The Trial of Martin Luther

The Diet of Worms

MARTIN LUTHER’S STATEMENT TO THE DIET OF WORMS

"Your Imperial Majesty and Your Lordships demand a simple answer. Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convicted or convinced of my errors by the testimony of the scriptures or manifest reasoning, I stand convicted and convinced by the same scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God’s word. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me, Amen."

Exhibit A

Martin Luther’s Testimony (c. 1521)

Issue 1: Indulgences
a. “No where in the Bible does it teach that when a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.”
b. “The sale of these indulgences is telling people they can purchase someone else’s salvation. This is a corrupt lie and must be stopped.”
c. “Priests should preach the Gospel and love of Christ as Christ commanded, not preach indulgences as he did not.”

Issue 2: Authority of the Bible
a. “The scriptures alone are the foundation of our beliefs as Christians.”
b. “I stand on the word of God as recorded in the Bible.”
c. “The world will be conquered by the word of God and upon the word the Church will be rebuilt and reformed.”

Issue 3: Faith and Works
a. “Faith cannot be inherited or gained by being baptized into a church. Faith is a matter between the individual and God.”
b. “The truly faithful in the church is a relatively small number, for narrow is the gate and few will find it.”
c. “Faith is from God, not from man. Man can do nothing to earn or receive it. We are right with God by faith alone.”

Issue 4: Church Practices (Sacraments)

a. “The celebration of mass is not for clergy alone. All believers are priests; therefore, all should celebrate together.”
b. “The words of priest do not transform the bread into the body of Christ or the wine into his blood. Christ is present no matter what words are said.”
c. “There should be no sacraments except those found in the Bible: I can find only two – the Lord’s Supper and Baptism.”

Issue 5: Church Authority

a. “I will not be convinced by popes and councils, but by scripture & reason.”
b. “I do not believe that to be a Christian you have to believe in the Pope.”
c. “A simple layman armed with scripture is above any Pope or Church council.”
Issue 6: The Papal Bull of 1520
a. "I was called a wild boar by the Pope. My books were ordered burned. I was excommunicated without trial. Is this God's justice?"
b. "Whatever happens, I have peace in my being. Not a leaf falls to the ground without God's Knowledge. For he is with us all."
c. "Ultimately, God will judge whose excommunication will stand."

Exhibit A
Excerpts from the Ninety-Five Theses by Martin Luther (c. 1517)
In the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

#28 – It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.

#32 – They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of salvation because they have letters of pardon.

#52 – The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain, even though the Pope himself, were to stake his soul upon it.

#75 – To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God – This is madness.

#80 – The Bishops, Curates, and Theologians who allow such talk to be spread among the people, will have an account to render to almighty God.

#86 – Why does not the Pope, whose wealth is today greater than the riches of the richest, used to build this one church of St. Peter, rather than with the money of poor believers?

Exhibit B
Excerpts from the Letter to the Archbishop of Mainz by Martin Luther (c. 1517)
Why, then, do the preachers of pardons, by these false fables and promises, make the people careless and fearless? . . . . When, works of piety and love are infinitely better than indulgences . . . How great then is the horror, how great the peril of a bishop, if he permits the Gospel to be kept quiet, and nothing but the noise of indulgences to spread among his people! . . . .

Exhibit C
Excerpts from the Letter to Pope Leo X by Martin Luther (c. 1518)
It is not long ago that the preaching of the Jubilee of indulgences was begun in our country, and matters went so far that the preachers of indulgences, thinking that the protection of your name made anything permissible, ventured openly to teach the most impure and heretical doctrines, which threaten to make the power of the church a scandal and a laughing stock . . . Not content with spreading this poison of their by word of mouth, they published tracts and scattered them among the people.
Exhibit D

Excerpts from the Letter to Pope Leo X by Martin Luther (c.1520)

Among those monstrous evils of this age, with which I have now for three years been waging war, I am sometimes compelled to look to you and to call you to mind, most blessed Father Leo. In truth, since you alone are everywhere considered as being the cause of my engaging war, I cannot at any time fail to remember you.

I have indeed intervened sharply against impure doctrines, and I have not been slack to censure my adversaries on account, not of their bad morals, but of their impiety. And for this I am so far from being sorry, that I have brought my mind to despise the judgments of men . . . according to the example of Christ . . . to call his adversaries a generation of vipers, blind, hypocrites, and children of the devil.

Exhibit E

Excerpts from the Address to the Christian Nobility by Martin Luther (c.1520)

The Romanists (The Church) have . . . drawn three walls around themselves, with which they have hitherto protected themselves, so that no one could reform them, whereby all Christendom has fallen terribly.

First, if pressed by the temporal power (worldly power of monarchs), they have affirmed and maintained that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the contrary, that the spiritual power (the Church) is above temporal power.

Secondly, if it were proposed to admonish them with the Scriptures, they objected that no one may interpret the Scriptures but the Pope.

Thirdly, if they are threatened with a council (of clergy and nobles), they pretend that no one may call a council but the Pope.

Now, may God help us and give us one of those trumpets that overthrew the walls of Jericho. . . Therefore, when need requires, and the Pope is a cause of offense to Christendom . . . as faithful members of the whole body, we must do what we can to procure a true free council.

Exhibit F

Excerpts from BIBLICAL VERSES and CANON LAWS

Acts 20:28-32: The Bible does not teach that the apostles were infallible, but rather commands them to carry on their authority through "God and the word of his grace."

Galations 1:8-9: The Bible also teaches that scripture is to be sued as a measuring stick to determine truth from error, and curses those who would teach differently than by the Gospels.

Canon Law 937: The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls.

Canon Law 1364: With due regard for an apostate from the faith, a heretic incurs automatic excommunication and if a cleric (clergyman), he can also be punished by other penalties (loss of power, position, place, or territory).

Canon Law 1401: By proper and exclusive right the Church adjudicates to the Pope the right to cases concerning spiritual matters, the violations of ecclesiastical laws, and those cases where there is a question of sin.