

listen to the ideas of the higher schools of learning that had previously held sway. Carlstadt had to apply himself to the study of Scripture and Augustine. As early as the next spring Luther rejoiced in the fact that on Misericordias Domini Sunday, (*2nd after Easter*) the festival of relics for the castle church, Carlstadt posted 152 theses for the customary disputation scheduled for that day. In regard to those theses Luther cheerfully commented, "These are no longer statements from Cicero, but those of our Carlstadt, indeed, even of the holy Augustine. ... Praise be to God who once again is letting light shine forth out of darkness." It is important to note the nobility of Luther's support for Carlstadt! While he rejoiced greatly in the work of his former opponent, he was well aware of his shortcomings. Yet Carlstadt was now presenting his theses to the elector with the intent of honoring him. If the count chose to respond by paying the 30 guilders for printing costs, Carlstadt would then issue these theses, dedicating them to the count and bringing honor to the university.

Luther rejoiced as did the apostle Paul in the fact that Christ was being proclaimed, even though some might have been motivated by jealousy. His joy was evident in his correspondence with Lange concerning the whole episode. He noted that the true theology of God's grace was gaining ground at the university, ever more displacing Augustine and the scholastics. He continued to work vigorously in building up biblical theology and tearing down the papal theology handed down through the years. He allowed his student, Franz Guenther of Nordhausen who became baccalaureus during the summer of 1517, to dispute regarding the natural inabilities of man. Among the sentences of this dispute he defended the following: "It is true that man, after he had become a rotten tree, could desire or do nothing but evil."--"It is not true that free will can decide in both directions; moreover it is not a free but a captured will." -- "On man's part you can find nothing save inability, in fact, rebellion against grace is placed above grace." -- "We are not masters of our actions, but slaves from beginning to end." -- "We will not be justified by doing good works, but when we have been justified we do righteous works." -- "It is not true to say that without Aristotle one cannot become a theologian." -- "In fact, no one will become a theologian, who will not become one without Aristotle." As

these assertions were being made Luther was unaware of any conflict with the teachings of the Roman Church, though he did recognize a deviation from the scholastics. Because of that recognition he was anxious to discover how Erfurt would react to these statements, since the scholastics still held sway there. He was willing to debate in Erfurt what he maintained in Wittenberg.

Yes, the fact that Luther had the role of spiritual leadership in a very short time was demonstrated by his blossoming influence in his university, where people from as far away as Sweden came to sit at his feet. Yet he still remained the tempered, humble, monastic brother he had been before. When in 1516 the plagues visited Wittenberg and caused much devastation, he replied to Lange's advice to leave the city: "This world, I hope, will not collapse when brother Martin falls."

Chapter 9

The Ninety-five Theses

During the middle ages the Catholic Church administered indulgences. Indulgences were declarations of the remission of punishment for sins or for the penance imposed by church authorities. As early as the 2nd century, during the time of Irenaeus, we read about strong penalties imposed on members of Christian congregations who had committed some serious offense. The intent was not for the people to have a better standing before God. Rather it was intended to make the congregation better able to recognize true contrition and to warn others against committing similar sins. The time frame for carrying out such penance was often an extended one, but for the sinner who showed sincere penitence that time was shortened. During the days of persecution these penalties were imposed on those who denied the faith. So if others interceded for the offender, testifying about the sincerity of that person's faith, the time of the penalty was reduced. The first general council of the church, held at Nicea, declared that when the penitent displayed numerous and clear proofs of his repentance, his bishop was allowed to reduce his sentence.

As centuries passed and the church was falling prey to more and more vices and apparent sins, the pile of types of penance kept growing larger. Sins were divided into categories and types. This required lists of penitential regulations, which assisted the priests in determining sins and assigning works of contrition more consistently. These also made it possible for the sinner on whom a penalty had been imposed to exchange his particular penance for a different one. For example, if his penance was fasting, taking no food or water for a day, he could instead pray fifty psalms while kneeling in church. But there was an exchange that was of particular benefit for the wealthy. This also fed the greed of the priests as it allowed for considerable sums of money to be paid in view of the prescribed

penance. Still, the right to arbitrarily assign monetary indulgence did not belong to a common priest or bishop. This authority belonged solely to the



Picture of John Tetzel, Dominican Monk and Seller of Papal Indulgence

pope. These papal indulgences led to the complete destruction of all church discipline.

This self-assigned right of the popes was most widely exercised during the crusades. A full and complete indulgence was granted to all those who took part in those wars. In 1300 Pope Boniface VIII expanded the use of indulgences even further when he issued the first great year of Jubilee indulgence. He ascribed not only complete, but most complete, indulgence to anyone who would visit the churches of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome. If the person was a Roman, his time in the churches was to be thirty days; if an outsider, fifteen.

The success of this indulgence exceeded the pope's wildest expectations. The hundreds of thousands of pilgrims brought immeasurable wealth to the papal coffers. It is no surprise that succeeding popes found the one hundred year wait for the next Jubilee, as dictated by Boniface, was too long a period of time. Thus the time span was reduced, first to 50 years, then to 33, and finally to 25 years. When the second Jubilee was held in 1350 under Clement VI, not only had the number of pilgrims greatly increased but the money that was brought into Rome greatly surpassed the first collection. By the time the third Jubilee was held Pope Boniface IX made another decision. He sent his ambassadors into the different countries. These agents had his full authority to offer the same full indulgence for the amount it would have cost the prospective pilgrim to travel to Rome. By using this method his success far surpassed that of his predecessors. In 1500 the disgraceful Alexander VI took the sale of indulgences one step further. He extended the benefit of indulgences to those in purgatory, so the benefits of the Jubilee offering could be applied to friends and relatives.

With this last distribution of indulgences the century of the great councils came to an end. That meant that another Jubilee year could not be celebrated for some time. However indulgences could still be sold. In fact, this type of sale occurred a number of times under Julius II. These sales took place by the pope's sending his agents into countries at large, where the indulgences would then be peddled. These agents had the full authority of

a year of Jubilee. In Germany there was one such agent who amassed large sums of money with the help of his aide, John Tetzel. This Dominican monk had been sentenced to drowning for the crime of adultery. A letter of indulgence exists from that time which granted complete indulgence not only to the two spouses who had forgiven him, but also to their parents and beloved benefactors who had already departed this world. They were to receive eternal benefits from all prayers, intercessions, alms, fasting, pilgrimages, and the like, which had taken place in the church militant. It was claimed that the money received from all indulgence sales would be used to build St. Peter's church in Rome.

At that time the papal throne was held by Leo X, who was from the famous House of Medici. This well-educated man, a patron of the arts, was considered no better than a heathen, due to the infamous reputation of his house. The cardinals to whom he owed his election were thoroughly disappointed in that house. He was not elected because the cardinals considered him more devout than he showed himself to be. No, their hope was that papal power would be reduced. Instead, this pope aimed to increase his power. It so happened that one of the most distinguished of the cardinals personally approached this pope to assassinate him with a dagger concealed under his robe. After reconsideration he decided to eliminate the pope by using poison. However, the assassination plot was discovered. The reaction that followed was that Leo destroyed his enemies and by appointing 31 cardinals immediately secured the majority needed to be elected. Very quickly he received large sums of money by dispensing special favors. After all, the excellencies were expected to produce the clinking of many coins to show their appreciation for such favors.

But Leo also spent immeasurable sums of money. Not only did he have to pay back large sums to his relatives, but his political maneuvering devoured thousands of coins as well. As a result he constantly had to find new sources of wealth. Indulgences were to prove themselves as one of those sources, with the on-going building of St. Peter's church in Rome providing the excuse for a new distribution. Thus three commissioners were entrusted with the management of this latest indulgence sale. One of

these was the Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Magdeburg. He was selected by the monasteries within his territory because of a promise he had made regarding the money to be paid to the pope for the pallium, the white archbishop's collar, blessed by the pope and adorned with crosses. He promised not to take the funds from the archepiscopal foundation but to raise the money himself. Accordingly he borrowed 30,000 gold guilders



Picture of Pope Leo X by Raphael

from the rich House of Fugger in Augsburg. In order to pay this pressing debt and to be able to satisfy some other expenses, he now assumed the reins that allowed him to raise half of his payment from the sale of indulgences in his expanded territory. Soon the agents of these lords were traveling from city to city. These peddlers went from door to door, offering the sale of indulgences with much ceremony.

Among these door to door sellers was the very ardent and brazen John Tetzel, mentioned earlier. He had been hired by the Elector of Mainz. This salesman knew how to exploit both the superstitions and the carnal desires of the people. He knew how to camouflage his foul dealings with gaudy splendor. Before entering a city he had someone announce his arrival. Soon the phrase could be heard, "He's coming!" The corpulent monk and his entourage were then met by a festive procession of priests, monks, teachers, students, town council representatives, men and women. They would be waving banners, sounding trumpets, and carrying burning torches. This whole train of humanity would then enter the city accompanied by the ringing of bells and shouts of joy. At the sound of the organ they would enter the church where the indulgence salesman took center stage, erecting his red cross surrounded by papal banners. In other churches the salesmen priests were required to proclaim the glories of indulgences according to prescribed instructions.

Tetzel understood better than any other how to glorify his wares. His naturally glib tongue, honed by years of experience, served him well. But there was also no one who would speak about indulgences with as much insolence and blasphemy. He called indulgences the highest and most glorious gift of God. He declared that the papal cross he erected offered just as much as the cross of Christ. He asserted that he had no desire to change places with St. Peter in heaven because, after all, he saved more souls than Peter. The pope had higher authority than all of the apostles, angels and saints. These all were under Christ but the pope was equal to Christ. Since his ascension into heaven until the Day of Judgment Christ need not rule any more in the church. He has transferred his lordship to the pope as his steward.

So the rush to get to Tetzel's indulgence market was intense. The rich and the poor, the noble and the ignoble, even those who had to beg money for themselves all bought indulgences. First they bought for themselves and their relatives, but especially for those who had died and were believed to be in purgatory. And this purgatory was a place of torture as described with lurid terms by Tetzel and his aides. For a special price you

About Indulgence from Rome

A person can become holy, by way of reference to the divine Holy Scripture

On Ablas von Rom
kan man wol selig werden
durch anzeigung der götlichen
heiligen geschryfft.



Illustration of an Indulgence Market

Title page from a pamphlet during the time of the beginning of the
Reformation

could buy an indulgence not only for sins committed but for intended future sins. It didn't bother him that, from time to time, someone would cheat him. He more than made up for it by the money he put aside for himself, giving him a gloriously joyful life. It is certain he would have set aside even more for himself if an agent from the House of Fugger had not kept a sharp watch on his trunks and bowls.

The financial harm which this salesman did to those people was serious. These poor souls had been visited by the failure of their harvests and the terror of the plague. Yet this harm was minimal compared to the harm done to their souls. After all, consider what they were promised in buying indulgences. First, anyone who would confess his sins with a contrite heart and buy an indulgence was assured of the grace of God and freedom from purgatory. Then, for an additional payment, a person could also obtain the following three extras: 1) Instead of going to his own father confessor he could choose a different confessor more to his liking. He could choose one who could absolve sins not yet forgiven and who could exchange difficult penances for easier ones. 2) He would receive a share from all prayers, fasting, pilgrimages, and other good works from the entire church militant. 3) He could accomplish the instantaneous release of those dead souls in purgatory. These three extras were even accessible without prior contrition and penance and were to be granted as soon as the required payment had been received. In regard to the last extra gift of the indulgence Tetzel had composed a little rhyme:

As soon as the money is heard clanking in the coffer

The soul of the deceased in heaven does hover

(or)

As soon as the money falls into the chest,

The soul jumps up to its heavenly rest.

(The translator's attempt to phrase the original rhyme into a rhyme with the same basic meaning as was implied with the German rhyme.)

Word was brought to Luther about the devastating effects these false teachings imposed on the consciences of the people. He was also informed of Tetzels blasphemous teaching. Thus was our Wittenberg doctor forced upon the path which would take this story far beyond its first need for purpose of correction.

The first report of Tetzels presence in Saxony reached Luther in the spring of 1516 as he, together with Staupitz and Link, was overseeing the Augustinian monastery at Grimma.

When he would again be made aware of Tetzels continued peddling of indulgences in the area around Wittenberg, he could not help but sound a warning to his parish children from his pulpit. In these sermons, one as early as 1516 and others in the spring of 1517, it is plainly evident that Luther feared the damage enacted on the spiritual condition of his flock through the influence of indulgences. In a sermon preached on the tenth Sunday after Trinity in 1516 he still acknowledged the right and power of the pope to grant pardon for certain transgression, for present time and in purgatory, by way of intercession which had been applied. However, he lamented the fact that the indulgence preachers did not instruct the people properly and left them with the delusion that they are saved if they have an indulgence document. Therefore he warned his listeners not to be led away from Christ and his cross by indulgences and not to be led into carnal security and laziness.

We hear the same laments and admonitions in his sermon for the festival of St. Matthew in 1517. As a result of one sermon on this subject preached in the castle church, he had fallen into disfavor with the count. As he later recounted, this was because there was a direct connection

between the treasury of relics in that church and the treasury of indulgences gained for the church foundation through those relics.

But Tetzel was also informed about what was being said about indulgences in Wittenberg. We learn that in his anger he boldly denounced those who were demeaning indulgences. As a master over heresy he kindled a fire to illustrate the danger that came from attacking the pope's indulgence.

