
35. They are teaches of anti-Christian doctrines who pretend that to deliver a soul from purgatory or to buy an indulgence there is no need to either sorrow or repentance.
36. Every Christian who truly repents of his sins enjoys an entire remission both of the penalty and of the guilt, without any need of indulgences.
37. Every true Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ, or of the church, by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence.
40. True repentance and sorrow seek and love the punishment; but the mildness of indulgence absolves from the punishment and begets hatred against it.
42. We should teach Christians that the pope has no thought or desire of compassing

- in any respect the act of buying indulgences with any mark of mercy.
43. We should teach Christians that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does better than he who purchases an indulgence.
 44. For the work of charity increaseth charity, and renders a man more pious, whereas the indulgence does not make him better, but only renders him more self-confident and more secure from punishment.
 45. We should teach Christians, that whoever sees his neighbor in want and yet buys an indulgence does not buy the pope's indulgence, but incurs God's anger.
 46. We should teach Christians that if they have a superfluity they are bound to keep for their own household the means of procuring necessaries, and ought not to squander their money on indulgences.
 47. We should teach Christians that the purchase of an indulgence is a matter of free choice and not of commandments.
 48. We should teach Christians that the pope, having more need of prayers offered up in faith than money, desires prayer more than money when he offers indulgences.
 49. We should teach Christians that the pope's indulgence is good if we put no confidence in it; but nothing is more hurtful if it diminishes our piety.
 50. We should teach Christians that if the pope knew of the extortions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather the mother church of St. Peter were burnt and reduced to ashes than see it built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his flock.
 51. We should teach Christians that the pope (as it is his duty) should distribute his own money to the poor whom the indulgence sellers are now stripping of their last farthing, even were he compelled to sell the mother church of St. Peter.
 52. To hope to be saved by indulgence is a lying and an empty hope, although even the commissary of indulgence – nay, farther, the pope – himself should pledge their souls to guarantee it.
 53. Those who forbid the preaching of God's Word in other churches on account of the preaching of indulgences are enemies of Christ and of the pope.
 54. Injustice is done to the Word of God when as much or even more time is taken up in church in preaching indulgences than the Word of God.
 55. The pope can have no other thought than this: If the indulgence, which is a lesser matter, be celebrated with ringing of a bell, with pomp and ceremony, much more should we honor and celebrate the Gospel, which is a greater thing, with a hundred bells and a hundred poms and ceremonies.
 56. The treasures of the church, out of which the pope distributes indulgences, are neither recognized nor pronounced satisfactory by the church of Christ.
 59. St. Lawrence called the poor members of the Church, the Church's treasures, but he used the word as it was understood in his day.
 62. The proper and true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.
 63. This treasure is for the benefit of the most hostile and the most hated, for it causes the first to be last.
 64. But indulgences are for the benefit of the most worthy, for it causes the last to be the first.
 65. Therefore the treasures of the Gospel are nets by which in former times the rich respectable were caught.

66. But the treasures of indulgences are the nets by which in the present day the riches of the people are caught.
67. But the indulgence which the preachers hold up to the greatest grace must, of course, be esteemed a great favor, for it produces great gain and interest.
68. And yet this indulgence is certainly the very smallest token of grace when compared with the grace of God and the salvation of the cross.
69. It is the duty of bishops and pastors to receive with all respect the commissaries of the pope.
70. But it is still more their duty to ascertain with their eyes and ears that the said commissaries do not preach the dreams of their own imaginations, instead of the orders of the pope.
72. But blessed be he who speaks against the foolish and impudent language of the preachers of indulgences.
76. The indulgence of the pope cannot take away the smallest daily sin, as far as regards the guilt of the offense.
77. To say that St. Peter, if he were now pope, could not give a more perfect indulgence, is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.
79. It is blasphemy to say that the cross adorned with the arms of the pope is as effectual as the cross of Christ.
80. The bishops, pastors and theologians who permit such things to be told the people will have to render an account of them.
81. This shameless preaching, these impudent commendations of indulgences, make it difficult to defend the dignity and honor of the pope against calumnies of the preachers and the subtle and crafty questions of the common people.
86. Why, say they, does not the pope, who is richer than the richest Croesus, build the mother church of St. Peter with his money rather than that of poor Christians?
92. Would that we were quit of all those preachers who say to the church, Peace! When there is no peace.
94. We should exhort Christians to diligence in following Christ, their Head, through crosses, death and hell.
95. For it is far better to enter into the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation than to acquire a carnal security by the consolations of a false peace.

This inspiring article concludes with a description of Martin Luther's famed statue, together with an over view of the unveiling ceremonies:

It will be remembered that the statue represents Luther is a standing position in the clerical robes of that age. The right hand rests upon the Bible, and the facial expression is such as to impress the visitor with the Christian character of the man. The word "Martin Luther" will appear in bold relief on the pedestal. The unveiling will take place early in March, and the ceremony will be very impressive. People from all parts of the country are expected to participate and the President will be invited to officiate.