Meanwhile the fallout from Tetzel's misconduct became more apparent. In large numbers people would travel to Jueterbock, Zerbst, and wherever else indulgences were available. They came back with their indulgences, full of praise for the high value Tetzel had assigned to them. Luther listened to the reports of this brazen monk's conduct with terror and shock. Luther watched with deep sorrow what was happening to his parish children. They were being deluded regarding the confession of sins! Many demonstrated a newfound frivolity. Others were even rebellious and insolent when the seriousness of their sins was pointed out. When they showed no contrition, their doctor refused to absolve them. They stubbornly pointed to their indulgence document and even returned to Tetzel with their complaints.

Why should they struggle to improve their sinful lives as Luther admonished them? Why should they accept penance? They had made their purchase from the immeasurable treasury of the merits of the saints! If Luther did not want to absolve them, fine. They had bought the right to seek out a different father confessor, one who would not be so strict and would show more respect for the indulgences.

Where would all of this end? If this went on, wouldn't all church discipline become void? Wouldn't the people get to the point of wickedly and insolently despising God's holy law and the precious blood of Christ? There were others who had similar experiences and were harboring similar concerns. Luther had heard from others about the sale of indulgences, both in writing and face to face.

All Saints Day was coming, as was the date for the dedication of the castle church in Wittenberg. Many guests would stream into the city for the festivities and these guests would have the opportunity to buy indulgences. Luther may well have wrestled as to the best way to respond to this situation. He could not remain silent. That would have brought him just criticism. Even if he had wanted to remain silent, he would have been unable to avoid the opinions expressed at such an event attended by many other theologians. And so he decided to proceed as follows.

Since the church foundation was also closely connected to the university, academic activities were going to play a role in the festivities. The announcements of such academic activities were publicized by being posted on the church doors. This was where Carlstadt had posted his previously mentioned theses earlier in April. And so this is how Luther chose to inform the presiding leader of the church and university, Bishop Hieronymus Scultetus of Brandenburg, about his concerns in connection with the abuse of indulgences and what he intended to do about it.

In the meantime he had discovered that Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz was involved and that the instructions were being issued in the archbishop's name. So Luther also wrote a letter to him. He pleaded with all humility and expressed his respect for the archbishop. But it was his expressed firm and decisive request that the archbishop would remove this offense which endangered so many by damaging their souls. "What danger and fear must a bishop expect," he wrote, "who pompously allows indulgences and nothing else to be spread among the people. Meanwhile the gospel is omitted and left silent. This bishop is much more concerned with indulgences than with the gospel. Will not Christ address you as the one, who filters out mosquitoes and swallows camels? In addition, most honorable father under God, it is said the instructions have been issued under knowledge and intent of your highness.

"Those indulgences offer to bestow incredible grace by which man is said to be reconciled with God, and the fires of purgatory extinguished; even more, contrition is not required for those who buy indulgences. But what can I do, most highly honored bishop and most highly serene elector,

except to plead with you, highly honored archbishop that your electoral grace would keep an eye of fatherly care on this issue and completely do away with these instructions. May you also command the indulgence preachers to proclaim indulgences in some other way, lest some person arises who will refute both the indulgence preachers and those instructions to the highest disgrace of your most highly serene highness."

In his letter Luther included a number of his theses with the added comment, "If it please you, highly honored father, examine these theses of mine concerning this dispute so that you might understand that the illusion these indulgences provide is a very uncertain promise, though they dream that the promise is a very sure thing."

Luther completed his letter to the archbishop containing the theses on October 31. That afternoon, since it was the eve of All Saints Day, the dedication festival of the castle church began. Luther was to preach for the opening service. Before the divine service he posted the articles of dispute, or theses, 95 in all, on the door of the castle church. They were intended for learned debate and issued in Latin. The heading and announcement were also in Latin, rendered here in English:

"Disputation of the Theologian, Doctor Martin Luther, for Explanation of the Power of Indulgences

"To bring the truth to light out of love and diligence, debate will be held concerning the following statements under the presiding of the honored Father Martin Luther, by the free abilities, by the masters of holy theology, and by the regular instructors thereof. Those who are unable to speak with us in person due to their absence may do so in written form.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We shall now consider some of these Theses *(footnote: A translation of the 95 Theses [into German], "Luther's Volksbibliothek," Vol. 17.18 P. 247 ff. Vgl. Foreword p. 3)

The first was worded "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying, "Repent" etc. wants the whole life of the believer to be repentance."

This first sentence already has tremendous significance. Positioned at the beginning, and thereby at the top of the entire document, is the name of him in whom alone salvation is to be found for poor sinners. This is not the statement of a famous church father but a word from the mouth of Christ. This is the word with which the Prophet who came from the right hand of the Father also began his preaching. This has been laid down as the fundamental statement for the entire debate. At the same time this beginning statement sets forth the practical issue of the day which Luther was addressing with these Theses. The faith and the living by faith of every Christian were threatened by the entire use of indulgences and were now to be protected. So Luther is entering the fray on behalf of Christ, the Word, and the believers.

In the following theses there is no doubt that Luther recognized the right of the pope to distribute indulgences. But he limited that right to church penance which the pope himself would impose. Thus the 5th thesis states:

"The pope shall and can remit no punishments except those which he himself has imposed according to his own or the church's command."

Still, Luther wants such punishments to be applied knowingly only to the living. He makes this clear in the 8th, 9th, and 10th theses. The 11th reads:

"The weed that church punishment can be exchanged for pain in purgatory surely must have been sown while the bishops were sleeping."

In this way without confronting purgatory itself, Luther confronted the corrupt practice which taught that any life of repentance could be postponed to purgatory and even then be completely removed from the dead through indulgences; customary indifference was supplied with every possible excuse. After explaining in the 20th thesis that the pope understands that by rendering a complete indulgence for all punishments does not mean all, but only those which he himself imposed, Luther attacked the indulgence seller directly in the 21st as he wrote, "Hence, the



Picture of the Castle Church of Wittenberg from the year 1509

indulgence commissioners, who state that a person is set free, separated from all sins and saved through the pope's indulgence, are in error."

The 27th also made the same point. It reads, "Those who say that, as soon as the money rings in the chest, the soul jumps out of purgatory, are preaching teachings of men."

The 32nd does the same, "Those who believe themselves to be sure of their salvation through indulgence documents will be eternally damned together with their masters."

But Luther attacked not only the promises of the sellers of indulgences. He also dared to attack the declarations of the aforementioned directions by the Archbishop of Mainz, as he wrote in thesis 33, "A person should diligently watch out for those who say that the pope's indulgence is the priceless gift of God through which man is reconciled with God."

Thesis 35, "Those who teach such, who want to buy souls and indulgence documents, are not proclaiming Christian teaching."

In the next two theses he in contrast states that every true, upright, and penitent Christian has full forgiveness and shares all the blessings of Christ and the church without an indulgence document. Then he returns to the issue of manner and style used by those selling indulgences for money. He attacks the ceaseless praising of the indulgences and the debasing of the works of compassionate love when compared with the sale of indulgences. So he stated:

Thesis 39, "It is a very difficult thing, even for well trained theologians, to exalt the riches of pardon and the true substance of contrition for the people while this is going on."

Thesis 41, "The apostolic absolution should be preached carefully, lest the people understand it, as though the same (namely, purchase of indulgence) is preferred over other good works of love."

Thesis 42, "The Christians are to be taught that it is not the pope's intent for the purchase of an indulgence to be considered identical with works of compassion."

Thesis 43, "Christians should be taught that he who gives to the poor and lends to the needy is doing a better deed than buying an indulgence."

Thesis 45, "Christians are to be taught that someone who sees a starving person and, instead of helping him buys an indulgence, does not bring the pope's absolution but God's disgrace upon himself."

Thesis 47, "Christians are to be taught that while they are free to buy indulgences, they are not commanded to do so."

We have heard earlier of the pomp and ceremony with which people would approach the indulgence sellers, as well as how the sellers performed in the churches. Luther also took a stand against these practices. He wrote,

Thesis 53, "Enemies of Christ and of the pope are those people who permit God's Word to be completely silenced in churches by the preaching of indulgences."

Thesis 54, "Wrong is done to the Word of God when a sermon contains as much or even more teaching about indulgences than God's Word."

Thesis 55, "Only this can be the intent of the pope that the indulgence, which is the least, is celebrated with a single bell and simple ceremonial procession; but the gospel, which is the highest, is proclaimed with a hundred bells and hundredfold procession and ceremony."

Since it had been declared that the pope had the right to distribute indulgences from the assumed treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints, Luther opposed this, too. After he contradicted this concept in reference to the merits of Christ and the saints in thesis 58, he went on in,

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

Thesis 63, "This treasure is logically the most hated, because it makes the last the first."

Thesis 64, "The indulgence treasure, on the other hand, is logically the most pleasing, because it makes the first out of the last."

Indeed, with open disdain he went on to state in the next thesis how in days gone by rich people were being fished for with the net of the gospel. But now the treasure of the indulgence is the net which is being used to catch the riches of the people. Thus the gifts of indulgences have their true value.

He admonished the bishops and parish lords in the next theses to accept the sellers of indulgences honorably, but to pay attention that they are proclaiming what the pope has declared and not their own dreams. But notice how far removed Luther remained from personally attacking the indulgences themselves. The fact that he only wanted to debate the misuse of indulgences is apparent from the next two statements.

Thesis 71, "May he, who speaks against the truth of the apostolic indulgence, be accursed and condemned."

Thesis 72, "But he, who is concerned about the careless and frivolous declarations of the indulgence preachers, is blessed."

Thus he believed that he was speaking in complete harmony with the pope, as the next two theses show.

Thesis 73, "As the pope hurls his ban rightfully against those who scheme to do damage to the use of indulgences,"

Thesis 74, "So does the pope even more intend to hurl his ban against those who aim to use indulgences to disguise their fraudulent activity against holy love and truth."

Here it is apparent that Luther, as he would later admit, had not yet grasped a true understanding of indulgences or the pope. As he had done earlier, he continued to intercede for the pope in his theses. After he had denounced a number of the reckless claims of the indulgence peddlers he charged bishops, pastors, and theologians that they would be held accountable for allowing such preaching among the people. He lamented that these indulgence preachers had made it difficult for even a learned teacher to defend the pope against pointed questions posed by the

common man. Still his confidence in the pope shows itself again in the 91st thesis.

Thesis 91, "If indulgences would be preached according to the pope's understanding and intent, then all the questions about them could be easily resolved, indeed, they would not even exist."

In the last two theses he finally returned to the thought from which he had parted, and said,

Thesis 94, "Christians are to be admonished to occupy themselves in following Christ, their Head, through pain, death, and hell."

Thesis 95, "And so they should comfort themselves that they enter into heaven through many hardships, not through peaceful security."

Here he points us again to Christ, the Head, the salvation which he seeks for the souls of Christians, and a Bible passage (Acts 14:22) as a foundation. Thus this noteworthy work evinces the same spirit at its conclusion as at its beginning.

The 95 Theses are a remarkable work in a number of ways. Luther was aiming his blows at a target that was remarkably narrow in range. He didn't want to challenge the pope, the teaching of purgatory, or indulgences themselves. On the contrary we have seen how he purposely placed the pope and his indulgences under his protection while treating the indulgence sellers as enemies of both. Still, the writing and the publishing of these statements were truly an act of reform. It was a decidedly different attack launched by the Parisians and big councils of the previous century. What they had failed to do, Luther did. He let Christ be the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Once this happened the pope would inevitably be revealed as the antichrist, even though Luther did not recognize him as such at the time. He applied the Word of God as the yardstick. As this was being done the papacy would eventually have to be revealed as a dungeon, which the prince of darkness had built, to rob Christians of the freedom, with which

Christ had set them free. With these theses God had begun the work which would expose the evil one and finally destroy him with the breath of his mouth. Therefore we rightly celebrate October 31 as the anniversary of the Reformation.

There is a story that the Elector Frederick the Wise had a wonderful dream the night before the posting of the 95 Theses. It appeared to him as though he saw a monk, a son of the Apostle Paul, writing large letters on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. The letters were so large that they could be read from the electoral's main residence in Schweinitz. He was writing with a rattling large quill which reached all the way to Rome. In Rome it went into the ear in the head of a lion and came out again through the other ear. It then stretched out even farther and struck the threefold crown of the pope with such force that it was tottering and the count struggled to hold on to it. All of the people in Rome and throughout the empire came running. They attempted to break the feather in two and rescue the pope. But it was in vain. They had to let the monk write on.

In regard to the accuracy of this story, we shall let it stand on its own. At the same time it is true that every detail of this dream is reflected in the history of the 95 Theses and their consequences. Soon the lion in Rome began to roar. From all directions people rushed to his side to break the feather of the student of St. Paul, the feather which would quickly cause the papal crown to shake and totter. It wasn't difficult for the entire army gorging itself on the indulgence monetary trough to understand what could happen. If the fundamental truths set forth in the Theses were to gain ground, especially those which directed the people toward repentance and faith, the paper on which papal indulgence was written would become worthless. The result would be that the river of gold flowing into the sacks and chests of the prelates and popes would run dry. If Luther had attacked Christ and the gospel, Rome and Mainz would have forgiven him. But what he had done with the theses was a sin, a sin for which there would be no indulgence.

Chapter 10

The Consequences of the 95 Theses

As claps of thunder and bolts of lightning alert us to the coming of life-giving rain, so did the powerful theses of the Wittenberg Monk echo throughout Europe. It continued until the first rumblings of the storm brewing in Germany were heard on the other side of the Alps in sunny Italy and Rome. The time was just right for the publication of Luther's 95 Theses and for their availability to the masses. It appears most likely that they were immediately copied from the manuscript posted on the church door. These copies were personally taken along by visitors in Wittenberg, as they were returning home. What happened was not what Luther had intended. Those theses, which had been meant for a small group of scholars, were soon distributed throughout the land. Now they were being read not only by scholars but by the common people as well, after they had been translated into German. As borne by the wind or angels they spread through all of Germany in two weeks, and they caused a sensation everywhere they went.

Luther himself, as well as his colleagues, reported on how these theses were received. "Many devout men spoke out publicly," a foreword of a later edition of the theses reported, "how pleased they were with the theses and how highly they were valued." His student Methusius related, "Devout monks, seeking their holiness in their monasteries and continuing to struggle with the suspicious nature of the Kostitz affair, received the theses with joy. This was the testimony of the devout Dr. Fleck, who had preached the dedication sermon for the University of Wittenberg and had foretold that the entire world would gain wisdom from this white mount (the meaning of Wittenberg). "I tell you about a certain monk, who never held a mass in his entire life. He found the theses posted in his rectory at Steinlausig. As he began to read it he cried out with joy: 'Ho! Ho! He is

coming, the one for whom we have waited for such a long time!" Luther referred to that man's reaction later in a letter, "I like Fleck, for he was a comforting man. His words were very soothing. He wrote a wonderful letter to me right after I had issued my theses. I would pay ten guilders for that letter, if I could still have it."

Others felt less induced to write letters of encouragement to Luther. It may have been that they considered what Luther was trying to do was hopeless. "You are speaking the truth, good brother, but you will accomplish nothing. Go back to your cell and pray for the Lord's mercy." This was the reaction of old Dr. Albert Krantz at Hamburg, when he read the theses shortly before his death. At Hexter in Westphalia another had this to say, "My dear brother Martin, if you are able to address purgatory and the selling of indulgences and do away with them you are truly a great lord." (In the original this comment is recorded in Low German: "Min leewe Broder Marten, wenn du dat Fegefueer un de Papenmerketenderei stoermen un wegschludern kannst, bist du vorwahr en groter Herr.")

In Wittenberg Carlstadt once again disagreed with Luther. For him Luther had gone too far. The brothers of his order already envisioned the triumph of their enemies, the Dominicans. Now an Augustinian would have to burn, as Savonarola and others of their order had been burned. Luther's friend Dr. Schurf held the same opinion. "What are you doing? It will not be tolerated!" To which, of course, Luther responded, "What does it matter if one has to suffer?"

Luther, however, was not as confident at the time as it might appear from his response. He had been looking for a debate, but there was no one volunteering for such a debate as he proposed. What was developing before his eyes was something he had not been looking for. His theses were being spread not as an invitation to debate but as an expression of his convictions. While they were generally accepted with approval, a public defense in support of them was not to be found. As had been the case with his monastic lectures on Scripture and again at his university lectures on the

books of the Bible, he stood alone in his attacks on the misuse of indulgences. He refers to himself in uncertain terms as a frail, emaciated monk, "more like a corpse than a man." But the die had been cast and his opposition would soon step up its counter attack against the theses. The ball was rolling.

It was expected that Tetzal, whose actions were the main target of these theses, would be the first to respond when he got back to his business. It made perfect sense. He had been attacked while serving under the authority of the Archbishop of Mainz and so turned to him for support. But Albrecht seems to have been of the opinion: you cooked the stew; now you have to eat it. Although he was certainly not pleased with Luther's assertions, he was content to let "that complainer's chestnuts burn" because he himself did not want to get involved. As a result Tetzal was forced to take matters into his own hands. With the help of his old friend, Prof. Wimpina of Frankfurt, he posted two columns of theses which had been debated at Frankfurt on the Main, as a part of his attempt to receive the degree and title of doctor. In these theses he fearlessly defended the total authority and inerrancy of the pope in matters of faith, even in those cases where the pope's doctrinal decisions could not be supported by Scripture. Luther had no respect for these theses. What they presented was nothing new and, coming from Tetzal and his friends, they caused him little concern.

On the other hand, the heading of a document he received at the beginning of 1518 caused a completely different reaction. When he read it, Luther was startled. He had sincerely believed that the pope would declare himself in agreement with his theses. But this document was issued by one of the foremost of the pope's court officials. This was Silvester Mazolini of Prierio, the Roman censor of books and the judge of matters of faith and doctrine. He attacked Luther in his response to the 95 Theses. His answer was dedicated to the pope. His reply was a proud, harsh repudiation of Luther's declaration of the papal understanding of indulgences. This document referred to several basic principles which had been unacceptable to Luther for quite some time already. This was in response to Luther's 91st

thesis, "If that were the understanding of the pope, as you imply in your writing, then it would be a badly informed opinion and a meaning far from a true understanding of the pope." In the principles, with which he prefaced his individual responses, Silvester maintained the following. He stated that whoever does not accept that the pope is inerrant in matters of doctrine and the rule of faith, from which even Holy Scripture receives its authority and power, is a heretic.

What was Luther to do? It would have been a simple matter for him to counter the statements of Silvester. But how was it possible for such a respected member of the pope's inner council to have produced something so abominably wrong? Was it not much more probable that one of those anonymous mockingbirds, the scholastic opponents of the learned Reuchlin, the authors of the year-old "letters of the dark men," had done so out of hatred for the monks? Surely they must have pulled this dirty trick and had published this document under Silvester's name. If Luther were to respond seriously, surely he would become the laughing stock. And so Luther did as his friends advised. For the time being he remained silent over against this attack from the pope's representative of Priero.

However, this does not mean that Luther stayed idle as a result. He had offered up the 95 Theses for debate. From the time of their posting he occupied himself with further explanation and clarification of his theses. And still no one stepped up to debate. Yet the very fact that the statements were going out into the world without debate resulted in the appearance that they may stand as written commentary. Luther was in the process of producing his written commentary for the scholars in Latin. But before he was even finished he also produced this writing in the language of the common people.

To be sure he had desired to do so right after his theses had been published. But at the request of the Bishop of Brandenburg he had put a stop to it, even though the printing process had already begun. But now, in the spring of 1518, he allowed it to be published under the title, "A Sermon about Indulgences and Grace." Once again he refrained from rejecting indulgences in plain language. But he did say, "Indulgence is permitted on

account of the back-sliding and lazy Christians, who do not want to exercise themselves in good works. ... For this reason one should not speak against indulgence, but at the same time one should not also seek to persuade anyone by speaking in favor of it."

Furthermore, "Much better is the work done on behalf of a person in need than on behalf of a building; it is also much better than to donate for indulgence. First, one should consider giving for the poor, then for the local church, then for the building of St. Peter, and indeed not for the cause of indulgence. For St. Paul says that the one who doesn't do good to those of his own house is not a Christian and worse than a heathen. You can depend on this, that whoever tells you differently is misleading you. He is looking for your soul in your wallet, and if he would find some pennies they would be more precious to him than souls. Hence you say, 'Therefore, I will never buy another indulgence.' To which I reply, 'I have already told you that it is my goal, desire, plea, and advice that no one buy an indulgence. Let the lazy and sleepy Christians buy indulgence. You go your own way.'"

"Whether or not souls are pulled out of purgatory by way of indulgence I do not know, nor do I believe it to be true, though some new doctors are saying so. In regard to these points I have no doubt, since they are sufficiently supported by Scripture. Therefore you should also have no doubt and let the scholastic doctors be scholastics. All of their opinions gathered together would not be enough to strengthen one sermon. Some of them, to whom this truth is so damaging to their coffers, most likely will denounce me as a heretic. I do not mind their declarations. Their preaching is so disorderly, because they are dark brains who have never smelled a Bible, never read Christian doctrine, never understood their own teachers, but merely rot in their own pierced and torn thoughts. For if they had understood, they would also have known that they should fault no one without trial and conviction. May God give good sense to both them and us. Amen."

We are faced with two important thoughts in his written comments. First, there is Luther's powerful openness with which, while he doesn't clear the air with the Roman church, he nevertheless confronts the new doctors.

Second, we note the source of his confidence - that he knows that Scripture is on his side and that he has a fairly firm grasp of what it says.

Luther's warning against indulgence in this writing was against false Christians finding false comfort. At the same time his sermons from this era directed his hearers to the Savior of sinners, the One in whom faith finds the comfort and peace which our works cannot give. He also edified others at this time with a lesson on Psalm 110 which taught the same lesson. He wrote it in response to Scheurlis' request that he write something for his friend Hieronymus Ebner of Nuernberg. It was subsequently published by Spalatin.

In commenting on verse four, he remarked on the sworn assurance from God that is designed to serve "for unspeakably sweet comfort for us poor, sinful people, that we may believe and hope all the more confidently that Christ is a priest, for it is easier to believe that Christ is Lord over all things, which terrifies a man because of his enormous power. But that Christ is a priest is more difficult to believe, because our abnormal and sinful conscience, which despairs and is easily frightened by God's power, finds it hard to trust that our sins have been forgiven. This abject terror God confronts as he lifts us up and comforts us by crying out that Christ is a priest; that is, a Patron, Intercessor, Mediator, Atoner of all sin. He does so by swearing an oath, declaring even more vehemently his compassion instead of his power, in order to elevate human trust rather than fear. Therefore this verse should be adorned with gold and precious jewels because it sounds so comforting and gracious."

Chapter 11

Luther at Heidelberg

In the second column of his Wimpina-flavored theses, Tetzel had asserted that a convent of Dominicans had assembled 300 brothers of his order in Frankfurt, who had taken up his cause. On the other hand, he admitted that Luther's theses, as well as his sermon on indulgence and grace, had found eager readers far and wide, especially in the cells of Augustinians. And so it could be easily understood that there was a growing desire in many brothers of that order to see Martin, that bold monk, personally. Their desires could now be fulfilled. A general convention of German Augustinians was called to order at Heidelberg in April of 1518. The residents of Heidelberg and other cities were happy to learn that Luther would be attending. The elector was not pleased for his doctor to go on journeys which would keep him away from his university for any longer than necessary. And so he entrusted his superintendent, Staupitz, to make his desire for a quick return known to Luther.

Luther journeyed with his friend, Lange, whom he had met during his stay at Wuerzburg. On April 21 he entered Heidelberg and was enthusiastically received by brothers of the order and students. The fact that a great number of those attending the convention supported Luther can be derived from the fact that his patron Staupitz was reelected as the order's vicar. In addition, his close friend Lange was elected as District Vicar. But the rightful level of celebrity that Luther enjoyed became evident when an open debate was scheduled to be held in the monastery's lecture hall upon the conclusion of the convention's business. For this debate Luther set forth a set of theses. Their basic spirit can best be demonstrated by two of them which are as follows:

Thesis 25. "Not he who does many works is justified, but he who firmly believes in Christ."

Thesis 26. "The law says, 'Do this,' and it never happens; grace says, 'Believe in him,' and everything is already done."

This debate drew large crowds. The entire university, teachers and students, brothers of the order, all attended. Secular lords, for whom Luther carried "a precious letter of confidence" from his elector, were also present. The manner in which the professors participated in the debate brought joy to Luther's heart.

One of those who intently listened to the debate was of Tetzels order. His name was Martin Butzer and at the time he was a Dominican monk serving as baccalaureus and monastery magister. We have a direct report on the disputation from him in a letter he sent to his friend, Beatus Rhenanus of Basel, on the day on which Luther took his leave. He wrote about Luther in this way:

"During the convention of his order Luther functioned as chairman among the festive gymnasium of the learned. As such he posed and defended a column of statements, which not only exceeded every expectation, but even seemed heretical to most of the theologians. ... As much as those main participants in the debate tried to unseat him through their pointed comments, they won nothing, not even a finger's width, from him. It is astonishing how he answered them so graciously and how he listened with incomparable patience. He takes hold of the knots of objections and solves them with truly Pauline rather than Duns Scotus-like depth. The result is that with replies taken purely from Scripture, through his concise and convincing words, he like a magnet attracts nearly everyone to himself."

This Dominican was well versed in ancient languages, including Hebrew. In addition he had a Greek / Latin New Testament and a Hebrew book of Psalms in his possession. He seemed in a much better position to assess the debate than most of the other listeners. He had been fervently

taking notes during the debate. He did the same the next day when he learned much from Luther during a long conversation. After reporting much of what he had experienced he closed his letter to his friend with the following words,

"This, my dear Beatus, is what I personally recorded in my notes and from the conversation I had with the author himself the next day. I gleaned this from his unbelievable teaching ability and his spirit - inspired elucidations. ... Finally I beg of you, most dear friend, and swear to you under oath, that you do not share this writing with anyone other than a confidant, lest anything unpleasant happen to me as a result."

Just as it had been with Butzer, so did the debate make a lasting impression on others who attended. An example was the case of the nineteen-year-old John Brenz. This young man, who already enjoyed a considerable reputation as a highly learned magister, remained faithful to Luther's cause from this time on. The same could be said for Erhard Schnepf, who would also go on to become a learned theologian.

Luther arrived back in Wittenberg on the 15th of May. He had been gone for five weeks. The trip had invigorated him and with renewed strength he was ready to face the new work that was waiting him.

Chapter 12

Attacks and Defense

Shortly before Luther's journey to Heidelberg a document had appeared opposing the 95 controversial theses. It was entitled "Obilisken" (Obilisk being the name for a small, wedge or poniard shaped mark used to indicate a questionable passage in a book). Originating from the pen of Dr. Eck of Ingolstadt, it was copied by hand, and a copy was given to Luther. This was an attack that troubled him. This attack, considering its source, needed a rebuttal. Such was the opinion of Luther and his friends. However, the Heidelberg convention intervened and forced a delay in framing his reply. But before Luther returned from Heidelberg his ambitious colleague, Carlstadt, went ahead and, without Luther's approval, responded with two columns, 402 theses in all, to Eck's attack. Such was his desire to measure himself against a worthy opponent.