Lesson Five

Pupil's Guide

III. 1. *The kind of man Martin Luther was:*

- i) Where is the famed bronze statue of Martin Luther to be found in America? Luther's statue is to be found in:
 - a) Los Angeles, California
 - b) Albuquerque, New Mexico
 - c) Washington, D.C., our nation's capital
 - d) Plymouth, Massachusetts

- ii) What great event did the unveiling of this world-renowned statue commemorate?
 - a) The birth of the Reformation
 - b) The 1,883rd anniversary of the birth of Christ
 - c) The 400th birthday of Martin Luther
 - d) The 60th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr.

- iii) At the time of the statue's dedication, a prominent article appeared in one of the nation's foremost newspapers. Identify the name of the newspaper, and date of the article: (Circle one)
 - a) The Los Angeles Times, December 5, 1872
 - b) The Washington Evening Star, November 10, 1883
 - c) The New York Herald Tribune, September 17, 1887
 - d) The Mississippi Clarion Ledger, January 20, 1891

- iv) According to this prominent newspaper article, the Protestant Reformation dates from: (Circle one)
 - a) August 15, 1215 A.D.*
 - b) July 10, 1325 A.D.*
 - c) October 12, 1492, A.D.*
 - d) October 31, 1517, A.D.*

- vii) Identify the name of the person to which this traffic was entrusted: (Circle one)
 - a) A friar named Melancthon
 - b) A priest named Benedict
 - c) A Cardinal named Petros
 - d) A monk named Tetzal

- viii) Who first informed Martin Luther of this traffic? (Circle one)
- a) Monastery monks at Wittenberg
 - b) The prelates of the diocese
 - c) Some of Luther's parishioners
 - d) The confessors of Rome
- ix) To whom did Martin Luther appeal and what response did he receive? Luther appealed to: (Circle one)
- a) The priests and prelates. They stopped this traffic
 - b) The princes and dukes. They rebuked the traffickers
 - c) The Emperor. He banned this traffic
 - d) The bishops and the pope. They refused to interfere
- xiii) In Martin Luther's 62nd Thesis, he states that the proper and true treasure of the church is: (Circle one)
- a) Indulgences
 - b) St. Peter's in Rome
 - c) The holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God
 - d) The Archbishop's ring
- xiv) In Martin Luther's 63rd Thesis, he states that the proper and true treasure of the church is for the benefit of whom and why? (Circle one)
- a) The Aristocratic rulers. It causes the first to be first
 - b) The Hierarchy of Rome. It causes the hierarchy to be first
 - c) The beautiful people. It causes them to be celebrities
 - d) The most hostile and hated. It causes the first to be last
- xv) In Martin Luther's 64th Theses, he states that indulgences are for the benefit of whom, and why? (Circle one)
- a) The prelates of Rome. It increases their power
 - b) The unworthy rulers. It brings them fame
 - c) The most worthy. It causes the last to be first
 - d) The rich merchants. It causes their traffic to flourish
- xvi) In Martin Luther's 65th Thesis, what nets caught the rich and Respectable in former times? (Circle one)
- a) The nets of pride and prejudice
 - b) The nets of fishermen

- c) The nets of the treasures of indulgences
 - d) The nets of the treasures of the Gospel
- xvii) In Martin Luther's 66th Thesis, the treasures of indulgences are used as nets, for what purpose?
- a) To catch the poor and the sick
 - b) To catch the orphans and widows
 - c) To catch the riches of the people
 - d) To catch lost souls for Christ
- xviii) In Martin Luther's 68th Thesis, what does he state that an indulgence represents the very smallest token of, when compared with the grace of God, and the salvation of the cross?
- a) money
 - b) riches
 - c) grace
 - d) profit
- xx) In his 94th Thesis, Martin Luther states that we should exhort Christians to diligence in following whom, and through what means? (Circle one)
- a) The Emperor, through good citizenship
 - b) The Pope, through indulgences
 - c) Christ, their head, through crosses, death and hell
 - d) The Dukes and Barons, through the feudal system
- xxi) In his 95th Thesis, how does Martin Luther advocate entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven? (Circle one)
- a) The ringing of bells; pomp and ceremony
 - b) A horse-drawn carriage
 - c) The buying of many indulgences
 - d) Much tribulation
- xxii) In his 95th Thesis, what does Martin Luther state are the consolations of a false peace? (Circle one)
- a) To take care of the orphans and widows
 - b) To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - c) To acquire a carnal security
 - d) To help the sick and miserable

V. Memory stanzas: (From Martin Luther's immortal hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God.")

A mighty fortress is our God
A bulwark never failing
A helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing

For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe
His craft and power are great
And armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal

Did we in our own strength confide
Our striving would be losing
Were not the right Man on our side
The Man of God's own choosing...
Christ Jesus is His name.

Answers to Questions

- i) c
- ii) c
- iii) b
- iv) d
- vii) d
- viii) c
- ix) d
- xiii) c
- xiv) d
- xv) c
- xvi) d
- xvii) c
- xviii) c
- xx) c
- xxi) d
- xxii) c

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