But when Eck found out about the publication of his theses in Wittenberg he attempted to fend off a confrontation. He asked Carlstadt, whose friendship he valued, to attack the Frankfurters, Tetzl, and Wimpina instead of openly confronting Eck himself. His obilisks, a hasty bit of writing, had not been intended for publication. But it was too late. Carlstadt would not have considered remaining silent anyway. He replied in a letter to Eck that it was Eck, who had broken their new friendship. He, Carlstadt, would prefer to take on a lion rather than a donkey like Tetzl or Wimpina.

Luther disapproved of Carlstadt's presumptive reply. He asked that Eck would delay a response to his colleague's statements. He wrote an amicable letter to Eck and sent it to Scheurl in Nuernberg for delivering it. Yet at the same time he drew up a personal reply to Eck's obilisks which went to the printer in August.

Once again, upon his return from Heidelberg, Luther zealously applied himself to his previously mentioned explanations of his 95 Theses. Luther first sent a copy of this extensive work to his superior, the Bishop of Brandenburg, in a letter dated Exaudi Sunday (*6th Sunday after Easter*). It was entitled, "Resolutions for the Disputation concerning the Power of Indulgence" on the first printed sheets. Luther had also approached the bishop concerning indulgences prior to posting his theses. He began his letter by explaining how he was compelled to write his disputation due to the unheard of presentations by the indulgence peddlers. He also had to respond to the many questions posed to him regarding such preaching. This was his intent in writing his theses, not to declare any final assertions. As a result he was not pleased that his theses had been so widely distributed and was willing to submit to the church and its verdict in regard to everything. He concluded by testifying again that he was not setting forth assertions but that he only desired debate. He did so fearfully, though not with fear for bulls and threats from those who demanded fearlessly that everything they imagined was to be accepted as the gospel.

Another person, who was to receive a copy of his "Resolutions" prior to their being printed, was no one less than the pope himself. In fact, Luther had even dedicated his writing to him. He sent it addressed to Leo along with an accompanying letter. He sent this package to his old friend Staupitz to forward to the pope. In the letter he wrote to Staupitz, he pointed out how he had arrived at the understanding which lay at the foundation of his theses. He reminded him that it had been Staupitz himself, who first led him to the idea that true repentance begins at the point where others thought it had ended. When the new indulgence preachers began bringing out their false, godless claims, he decided to debate. The result was that he incurred the wrath of those money-preachers. When they were unable to discredit any of his teaching, they set up a straw man argument that these debates were undermining the power of the pope. And so Luther, who would happily have stayed in his corner and quietly watched the battle, was now forced into the open. He therefore begged that his writings be forwarded to "the best Pope Leo X" as

quickly as possible so that they there could speak as quickly as possible in his defense against his enemies.

Still, feeling that matters might develop to his disadvantage, he absolved Staupitz of any responsibility. He comforted himself with Reuchlin's proverbial saying, "a poor man fears nothing since he can lose nothing." He continued, "I have no possessions, nor do I desire them. If I ever held a position of fame and honor, let whoever so wishes take it. Hence nothing is left for me other than my weak, constantly deprived, tired out body. Should they take that away from me by force or cunning, they will perhaps shorten my life of service to God by one or two hours. My sweet Redeemer and Reconciler, my Lord Jesus Christ, is enough for me. I shall sing to him as long as I live. And if no one wants to sing along with me, what does it matter? He shall weep, if he cares to, for himself alone." So Luther trusted that Christ would accept his teaching and would lead the pope's voice and the hearts of kings to the right decision.

The letter sent along to the pope was a remarkable piece of writing. In it Luther explained how the actions of the indulgence preachers had flayed the flesh off the bones of the poor, even as they fattened themselves with their incredible greed. As a result he was driven to do something and so issued the theses on paper for discussion and invited the learned to debate with him. In this context he declared that such was his right as a doctor of theology, a right which perhaps his enemies did not want him to have. Still he regretted that his theses were being so obscured from their original purpose that now they were hard for anyone to understand. Then he wrote, "What should I do now? I cannot take it back, even though I see that the steps I have taken have resulted in such hatred for me. Uneducated and immature person that I am, having yet to grow into full bloom, I do not enjoy this open debate. But it is necessary, requiring me to cackle among the swans like a goose." His desire was that his explanation of his theses be issued under the protection of the name of the pope that it may be recognized how faithfully he had submitted to the holy father. "Therefore," he concluded, "most holy father, I lay myself at the feet of your holiness with all that I am and have. I shall recognize your voice as the

voice of Christ, who rules and speaks in you. If I am deserving death, I shall not refrain from dying. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. (Ps. 24:1) May he be praised eternally. Amen. On the day of the Holy Trinity, 1518."

What a remarkable letter! On the one hand we read of Luther's humble submission, his willingness to acknowledge the voice of Christ in the voice of the pope. Yet on the other hand the declaration, "I cannot take it back." Both statements are surely intended seriously and honestly. Luther submits to the pope, trusting that he will do what is best for him as far as possible, even though he declares both to Staupitz and the pope the possibility that he would see himself condemned and punished in his body and his life. All this for the sake of the doctrine, which he "cannot take back", and, which is divine truth.

Though as the monk he was very respectful in his letter, as the doctor he maintained control in the "Resolutions". One after another he took up, clarified and explained his theses. He set forth the doctrine of righteousness by grace through faith in a clear and decisive manner. The faith depends on God's Word, spoken in the absolution by the administrator in God's place. Only the believer will be a partaker of the grace found in the Word and Sacraments. Furthermore, faith is required to receive divine grace. For the one who has Christ through faith has everything: righteousness, life and blessedness. Therefore Christians are to be instructed so that they do not seek comfort and peace by way of their own achievements, nor from their contrition, nor in the numbering of their sins during confession, but only through faith in the divine word of forgiveness. And so faith is also necessary in the use of the Sacraments for it is faith that enables the possession of the salvation which they offer. Therefore a person does not share in the merits of Christ through indulgences but only through faith. As for the merits of the saints, which they had supposedly earned in excess, they do not even exist. For no saint has fulfilled God's Commandments at all, let alone achieved extra. This point was so ingrained

in Luther that he was ready to face death by fire and considered those who taught otherwise to be heretics.

The only thing the pope could grant was earthly authority. He had no lordship over souls. Truly, according to Romans 13:1-2, honor was to be paid to the pope as to every earthly authority. This held true even when wrong was being done, as when the church was at that time placing endless burdens on the people. But his authority was not based on the phrase: "What you bind on earth, etc."--as the pope has declared some to be bound by the church who in fact are not bound before God—but rather on the basis of the word, "Settle matters quickly with your enemy...(Matthew 5:25), and, "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also..." (Matthew 5:39), and Romans 12:19, "Do not take revenge..." The pope cannot make new articles of faith but can only make judgments based on those that already exist. If it were otherwise the church would be in constant danger, since the pope can err in matters of faith just as in earthly matters. He was unimpressed with papal decisions. The pope is a man as any other man, and many popes had made horrible decisions. However he alleged that in the person of Leo X they had an honorable pope. But he wondered what even this honorable man could accomplish in the midst of the present confusion. After all he lived in Rome, the true Babylon, where even the best of popes have been mocked.

Truly the church was in need of a reformation. However that time for that reformation was known only to the One, who had created time. The present time was so terrible that even highly educated and holy men could not help the church. But rather than have the truth be completely silenced it was better to be spoken by children and fools. Perhaps then the educated and the wise would become bolder, as they would learn that even an immature person like himself felt the need to raise his voice according to the Word of God. "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (Luke 19:40)

Yet Luther did not want to separate from the Roman church. That is why he rejected the Bohemian brothers who had separated from the church, calling them heretics and unholy people, who rejoiced in the disgrace of Rome as the Pharisee looked down on the tax collector. He

wrote: "Oh, we know our failings and lament them; but we do not flee like the heretics; we do not pass by those who are half dead. ... The more pitiable the church is, the more faithfully we stand at her side. We come to her aid with weeping, praying, admonishing and pleading. This is what love compels us to do, namely to carry one another's burden."

These closing words provide us with a key to understanding Luther's actions at this time. Even though we know that he would later mean something different when he said, "knowledge is but piecework," he really believed that it was his duty to take the stand he did and to give his testimony. But the time was not far off when he would praise Bohemia and bless them, along with all the others who had stepped away from the Babylon of Rome. Then he would declare that he no longer had any desire to side with the Roman church.

While the printing process of the Resolutions was still going on, Luther's restless pen produced two more publications in swift succession. For Tetzl had issued a refutation of "Sermon about Indulgence and Grace," concerning which Luther could not remain silent as he did with the Frankfurter theses. He responded under the title, "Freedom of the Sermon about Indulgence and Grace." In it he reproached Tetzl about the manner in which he used Scripture. He wrote, "It is a tremendous cause for lamentation that one has to endure the rending of Scripture by such an arrogant blasphemer. Would that he treat me in such an evil way, calling me a heretic, an apostate, a speaker of evil and a victim of his evil desires. I would accept it and never attack him; indeed, I would gladly pray for him. But the fact that he does not handle Scripture properly cannot be tolerated. He treats Holy Scripture, our comfort, the way a sow treats a sack of oats." He then proceeded to address the individual points. Consider what Tetzl wrote, "He who buys an indulgence is doing a better thing than giving alms to any poor man who is not yet on his deathbed."

In response Luther wrote: "Beware, and, may God have mercy on you! This is a so-called teacher of the Christian people. From now on it is not so terrible to hear how the Turks dishonor our church and cross. We have in our midst hundreds of worse Turks, who in their blasphemy take

away from us our most sacred possession, the Word of God. The holy Apostle John says, 'anyone who sees his brother starving or in need and hardens his heart against him, how can the love of God abide in him?' The blasphemer approaches this text and hurls it a thousand miles away with the comment that the one starving or in need must be understood as being on his deathbed. With this I have no patience because this comment comes from an evil spirit."

He wrote further along, "The fact that such false teachers do not know Scripture, don't understand Latin or German, and above all, blasphemously berate us makes me feel as though an uncouth donkey is braying at me. Certainly I am glad and not sorry at all that such people fervently revile me in my Christianity." Tetzel, even though his loose and cavalier style of life was well-known, had boasted that he was prepared to endure water and fire for the sake of his teaching. So Luther concluded with the words, "For him I offer this free advice. He should ask for vine-branch-water (wine) and for the fire that steams from the roasted geese he enjoys so much."

Though Tetzel had pointed out in a veiled manner that people like Luther should have to face prison or burning, another Dominican, Jacob von Hoogstraten of Koeln, went much farther. He declared statements of Luther to be heretical and urged the pope to make short work of Luther, to attack him with fire and sword. The idea that the truth would be suppressed with bloody violence affected Luther very strongly. In a devastating pamphlet he sent that jail keeper fleeing. What follows is the conclusion of that work, which was published in German.

"So be gone, you evil, bloody murderer, thirsting only for your brother's blood! Spend your time looking for fleas in horse dung until you learn what true sin, error, heresy, and what else belongs to this kind of knowledge actually is. For I have yet to see a more stupid ass than you, especially one who brags about the many years he spent in the study of dialectics. It is no surprise that you condemn the best statements of the best of men as heretical. You still have no idea what is contrary to Scripture and, as a result, don't know what is to be condemned or heretical.

"It gladdens my heart that you have condemned me, you whose brain is so foggy. I beg and plead with you to never call me a Christian or a believer in Christ lest others believe you are lying or speaking out of ignorance. Please continue to denounce me as a heretic. For then there will be those who will defend me and say that Hoogstraten judges in the same way as a blind man distinguishes colors. So now you are warned, man of blood and enemy of the truth. Should your madness drive you to attack me again take care to act thoughtfully and take your time in the attempt. I am giving you this warning in advance. God knows what I shall do, if I am alive. I have every confidence that I would show the whole world that for the last 400 years no more destructive heretic has ever lived than Jacob Hoogstraten. Be kind to yourself, dear reader. July 13, 1518."

Chapter 13

Summons to Rome

By writing "Freedom of the Sermon About Indulgence and Grace," Luther again challenged his opponents to debate. "Here I am," he wrote, "in Wittenberg. Dr. Martinus Luther, Augustinian. I am exposing myself to a jail keeper who believes himself able to devour iron and rip apart mountain-sized boulders. I am informing him that he can have protection, free admission, free lodging and expenses covered from the gracious allowance of the honorable and Christian Duke Frederick, Elector of Saxony. From now on may those who have printed blasphemy understand that this count was in no way supporting heresy, as they delighted to slander and defame him in their last drunken ramblings, accusing him of protecting me as heretic, contrary to the truth.

The idea of separating the bold monk from the peaceful protection of his count originated in Rome. Leo X would not easily allow himself to be parted from his regal life style, his hunting, his bawdy plays, amusements and card games. He had originally regarded what was happening in Germany as trivial. The theses had been written by a drunken German who needed sobering to change his mind. However, it didn't take long for the situation to become uncomfortable for him. Perhaps it was that the flow of wealth from indulgences dried up. Maybe other discouraging news arrived. In any event we take note that already in early 1518 the first attempt to extinguish the Wittenberg flame, with the bucket of water that Silvester Prierias had poured on that Wittenberg fire, failed to calm Rome.

Now Rome resolved to adopt other options. As early as April a letter was sent to the elector instructing him to submit to the pope's desires. More than that, he attached an official complaint against Luther. The papal legate, Mario Perusco, raised the accusation of heresy. The pope appointed judges for the case, one of whom was Silvester Prierias, who had

volunteered to be the first challenger out of the papal camp against Luther. It was as early as August 7 that the accused received the summons to appear in Rome within 60 days.

So this is the answer that Luther received to his letter in which he had addressed the pope and from which he expected to receive some kindly direction. Later he reflected, "While I was expecting blessing, lightning and thunder crashed down on me." Now there was no longer any doubt as to the pope's position on this issue. What would he do now?

He first responded in a way that he would have done anyway. He sent the printed reply he had written to Eck's "Obilisks" under the title of "Asterisks." (Asterisks are the little stars which point toward remarks made at the bottom of the page explaining the context.) In a response such as this he was in no way indebted to his opponent. He attacked the lamentable weakness of his Obelisks, in which Prierias argued neither from Scripture nor from the church fathers, but purely from the scholastics.

The argument was so light that it could be blown away like a house of cards. "If the author of the Obelisks only were as fine a theologian as he is a sophist (almost calling him a philosopher)" he writes, and "I request that if you will write to me again some other time you would be content to only mention your argument three or four times in the one piece of work, rather than how you have foolishly made your point in every sentence which is laughable. For your information I don't want to hear about any scholastic theology unless it is based on church theology. Was this what you wanted, that I do nothing else than laugh at you? You offered nothing for me to read that I didn't question and against which I now debate."

Luther had to respond to an especially malicious attack which compared him to the Bohemian (John Hus) poison. He posited that he followed Christ's example, saying, "I do not have a devil." He served at an excellent university, in an acknowledged order, under a highly renowned duke of Saxony, and in a sizeable bishopric where everything was catholic. He attempted to force Eck to substantiate his lies and his blasphemous tongue. He formulated his conclusion by saying, "I am ashamed of such

extended foolish talk. Eck is a theologian. He tries very hard to ignore the fact that a Christian's freedom comes from his peace of conscience which no indulgence can provide. It comes only from the forgiveness of sins by grace alone ... but finally this should be enough to silence the talk of such a thoughtless, uninformed, inexperienced, that is to say, scholastic theologian. Finis! August 10, 1518."

But Luther was not content with that response. Even though he had remained silent concerning the attack of Prierias up to this point, now the question of how Rome stood toward him was answered with the summons to Rome. Prierias had composed his letter in three days. In this regard also did Luther outdo him by giving a considerably longer "Answer to the Dialog of Silvester Prierias" in two days. At the same time he reproached his opponent, informing him that he failed to understand Scripture, either having failed to apply it at all or having applied it incorrectly. Instead he garnered his weapons of defense from the scholastics. They had often erred, since no human being, pope or council is infallible. Because Prierias had maintained the convoluted idea that the word of an indulgence is God's Word, Luther argued that it was the word of man and refers only to human opinion. He stated that God's Word speaks differently, namely, "Faith justifies," and "The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe." But the indulgence declaration does not justify, nor does it produce anything except that it promotes laziness in regard to doing good works. He responded to the threats of his opponents, "Just stop your threats. Christ lives; indeed, he not only lives but he also reigns. He reigns not only on earth but also in Rome, no matter how much Rome may rage. If it condemns for the sake of the truth, I will praise the Lord. The censure of the church shall not separate me from the church as long as the truth binds me to the church. I would rather be condemned and banned by you, if you and your kind continue in such manner, than to be blessed with you. I've got nothing to lose. I belong to the Lord. If I die, I die to the Lord, which means I live. If you want to frighten someone with your actions, look for someone else."

In conclusion he wrote, "Note, honorable father, it has taken me only two days to respond to you because what you have said against me carries so little weight. Therefore I could answer you with little preparation, as the words came out of my mouth. But if you choose to carry this debate on then see to it that your Thomas enters the field of battle better prepared. You don't want to suffer more than you already have in this confrontation. I have been holding back, not wanting to repay evil with evil. May you fare well."

Proof that this work struck a nerve with his opponents can be found in the fact that this, like Luther's other works, was being widely read. But the copies of this one were all purchased throughout Germany by the brothers of Prierias' order in order to keep it quiet. The publisher had nothing to complain about regarding this quick sell out. When it sold out in September he simply printed a new one.

Phrases we read from this work like, "The censure of the church will not separate me from the church, when the truth binds me to the church," Luther had used before. He had detailed them in his congregational sermons even before this publication. He referred to the fact that a real ban declares that the banned individual has been shut out of the spiritual fellowship of the church. But it is so decreed because such an individual had previously separated himself from Christ. In contrast a so-called ban, which has been declared against a person who espoused a just cause, is truly not a ban but an honor. A person may bear that joyfully. The one who is unjustly banned because of the truth must therefore not deny the truth in spite of the ban.

Using phrases like this Luther provided comfort and serenity to many a Christian heart. He earned the sincere gratitude of those who had been threatened with a ban by the preachers of indulgences, a ban just because they followed Dr. Martinus and his teachings.

To his enemies this last sermon especially proved to be like fat in the fire. Since much of what Luther said was taken out of context, the preacher felt compelled to recall that sermon from memory and print it after the fact.

He did this, as he said in his introduction, to prove that there was nothing to regret in this sermon, either by the one who preached it or the devout member who heard it.

What Luther was at that precise time teaching the people about the ban was important. This was especially in respect to the unjustifiable ban, decreed against the proclaimer of the truth. It was important because he could expect that due to the way things stood with Rome, Rome would come after him with a ban, if other plans did not work out. A correct understanding of this subject would negate the intended effect on the people once the ban would be delivered.

At that time Luther expressed such a thought to Staupitz in a letter he wrote shortly after his summons to Rome, "Have no doubt, my honorable father, that I shall keep my freedom in the future by searching and holding on to the divine Word." He remarked further to Staupitz, "Should I be put under the ban I only fear one thing, namely that this might serve as a stumbling block for you, because I am sure that God has led you to a right understanding in the matter." He also added a copy of his, "Sermon regarding the ban," to this letter.

Luther received a warmly written reply from Staupitz, who at that time was staying in quiet retreat with the Archbishop of Salzburg. His letter closed with the encouragement that Luther leave Wittenberg for a while, since he was being rejected for Christ's sake, even as Christ himself was rejected. He ought to come to Salzburg. But Luther could not accept this well-intentioned heartfelt advice. He had his various responsibilities in Wittenberg, and he intended to carry them out until God would tell him to go. The university stood in beautiful support of Luther. This included the whole theology faculty, except for a single licentiate in the study of law. The students were encouraged to diligently continue their study of Scripture. How those students regarded Luther can be shown from the following story. Tetzels theses were brought into Wittenberg in March of that year. The students took 800 copies, some purchased and some taken by force. They solemnly burned them in the marketplace. For this action Luther seriously reproved them from the pulpit.

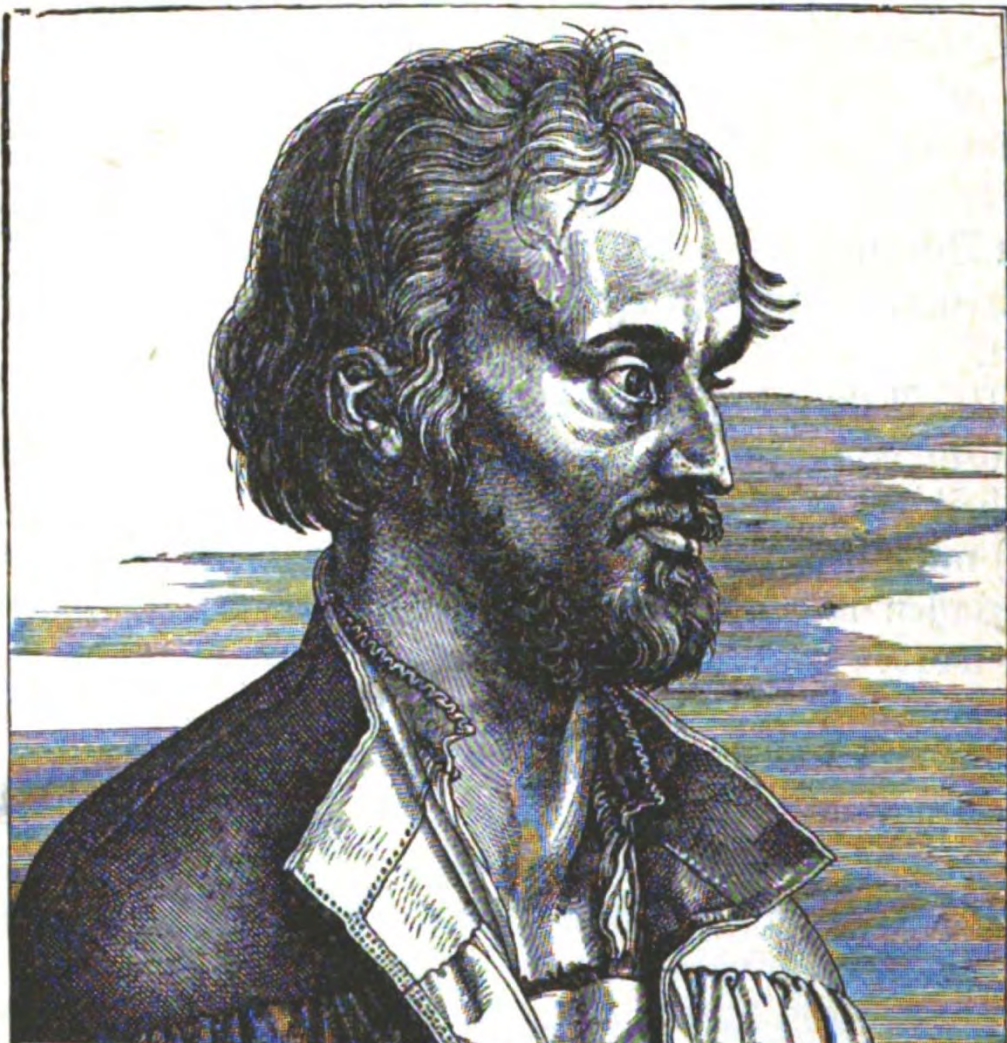
In the days that followed his receiving of the summons to Rome, the new professor of Greek, Phillip Melanchthon, arrived in Wittenberg.

Philip Blackearth was born on the 16th of February, 1497 in Bretten in the Lower Palatinate. His father, a famous weaponsmith and honest man, died while the boy was still wearing the shoes of childhood. The careful upbringing of the boy, begun by his father, was carried on by his grandfather. Later after his death, his grandmother, a sister of the highly educated Reuchlin, took up the task. In fact it was Reuchlin who gave the name of his young and very promising relative its Greek form, Melanchthon. Philip was not yet thirteen years old when he entered the University of Heidelberg where he became *baucalaureus* with honor at the age of fifteen. From there he moved to the University of Tuebingen. He diligently applied himself to the study of philosophy and became Magister in 1514 at the age of seventeen. He became familiar with most subjects, even with medicine. Then he turned to theology. Naturally this was scholastic theology which was being studied in the schools. And though he was already familiar with the New Testament, having read it in the original text, he did not grasp a true understanding during his time at Tuebingen.

So this was the Magister Philippus who arrived in Wittenberg on August 25, 1518. He had previously declined calls to Ingolstadt and to Leipzig. Despite his plain outward appearance he soon was held in high regard by colleagues and students alike. In fact, as early as four days later Luther would write to Spalatin and tell him that Melanchthon's lecture hall was packed full. Luther joyfully recognized that his new co-worker would stand alongside Luther not only as an aide in language instruction but also in studying Scripture. He recognized this when Magister Philippus gave a lecture on Homer and immediately announced one on the letter to Titus.

Luther would have had to be a Staupitz to leave Wittenberg voluntarily under such circumstances. However, he also did not dare to attempt such a move without considering the elector. He could not leave his post without his command or permission. At that time the elector was staying with his court preacher Spalatin at Augsburg, where an important imperial diet was

being held. In spite of the many types of business that occupied his time he did not forget about his doctor in Wittenberg.



Philip Melancthon according to Albrecht Dürer

Chapter 14

Cajetan

The man Frederick the Wise was dealing with while in Augsburg was the papal legate. His name was Cardinal Thomas Vio von Gaeta, called by his city's name, Cajetan.

This highly placed Dominican had been named a cardinal the previous year and now the pope entrusted him with directing papal concerns at the imperial diet. Being of the opinion that a papal legate held a higher position than a king, he presented himself accordingly. His specially chosen garments were so outlandish that the master of ceremonies responsible for the attire burst out laughing. His white horse was bridled with crimson red velvet, and his room was decorated with carpets of the same color. With a proud and pompous display he carried out his duties at the ceremonies of August 1. He placed a cardinal's hat on the Archbishop of Mainz and handed the sword and hat, consecrated by the pope, to the archbishop.

So Frederick began to deal with this red eminence on Luther's behalf. By the good reputation which Frederick the Wise had in the council of the counts and the professionals, it must have appeared advisable even to Cajetan to treat the elector quite respectfully. After all, the pope had made big plans in context with this imperial diet. His plan was to thoroughly fleece the Germans again, a plan for which the royal participants had no stomach. When Caesar and the legate requested money for "The War against the Turks," they answered with a decisive "NO" on the 27th of August. They then approached the papal chair with a number of long lists of complaints. These complaints had been gathered in respect to the simony hunters (most likely in reference to Acts 8:9-24) and seekers of German gold, who were unbearably oppressive to the German people. As a result things were not looking good for the pope, and it would have been

worse than foolhardy to aim a blow at the head of a man like Elector Frederick.

Even Caesar needed to show respect to the elector, for not only were complaints being directed at Maximilian by the accusers, but Maximilian had his own agenda. He was planning to offer Caesar's crown to his nephew Karl, the king of Spain. Thus Frederick had the advantage of wielding his influence. (Note: When a "Caesar", the title of the head of the Holy Roman Empire, died or was removed from office in some other way, it was the duty of seven out of the many counts to decide who would serve as the next Caesar, or head of government of the Holy Roman Empire. These seven were the only ones who were "Electoral counts" or held "elector" rank.) This was another reason why the pope and his legate needed to win Elector Frederick to their side. For the pope was doing all he could to prevent such a concentration of political power to be given to a man already wearing many crowns. The pope needed the electors. The manner in which the pope and the cardinal regarded Elector Frederick can thus be easily understood. A papal letter to Frederick arrived on August 23. In it the pope alleged that a certain Martin Luther, "a child of evil" and "blasphemer of God," was boasting that he stood under the protection of the elector and therefore feared no other human authority or punishment. Thus the elector must take care in this matter, lest he come under suspicion of aiding Martin Luther, and according to the legate Luther was to be delivered over for trial before the holy seat. Then soon after, another message arrived from Rome. This one stated that the pope was of a mind to bestow on him the golden rose as a sign of his personal favor.

Yet, before any of this transpired, the elector had personally confronted the legate with the wish that Luther be given a hearing on German soil. The cardinal very willingly agreed and reported back to Rome. On the 23rd of August the legate had received his instructions regarding Luther. He was to use every possible means to arrest Martin Luther, whom the papal auditor had declared an impenitent heretic under his power. He was to do this with the help of the secular authority and then to hold him securely until receiving further instructions to bring him before the holy

seat. The cardinal was also given full power to welcome Martin Luther back into the fellowship of the church if he would recant willingly and penitently. The harshest punishment of the church would come down on everyone who would oppose this decision or give protection, assistance, lodging, etc. to this heretic. All cities and countries where he remained would be placed under the interdict. (An interdict was a punishment in which all functions of the church, with few exceptions, would be suspended until the pope had been obeyed.) Either due to the new instructions he had received from Rome or acting under his own general authority, Cajetan made the offer to the elector for Luther to be granted a hearing in Augsburg. Frederick found this offer agreeable with his demand and directed Luther to appear in Augsburg.

Many people might wonder, had they been in Luther's position, whether he should assent to such a request without further assurances. Luther received warnings to that extent, including one from a count of Mansfeld. But Luther replied, "The more they threaten, the more I am comforted. I have no woman or children to care for, no property, house or possessions; my honor and name have already been torn to pieces. What remains is my frail, weak body. But the soul they shall not take away from me. The Word of God has been purchased through death. It is being preached with death. It has been preserved through death. It will have to be preserved through death."

And so Luther set out for Augsburg as his elector requested. He was accompanied by one of his students and a brother from the monastery, Leonhard Beier. He traveled through Weimar, where the elector was residing, to Nuernberg. If anyone saw him traveling on foot, so poorly dressed, he would never have suspected that this was the man with whom the pope, the cardinals, and the counts, had begun to deal. The meager amount of money he needed for his journey did not belong to him. He had received it from the elector. Once at Nuernberg he borrowed a better monk's habit from his friend Link in order to appear more acceptable before the cardinal. However, under that monk's robe beat a heart that was timid, yet at the same time cheerful. "My thought while traveling was," he would

later say, "Now I have to die. And I often said, 'Oh, what a disgrace I will be for my parents!'"

He also journeyed in confidence, trusting in his God, and fully aware that his cause was really God's cause. "Even in Augsburg," he wrote, "even in the midst of his enemies, Jesus Christ reigns. Christ lives. Martinus dies." When Kestner, the prior of the Weimar monastery, expressed his fear that the Italians might burn the dear doctor, he replied, "With nettles this will all pass, but with fire it would get too hot. Dear friend, pray a Pater Noster to our dear Lord God in heaven and to his dear Child, Christ, to whom belongs my cause, that he will be gracious to me. If he will preserve the cause for me, then it is already preserved. But if he does not wish to preserve it, then I will also not be able to preserve it and must bear the disgrace."

On October 7th, Luther, who had traveled the last three miles in a wagon due to an illness, left the Augustinian monastery in Augsburg to take up quarters in the Karmeliter monastery. He wanted to avoid all confusion that he was coming to represent his order. While at the Karmeliter monastery he received excellent hospitality under the care of his friend Johann Frosch, a Wittenberg attorney. Upon his arrival he immediately informed the legate through Link, who had come along to Augsburg. It wasn't as though the legate hadn't already heard. The entire city was talking about the bold monk.

So the cardinal immediately summoned Luther to come before him. But Luther had been advised from all directions not to become available immediately for a hearing. It was considered best by the cardinal that this stormy German be kept in a peaceful state of mind. For this reason a close Italian friend of Cajetan, Urbanus of Serralonga, had informed him that he would be summoned for a discussion two days after his arrival. So Luther was allowed to postpone his appearance before the cardinal until then. In reality Urbanus made it clear to him that this appearance revolved around only six letters, "r-e-v-o-c-o" (I take it back!). He would need to speak these letters and the whole matter would be settled. It amused him to hear from the German that the need for speaking these letters could only arise from a previous conviction. How anyone could object to the business of the

indulgence preachers, which brought in such nice profit, was a mystery to the Italian. But when he saw that Luther was serious he turned serious as well. He pointed out that the use of force was a possibility and asked Luther whether he thought that the elector would resort to weapons, putting lands and people at risk on this behalf. When Luther explained that he desired no such thing Urbanus asked, "Where do you wish to stay?" "Under the sky," Luther fired back. Instead of such treatment causing him to waver, Luther gained much confidence for the approaching dealings with the cardinal. All this was due to this pitiable (the German word "jaemmerlich") mediation by Urbanus, whom he recognized as the Cardinal's tool.

The German friends for Luther's cause, whom the elector had recommended, were on the other side. They advised strongly against an immediate appearance before the legate. Though the papal instructions given to Cajetan were not known at that time, these men did not trust Cajetan. They stopped Luther from appearing before Cajetan without receiving an official document from the Caesar. The obtaining of such a letter involved a time-consuming process, especially since Caesar had left the city on September 18^t just a few days before Luther's arrival. Maximilian had ridden out filled with dark foreboding, ill and depressed. Yet as he departed he called out in farewell, "God bless you, dear Augsburg, and all devout citizens in you! From time to time we truly enjoyed some good days. Now we shall never see you again." Yet, before he left he spoke with the legate and urged him to be gentle in his handling of the Wittenberg Doctor.

Since Caesar still had to provide the letter, Luther's friends insisted on waiting for its arrival. Not until the letter arrived, October 11th, did Luther proceed to the cardinal's residence. He was accompanied by Link, another brother of his order, prior Frosch and two Karmelites. At the cardinal's residence they met Urbanus of Serralonga, a papal nuntius, along with a number of other Italians. When the news spread that the bad monk had arrived, other foreigners came from their rooms out of curiosity. In order to avoid any complaints about failure to show proper respect toward

the cardinal, Luther had allowed himself to be taught regarding the etiquette for proper behavior before such a high spiritual official. He threw himself facedown to the ground before him. Then when the cardinal bade him rise, he rose as far as to his knees. Only after more bidding did he finally stand on his feet. Since the cardinal seemed to be waiting for him to speak, Luther did so. He explained that he had appeared in obedience to the papal order and his count's command. He said that he was prepared to be instructed concerning the statements for debate, which he had made public. Since this struck the legate as being a very short speech, he made it his goal to have an easy dismissal of the whole matter.

Luther had presented himself as an obedient son of the church. Thus the cardinal got straight to the point of reproofing that dear son by referring to the holy father in his reply. That holy father demanded three things from Luther. First, Luther was to retract. Second, he was to refrain from making any further comments of the sort. Third, he would do away with anything and everything which could disrupt the peace of the church. Luther then asked for specific references to the material which he was to retract. The cardinal chose one statement from the disputations and one from the resolutions. The first was what was alleged in the 58th thesis, that the treasure from which the pope provided the indulgence was not the merit of Christ. Luther had made this statement in opposition to the Constitutio "Unigenitus" issued by Pope Clemens VI in 1343. The claim was made in it that Christ had earned a treasure for his church, a treasure to be managed by Peter and his successors. This treasure could never run empty due to the unending merit of Christ and the excessive virtue of the righteous. The papal legate sought to excuse Luther for what he had written by expressing the opinion that perhaps Luther had never read the papal declaration. But he was wrong. Luther explained that he had, indeed, read the Bull of Clemens and also the one of Pope Sixtus IV, which was worded the same way. But he did not consider them to be binding over against Scripture, as the pope twisted the meaning. This was too much for the legate who stated that a person has to submit to a papal declaration. Luther had pointed out that the Parisian theologians had

appealed this point to the pope for a council. The legate responded that they would have to take their punishment.



Caesar Maximilian according to Albrecht Dürer

The statement out of the resolution, which Luther was asked to retract, was the one in which he alleged that in order to be a worthy recipient of Holy Communion the receiver must have faith. Luther's refusal to retract this statement prompted the Italians who were present to start to

laugh upon hearing a teaching so contrary to their own opinions. To this the cardinal declared, "Whether you want to or not you must retract today. If you do not I shall reject and condemn all of your teachings because of what you have said.

Luther could actually have retracted in Wittenberg. It would have been far easier and less stressful. As a result he was genuinely surprised to hear the cardinal's opinion and his refusal to conduct a real indepth debate about the issues that had been raised. When he saw how things stood, he ended the audience by requesting a recess of one day to think things over.

The legate's right hand man, who had already been reproached by the cardinal for sticking his nose into the discussion, ran after Luther and accused him of sophistry. Luther unceremoniously brushed him off saying he had enough and so withdrew.

Luther found his old mentor, Staupitz, in his quarters. He had arrived in Augsburg on that day to make good his promise to stand at Luther's side. They discussed what should be done. The next day the cardinal might have been surprised by what he saw. For in Luther's company he saw the Caesar's counselor, Dr. Konrad Peutinger, along with two other imperial counselors, the electoral counselor, Philip of Feilitzsch, Staupitz, and a notary. All of these appeared before him. Luther proceeded to read a protest which was clear in every sense. In it he explained that he could not retract without having been convinced of his error. He then offered to debate his statements publicly in Augsburg or anywhere else, or to defend himself in private. He was also ready to answer the legate in writing for anything that could be brought against him. He was furthermore open to a verdict by the four universities of Basel, Freiburg, Loewen, and Paris, as to where he may have erred.

To this proposal, which appeared to give the cardinal a wide variety of options, the cardinal only smiled and commanded Luther once again to retract. In doing so he warned him that it would prove difficult for him to kick against the pricks. (See Acts 9:5 KJV for intended meaning.) Luther's request to be allowed to respond in writing to the statements selected by

the cardinal was initially abruptly denied. Yet he did allow it after Staupitz lent his support.

Luther had his response ready the very next day. The truth of the first statement under attack was presented with crystal clarity, in spite of Pope Clemens' bull cited by Cajetan. He then put forth anew his allegation that every Christian has the right to compare any doctrine, even the pope's, with what Holy Scripture says. In this regard he used Peter as an example. Peter had to be corrected when he had strayed from the truth of the gospel (Mt. 16:22,23; Gal. 2). So also, without hesitation, did he defend himself against the legate's objection to the statement in Luther's resolutions. He proved from Scripture that only faith in Christ's Word can produce a living, worthy and properly prepared guest at the Lord's Supper and that everything else leads only to insolence or despair. Since this is the teaching of Holy Scripture, he could not depart from it. He must obey God rather than man.

Cajetan's failure to accept anything that was offered was no surprise. However, the legate acted as though the written statement no longer applied to him and promised to send it to Rome. Once again he commanded Luther to retract. The very next day Luther reported to Spalatin how the discussion ended.

"I started to speak several times, but he kept thundering, growling, trying to rule and lord it over me. Finally I also began to raise my voice, saying, 'If it can be proven from that aforementioned Extravagantus (the bull "Unigenitus of Clemens VI) that the treasures of the indulgence are the merits of Christ, I shall retract in agreement with the will and pleasure of your highness'." In response Cajetan became very unruly, burst out laughing, and picked up the book in his hands. He eagerly read the Extravagantus as fast as he could until he came to the place where it is written that the Lord Christ accomplished (in the sense of "arrived at;" the German word "erlangt" may also be translated, "gained", or "earned".) the treasure through his suffering, etc. Then I said, 'highly-honored-father, your highness may wish to consider the word (referring to the word "erlangt") and zealously apply it. Since Christ has earned (or, accomplished) a treasure

through (or, by way of) his wages (earning), it is not the wages which are the treasure, but rather this (is the treasure), namely, what the wages have earned (or, provided), the keys of the church (These are the treasure.). As a result my assertion is true.”

“So the legate was put to shame. Yet not wanting to appear ashamed he forcefully changed the subject and immediately forgot about my proof. I replied calmly and with the proper respect, 'very highly honored father, your highness should no longer be of the opinion that we Germans don't possess or understand grammar. It is one thing to be a treasure; it is another thing to earn a treasure.'

Since the legate had lost his confidence, he roared once more that I should retract, saying, 'Go away and don't come back unless you are willing to retract.' That is how I took my leave from the legate.”

Whether or not the cardinal truly wanted to break off the meeting with Luther, Luther took him at his word. Luther was firm in his resolve not to retract. That very day he wrote to Carlstadt, "I have no wish to become a heretic by retracting the very truth whereby I became a Christian. I would sooner die, be burned, be driven out, be cursed." (footnote reference: LV. vol. 7, p 7ff.) Hence he sought nothing more from the legate after those last words. In the same way the cardinal had lost all desire to deal with the German monk who had debated with him so energetically and had backed him into a corner with such heavy armaments. "I do not want to speak with that beast any more, for he has deep eyes and amazing ideas in his head," he said in discouraged manner to Staupitz and Link. He had been speaking with Luther's two friends that afternoon, advising them to try to get Luther to retract.

These friends also concluded that any further discussion was at an end. This was so, even though at another meeting with Link, Cajetan claimed that Luther had no better friend than himself. In fact, he would first await further instruction from Rome, where he had sent Luther's written defense. He would do this instead of using the full power at his disposal of immediately placing Luther under the ban.

Luther's two friends didn't trust this offer of peace and on Saturday proceeded to return from Augsburg to Nuernberg on different roads. Prior to that time Staupitz, acting as his superior, released Luther from the order's rule. As a result he would be free to move without being hindered by his vow of obedience or any other rules of the order.

But Luther, even though he had little hope in regard to the cardinal, did not believe himself free to leave the city as long as there was the slightest chance of being summoned once more, since he had been summoned by his count's command. He had written a letter to Carlstadt, "He is perhaps a Thomist by name, but a hazy, hidden, ignorant theologian or Christian. For this reason in sitting in judgment on this case, understanding or deciding this issue, he is as skilled as a donkey is skilled to play the harp. As a result my case is in so much more danger, since it has judges, who are not only enemies, who are angry with me, but are also incapable of recognizing or understanding the issue."

Luther desired to take at least a few steps toward satisfying the cardinal's desires, as he had been encouraged by Link and Staupitz. So he decided to do whatever he could still do with a good conscience. He wrote a humble message to the cardinal the day after his two friends departed. In it he admitted that he may have written too brashly. He also declared himself ready to let the entire indulgence controversy rest on this condition that those sellers of indulgences, who had driven him into action, would have their activities restricted with set boundaries and goals. When he received no reply from the cardinal, he followed with another message the next day. In it he proposed to the legate that, since he had been forbidden to show his face to the cardinal without retracting and since he was short of food and did not want to be a burden to the Karmelites, it was useless for him to stay in Augsburg. After all, he was now appealing to the pope, begging that he would look upon him with favor. The appeal to which he referred he had already submitted on Saturday in front of a notary and witness as "an appeal from a badly instructed to the pope who is able to better instruct him." This appeal also contained a request for the retraction



Picture of Billibald Pirckheimer according to Albrecht Dürer

of the citation from Rome and the court, from which he could not expect a just decision on his case.

When the legate maintained his utter silence after the second message, Luther's friends became very uneasy. In the middle of the night between October 20th and 21st a small gate in the city wall was secretly opened and two men rode off toward the north. The one was an elderly man who knew all of the paths and roads. The other, dressed as a monk, was sitting on a hard gaited nag without saddle, boots, or stirrups. He was called Martinus Luther. Brother Leonhard had stayed behind in the city in order to deliver the letter of appeal to the cardinal in the presence of a notary and witness.

The riders arrived in Monheim in the evening, where Luther was unable to stand after dismounting and instantly fell into the straw. In Nuernberg his friends strove to succor Doctor Luther as best they could after the troubles and dangers he had endured. The learned patrician Billibald Pirkheimer provided both food and shelter. We shall hear later about what this cost this Nuernberg humanitarian. On the first anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses, Martin Luther read a mass in Kemberg near Wittenberg. Later that day he arrived in Wittenberg, well rested and full of joy and peace. It takes little wisdom to conclude that the cardinal and his commander, the pope, would not stay satisfied with what had taken place.

The actual instructions of the pope, to which the cardinal had referred as a threat at their last meeting, were first brought to Luther's attention in Nuernberg. Luther could not believe that the same instructions were genuine that the pope had condemned him as a heretic before the time which had been allowed for his citation had expired. Even when Luther shortly thereafter put a sharp rebuke into print in the form of a short report, he still regarded the pope's instructions to the cardinal as forgery.

As early as October 23rd the cardinal had sent a letter to the elector, agreeing with the papal brief. In it he bitterly complained that Luther had appeared before him with royal escort, had remained disobediently impenitent to his fatherly admonition, and had put the reasons for justifying

his actions into writing. The final straw was that, without letting him know, both Staupitz and Luther had traveled away and so had betrayed him. For this the legate asked the count to either send Luther to Rome or into exile. The elector passed this letter on to Luther. Luther in turn tore apart the legate's arguments in his response to the count, which completely satisfied him.

It must have been especially reassuring to the count that Luther constantly showed himself striving, in whatever way possible, to keep the trouble away from him as the head of government. He even wrote a letter saying that he was ready to leave the country and head into misery. "For this reason," he wrote, "that nothing evil may happen to your electoral grace on my account. In God's name I am willing to leave the land of your electoral grace and go wherever the eternal and merciful God wants me to be." In this way he showed that he had been serious when he had declared to Urbanus in Augsburg that he would "remain under the sky."

Still he did not want his count to turn into a Pilate toward him, delivering him who had not been convicted of any wrong to a sure death in Rome. In truth the elector for some time entertained the idea that, should the ban be imposed very soon, Luther might leave the country. His idea was for Luther to go to France where it was hoped he would fit in with the Parisian doctors. The count would not hear of surrendering him to Rome. Instead he wrote to Degenhard Pfeffinger, his ambassador to Caesar, to try to convince Caesar to set up a non-partisan hearing for Luther in Germany.

He then wrote a letter to the legate. In it he declared his open astonishment with the demands made of Luther and himself: to Luther, that he was ordered to retract without having been convicted; to himself, that he deliver Luther to Rome without more ado or send him into exile. He requested that an orderly debate with Luther be held, or that his alleged errors be proved in writing. If that would happen he would know how to respond. Up to this point no one had been able to show him that Luther's teaching was godless, though some, who had seen a decrease of income for their money chests, had attempted to do just that. He included in the letter

a copy of Luther's critique of the letter of complaint sent to the count by the cardinal.

When Luther got to read that letter he was so delighted he read it over and over. That was the first time in which he learned with some degree of certainty what his ruler thought about his case and how he was minded over against the pope. He was well satisfied with it.

As all this was going on Luther remained active. First he published a report in Latin about what had taken place in Augsburg. This included his written arguments of October 14th with which he defended the two points which the legate demanded to be retracted. In reading his epilog one finds opposition to papal authority unheard of up to this time. He not only provides proof that Scripture was violated and misused by papal decrees, but he chose for such proof a case in which the misuse of Scripture was done intentionally to provide a proof source for the spiritual supremacy of the pope. Luther first disproved the correctness of the papal interpretation of the passage and then the issue which the passage was intended to support. He rejected as foolishness the view of those who believe that someone who does not live under the pope cannot be a Christian. He pointed out that at the time of Gregory the Great he did not have the title of universal bishop and, more to the point, Gregory rejected it. He added that there have been large groups of Christians who were never under papal authority and that in ancient days the other bishops addressed the Bishop of Rome simply as brother. He did not wish to deny the sovereignty of the pope. He suggests that the papacy allow itself to have its authority proven from Scripture. If so, perhaps only from Romans 13, "There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." He refuted those who would erect a Christian Babylon in the name of the Roman church.

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So we see how Luther was becoming more and more entrenched in God's work through the attacks of his enemies. He was forced to catapult heavier and heavier stones against the papal bulwark out of his firm conviction.

Luther combined his growing understanding with the axioms he had developed as he now asked for a free Christian council. This was in addition to the appeal he had sent to the instructing pope. With this request which he again presented in the correct form before witnesses, he attacked the proposed ban head on. He did so by arguing that the validity of such a ban depended on the decision of a council. He added this to his sermon on the power of the ban in which he proclaimed that a ban for the sake of truth was an honor for the one under the ban. Even as he was informing his friend Link about the appeal, the printer, contrary to Luther's wishes, was making the matter public. His publication included this remarkable statement, "My pen is already working on more important matters. I don't know where these thoughts come from. I am thinking that the real struggle has not even begun, even though the great lords in Rome may hope that the matter has already ended. I am sending you my ideas. I do this that you might consider whether my supposition is correct, that the real antichrist of whom Paul speaks rules in the Roman court. I think that I will be able to prove that he is worse than the Turk."

In the midst of all these battles this remarkable man also took great pleasure in pursuing peaceful works. He reworked an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, which had been distributed by his "good friends" after his sermons of 1517. He allowed it to be issued in its new form under the title, "A German Explanation of the Lord's Prayer of Doctori Martini Lutheri Intended for the Common Man, not for the Learned." In it Luther instructs the people in what one has to know in order to be saved, and he does so simply and powerfully. "He is justified before God," he writes among other things, "who humbly confesses his disobedience and sin, including the judgment he deserves. He offers a heartfelt plea for grace and has no doubt that it will be given to him. And so the Apostle teaches that a

justified person may stand before God with nothing except his faith and trust in God; hence his comfort and refuge comes not from his works, but from the bare mercy of God."

"Instruction and knowledge of Christ occurs when you understand what the Apostle says in I. Corinthians 1. Christ has been given to us by God for our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption. You comprehend this when you admit that all of your wisdom is damning folly, your righteousness is damning unrighteousness, and your redemption is miserable condemnation. You grasp that before God you are merely a foolish, unclean, and condemned man. You demonstrate this not only with your words but with your whole heart and with your works. You acknowledge that you have no comfort and salvation except that God has given Christ to you, in whom you are to joyfully believe. Only his righteousness will keep you." -- "This letter, which was sealed with Christ's wounds and confirmed by his death, has almost faded and rotted away because of the tempests of Roman indulgences."

There was a huge audience waiting for anything Luther wrote. The printers throughout Germany reaped great profits from the vast number of German publications from Luther's pen. In the fall of this year the first Latin collection of nearly all of Luther's writings was produced by the famous and well-respected printing firm of Johann Froben in Basel. The actual printer was not named. Capito, the Basel court preacher of that time, wrote the foreword but also withheld his name. Among the statements included in that foreword we read the following, "Here you have the theological writings of the honorable father Martin Luther, who, as most people believe, has been sent by Christ, who has finally looked upon us with compassion. He is a second Daniel, sent to expose the abuses which have arisen in the church, while other theologians are neglecting the gospel and Pauline theology. ... Therefore, my brothers, it is time that we arise from our slumber."

Froben sent Luther a copy of this edition as a gift in his honor. It was sent along with a letter. Capito wrote that the entire large edition had been shipped to Italy, France, Spain, and England in a period of one and one half

months. He related that even many of the Parisian doctors were pleased with his writings.

While Luther's writings made his voice heard in ever widening circles, Luther remained busy at home, in the pulpit and at the lectern. Nevertheless, he always stood ready to leave city and country at a moment's notice. He would tell his congregation, "live (or "fare") well," in case he would suddenly have to flee and not return. It is said that Luther had a farewell dinner with his friends, at which they admonished him to flee. He is said to have cried out, "Father and mother may forsake me, but the Lord will receive me." Luther would soon find a place of refuge. The following year Capito wrote to him, "When Cardinal von Sitten, the Count von Geroldseck, an honorable learned bishop, and a number of others among us learned that you were floating in dangerous waters they, immediately offered to help you escape. Not only were they ready and willing to provide you with funds, but also to provide you with a safe haven where you could live openly or clandestinely, however you would choose. So you see that when it was made known that you might have to enter a miserable existence, many offered to help you with a generous support."

In the meantime Rome was having difficulty getting accustomed to the fact that times could have changed so much. Unlike earlier conflicts, accusations which were raised against the actions and teaching of the Roman court could no longer be swept away with the power of papal declarations. Even so a papal bull relating to indulgences appeared on November 9th. It had crossed the Alps with full intention of its enforcement. It declared that the errors proclaimed by certain monks stood condemned. These errors pertained to teaching which Luther also had been contesting. This teaching pertained to the distribution of the treasure of indulgences. This treasure was being described as official doctrine of the Roman church. Everyone who dared to teach differently was threatened with the ban.

This very bull, which did not accuse Luther by name, gives us more evidence that a change of direction in church matters was in full motion. For no one respected this bull, even though it was endorsed by Cajetan.

This was made clear when a German bishop wanted to stop debates on the topic of indulgences because of this bull, as he maintained that the matter had been settled. Even though this occurred in a German university city with strong papal ties, the local authorities dared to tear down the bull that demanded the halting of debate as the bishop had posted. In fact, the one whom the bishop had directed to post the bull took it down and put it in his pocket.

Luther soon realized that they were again dealing with him with proclamations. But in the face of them he remained calm and cheerful. He shared his thoughts with Spalatin when he said, "The more they rage and plan how to use their power, the less it frightens me. I will only be even more free from those Roman snakes. I am ready for anything and everything, and trust in the guidance of God's Word." ("Ich habe mich auf alles gefasst gemacht und harre auf Gottes Rath.")

Chapter 15

Miltitz

Urbanus von Serralonga did not journey to Augsburg without good reason. He had come to encourage Luther to visit the cardinal's residence at once without waiting for Caesar's escort. Nor did Cajetan afterward complain without reason that he was not being trusted. For by first securing Caesar's escort, as a Catholic historian admits, the legate's "whole plan was debunked." The plan had been to put the uncomfortable monk under arrest and have him deported to Rome, which he surely would not have left again. Rome and its legate, who under normal circumstances would have struck terror into the hearts of kings and counts, had been defeated by this poor monk and they knew it. In fact, the cardinal didn't seem to have been able to shake off the impression, which Luther with his Bible theology had made on him. At any rate from this time on he zealously undertook the study of Scripture, even going so far as an old man, as to learn the original language of the New Testament.

The pope, however, wrote a new tune when the song didn't play out as he liked. Luther remained where he had been, in Wittenberg, diligently applying himself to his work under the elector's permission. It is reported that the legate, who had instructed him to exile that little monk, was told to cool off. But while Luther and his friends were spending their days in Wittenberg awaiting the papacy's next move, a new series of maneuvers appeared in Wittenberg even before a response had been heard regarding the Augsburg negotiations. It is possible these originated as a result of the support Luther had received in Augsburg and the reception of the imperial letter.

While Cajetan was trying to ingratiate himself with Caesar in Austria, a new messenger of the pope appeared in Germany. He was the Chamberlain Karl von Miltitz and he carried with him a number of papal

decrees, dated October 24th. Miltitz was a multi-talented man descended from noble Saxon blood, a wise and skilled courtier with a glib tongue. Back in 1515 the elector had told him of his desire for the rose. This was the rose which was consecrated by the pope every year on Laetare Sunday (the 4th Sunday in Lent). It was then delivered with great ceremony as a sign of special favor from the pope to a noble individual the church considered worthy of recognition. This honor was now being granted to the elector, and Miltitz had been chosen as the bearer of this "highly valuable and personal gift." This flower, whose scent was said to grant the highest joy connected with the redemption of humanity and the precious body of the Redeemer being represented by it, was connected with a plan. It was designed to direct the heart of Frederick, that beloved son of the church, to become willing and inclined to follow the papal instructions as outlined by Miltitz. His response was to be that he would cull that diseased sheep, Martin Luther, from the clean sheep of the elector's Flock and leave that son of corruption to the judgment of the papal nuntius.

The intent to arrest Luther became even more apparent, when a request came to the municipal council of Wittenberg to grant special license to Miltitz for his actions. And all of this was directed at Luther, who had been pricked by the devil. If it happened that Miltitz would actually get Luther under his control, he had similar allowances in regard to other German cities which would allow him to freely journey through their territory with his prisoner. Thus Luther was correct when he, at the time, wrote that the papal nuntius was coming to arrest him and deliver him to Rome.

In addition to those instructions it seems as though Miltitz was going to have to face other opposition to his task, both in Wittenberg and during his travels. The nuntius could expect two things during his journey to Saxony, if he had not already been made aware of them. One was that the pope's credit in Germany had plunged; and the other was that Luther had many friends. John Tetzel, the one responsible for Luther's attack and whose greed and loose tongue further diminished the pope's indulgence in the eyes of the people, was well aware of that situation. For when Miltitz

summoned him to give account of himself, he wrote a deplorable letter from his monastery in Leipzig claiming that he couldn't appear in public for fear of his life. When Miltitz later went to Leipzig and reproached him, Tetzel fell apart. He died in that monastery the following year on the 4th of July even while Luther had attempted to comfort him with a letter.

On top of all of the problems that Miltitz presented to the elector, even greater difficulties arose to bring all sorts of consternation to his mind. While the negotiations with Caesar were proceeding, the vague concerns that Caesar had expressed at his departure from Augsburg arrived. Before he could even return to his imperial headquarters, his physical condition had deteriorated. He had tried to improve it by way of diversion and exertion of the hunt and with various home remedies. But it was all to no avail, so much so that even the doctors who swiftly left Vienna to meet him could give him little hope. He drew up his last testament on December 20, and as the new year began Maximilian's end was very near. If Caesar were to die now, the empire's regency of Germany would become the responsibility of Luther's elector and would remain so until a new Caesar was chosen. The word of the elector would carry heavy weight in that election. In fact, if the elector had put himself forward, it was possible that the name of the next Caesar could well have been Caesar Frederick V.

All of these factors shed some light on everything that Miltitz did. The nuntius arrived in Altenburg on December 27 at the elector's residence. He had not yet brought along the consecrated rose. That had been consigned to the Fugger House in Augsburg for safekeeping. Most likely this was because he wanted to be careful in his haste to give it to the elector and to allow its scent to have its maximum effect. The discussion with the elector quickly led to a temporary resolution. It was agreed that Luther and Miltitz would meet at Altenburg. Luther obeyed his count and by the first week of the New Year stood face to face with the papal nuntius. He conversed with him, dined at his table, and was dismissed with a parting kiss.

This certainly sounds different from the description of Luther's departure from Cajetan! While Cajetan had received Luther in a cold and

aloof manner, Miltitz welcomed him with open warmth. "Dear Martine," he addressed him, "I thought that you were some old, worn out theologian who sat behind his stove and debated with himself. But I see that you are still a strong young man. If I had an army of 25,000 with me I would not try to take you out of Germany. For while I traveled, wherever I went I tried to find out what people are thinking and what they think of you. What I found was that for every one who was on the pope's side there would be three on your side against the pope." Miltitz also admitted that for the past hundred years nothing had proven to be as much of a headache to the lords in Rome as his case. He added that if the issue could be resolved by paying 1000 ducats it would be worth the price.

He allowed Luther to speak freely, even admitting that Tetzl had caused great offense with the way he acted. Even the demand for a retraction, which he had originally brought up, he did not pursue. He offered the opinion that the issue be transferred to a German bishop for examination, suggesting either the Bishop of Salzburg or the Bishop of Trier. Once more Luther was prepared to let the whole matter die and to maintain his silence if it was agreed that both sides would do the same. If one side was forbidden to preach and to write about the matter, then the other side was to agree to the same prohibition. Miltitz was to report to the pope about where matters stood and urge him to accept the agreed upon stipulations. In addition Luther was also to act. He was to write to the pope and to produce a pamphlet in which he would encourage the German people to honor and be faithful to the Roman church. Luther himself wrote a letter to his elector of their agreement. (*LV vol. 7.8, p.11ff.) He did, however, end his letter with the short, decisive statement, "The retraction will not happen."

If one looks only at the way this resolution was worded, one might get the impression that the talented Miltitz had achieved notable success. But when a person examines it more closely one realizes that Miltitz had drawn a number of zeroes with no number in front of them. Of course noone, neither the main players, Luther and Miltitz, nor Luther's attending friends, Spalatin and the counselor Fabian von Freilitzsch, was fully aware of

it. Luther, on his part, faithfully kept to his side of the agreement. He issued a pamphlet to the people entitled, "Doctor Martin Luther's Instruction in Response to Several Articles That Have Been Imposed and Assigned against Him by His Grudging Opponents." This "Letter" is important for us for a variety of reasons. On the one hand we recognize that in regard to certain sections of Christian doctrine Luther himself was still held captive under some of the papal errors. These are parts of doctrine which today, thanks be to God, are understood correctly in line with Holy Scripture by every properly instructed Lutheran catechuman, thousands of whom have been liberated through Luther. Luther, however, had not yet shaken off all Roman false teachings at that time. His words in this letter therefore seem surprising, "It is to be firmly believed concerning purgatory, and I know it to be true, that those poor souls in it suffer wretched pains. A person owes it to them to pray, fast, give alms, or whatever else one can do. But what sort of pain this is, and whether its purpose is only to atone or to improve, I don't know. Indeed, I don't think anyone does."

On the other hand we can clearly see that carrying through with the promise he had made at Augsburg, he did not surrender one iota of the truth as he understood it at that time. We also see how he confessed those parts of the truth openly and freely. Those were the truths he had come to know very well and were a thorn in his enemies' eyes. He wrote this about indulgences, "If someone fails to give to a poor person or does not help his neighbor, and still intends to buy an indulgence, he is doing nothing less than despising God and himself. He does not do what God has bidden him to do, and does that which no one has bidden." Concerning the dictates of the church he wrote, "The command of God is to be honored over the commands of the church as gold and precious gems are to be esteemed more than wood and straw." "Concerning good works," he wrote, "I have said and still maintain that no one can be holy and do right unless the grace of God has first made him holy. No one will become holy by doing good works, but good works can only occur through him who is holy. ... God wants us to despair of ourselves, our entire lives, and our works, to teach us that we cannot by ourselves be acceptable to God with the very best of our

works. He wants us to take comfort only in his boundless grace and compassion."

His promise to urge Christians to be faithful to the Roman church he was implementing in a way that would not be satisfactory to the Romans. Among other things he wrote, "The current situation in Rome could certainly be better, yet the problems that exist are not so large, nor can they be, that a person should tear himself away or separate himself from the church." That he would think differently after further study we have mentioned before and will speak of again. In this current writing Luther added, "We should not oppose papal rules for our physical lives."

However he was not submitting to the pope in spiritual matters with these words. He simply desired that the pope would be honored and esteemed like any earthly power. He wrote in this same section, "But in regard to the power and authority of the Roman throne and the extent of that power, let the learned men settle this. For the blessedness of the soul does not depend on them. Christ did not build his church on outward appearing power and authority, nor on any temporal matter. These things are left to the world and the worldly. Therefore whether the power is great or small, over all things or some things, we should be pleased to be satisfied in how God distributes it, just as we should be satisfied with how God distributes other temporal goods, honor, wealth, favor, skill, etc." But that was not what the pope wanted. It was his belief that the church was built on the papal throne, and acknowledging himself as the church's ultimate authority would result in the blessedness of souls.

Luther also carried out his promise to write directly to the pope. On March 3, 1519 he sent a letter to Leo, by which he showed himself extremely humble, yet also serious and frank. He described himself as human excrement, the dust of the earth, and a bleating lamb of the blessed father. He went on to state that what he had done to honorably rescue the Roman church had been misinterpreted as disrespect.

As before he decisively dismissed the idea of retraction, going on to explain that such an action would not help the matter. What he had

written had already been dispersed more widely than he had ever hoped and had been taken strongly to heart by so many that it could not be retracted. Because of the high spiritual atmosphere in Germany, retracting would only bring disgrace on the Roman church and expose her to attacks from the nations.

He asserted that he had never had any desire to question the Roman church or the power of the pope. In fact, he stated that the power of the church stands higher than anything else, with the exception of Christ. Yet in making this exception he retained the right to judge the teaching and the regulations of the Roman church on the basis of the Word of Christ. He declared himself ready to submit to silence about indulgences as per his agreement with Miltitz, if his opponents would also remain silent. He added that he would agree to address the people as he had in his pamphlet and perhaps expand on its contents.

Miltitz, too, continued to strive along the path set forth at Altenburg. It was important to him that Luther's issue would be brought before an arbitrator as soon as possible. Although he had received no permission at all from Rome, before Rome could make a decision he urged the Archbishop Richard of Trier to serve as arbitrator, and set a time frame for the hearing.

However, on the same day that Miltitz sent along the recommendation to choose Archbishop of Trier, Caesar Maximilian died. This meant that the Archbishop of Trier, who was also an elector, would have his hands full during the following days. There would have to be an election for a new Caesar, a matter which would occupy the most of his time. Since prolonged correspondence was cause for even more delays, Miltitz traveled to the Trier territory in person in an attempt to attain his objective more quickly and securely. He met Cajetan in Koblenz and was allowed to inform Luther that the archbishop was willing to undertake the hearing. The legate had forgotten everything so Luther should just come. The archbishop himself responded in similar fashion.

In Altenburg Luther had shown himself to be very agreeable. But if those lords thought that Luther would grab his hat and come without further ado they were much mistaken. Instead Luther replied that he would have to be a fool to make the long journey to Koblenz from where he was living quietly and safely in Wittenberg. In addition, he lacked funds to travel, nor had he received a summons from pope or archbishop to come to the archbishop's hearing.

Nevertheless, the archbishop had indeed sent a written summons to Luther. But he had sent it to the elector to give to Luther. The elector, however, was holding the letter in his files because it didn't seem right to him. He left for the diet at Frankfurt where he wanted to discuss the matter further with the archbishop. It is understandable that the two counts had little time for Miltitz in those days and regarded his concern as a secondary issue. But after the election of a new Caesar, the situation would be considerably different.

Despite the glowing reports of huge success which Miltitz must have sent to Rome, nothing had changed at the core of the issue. The conflict actually existed between Luther and the pope, and this conflict remained the same as before. We have ample evidence of this in regard to Luther. Though he had sincerely promised to let the matter rest, he had made no concessions in regard to the actual disagreement. Yet it was this disagreement which remained a thorn in the pope's flesh. For his part the pope remained the same and he likewise conceded nothing. This is apparent from a writing that would later surface, directed to Miltitz in response to his report on Luther. In it the pope addressed Luther as his son, yet repeated his demand that this "dear son" should come to Rome immediately and retract.

Others, too, had not changed. These were the ones, who needed to remain silent once Luther agreed to be silent. They were worthless to Miltitz's wise plans. These persons would let those plans turn into water, even vinegar.

Chapter 16

The Debate at Leipzig

We recall that during Luther's absence at Heidelberg the Ingolstadt doctor had published his "Obelisks." Luther's colleague, Carlstadt, had responded with several hundred statements. Eck had answered him in mid-summer of 1518, speaking about the doctrines of repentance, sin, and the freedom of the human will. Carlstadt sharpened his pen again in defense against Eck. He offered to submit himself to the judgment of the Roman throne, the universities of Rome, Paris, and Cologne, indeed to anyone who had studied the church fathers. Yet he maintained that Holy Scripture was the final authority. Toward the end of the year Carlstadt followed up with a small, half-satirical work on the whole subject. The result of these polemics was that the stage was set for personal public debate between these two opponents. Eck had suggested the debate and a mutually agreeable university, and Carlstadt responded with his acceptance, provided that costs and security were guaranteed and that the speeches and counter speeches would be recorded by notaries.

During those important days he spent at Augsburg, Luther and Eck, who was also present, had a friendly discussion about the situation. Luther had invited Eck to Wittenberg, but Eck declined, suggesting Cologne, Paris, even Rome for a debate. Luther, in return, did not agree and finally offered Leipzig and Erfurt as suggested sites. Eck, who had the privilege of choice from Carlstadt, chose the university of Leipzig. He made this choice because Leipzig was much closer to Eck's views of spiritual matters than Erfurt. In addition their envy of the Wittenberg faculty meant that Eck would have an advantage.

The theologians of Leipzig were not happy with the decision to have the face-off dragged to their university and did not give their consent to the agreement. Meanwhile Eck, without waiting for comment from the Leipzig