

# MARTIN LUTHER THE REBEL

By Mr Yelland  
www.SchoolHistory.co.uk



Martin Luther was very angry when Tetzel and his assistants began preaching and selling Indulgences in Wittenberg. He was so angry that he sat down and wrote out a long list of arguments against the selling of Indulgences, and he nailed the finished list to the door of the Church at Wittenberg Castle in October 1517. This list was later called **'The Ninety Five Theses.'**

## SOURCE 2 D – Some of Luther's Ninety-five Theses.

- 5      The Pope has no power to let people off the punishments they must pay for their sins. He can only do so for penalties he or the Church has imposed.**
- 21     Pardoners are mistaken when they say that by their indulgences a person is freed and saved from all punishment.**
- 27     They preach Man, not God, who say that the soul fled out of purgatory as soon as the money rattles in the chest.**
- 86     Why does not the Pope, whose riches are enormous, build the basilica of St. Peter with his own money instead of taking it from poor believers?**



**The list was supposed to be things he wished to discuss with other Churchmen – he did NOT write them with the idea of starting a rebellion against the Pope.**

His ideas, however, were supported by many thousands of people. This encouraged him to attack other Catholic practices such as:

- Praying to saints
- Going on pilgrimages
- Fasting
- Giving money to charity to get forgiveness for sins
- The use of statues in churches

Luther kept going back to his original idea, that all you needed to be a good Christian. Was faith in God, and that you did not even need a priest to help you to pray or speak to God.

This was completely against the teaching of the church and was called **“heresy”**. Many people had been executed in the past for making similar statements.

# SUPPORT FOR LUTHER GROWS



FIRST PRINTING-PRESS.

The invention of the printing press helped to spread Luther's ideas. Pamphlets (hand bills) were printed and distributed cheaply and quickly throughout Germany and the rest of Europe. Many people read or were told of his ideas and agreed with many of the things he wrote about including:

- Objecting to paying taxes to Rome
- The fact that many priests knew little or no Latin and had little training
- That foreigners were made bishops, and they cared nothing for people in their care
- German lords objected to the Church interfering in German politics

One very powerful supporter of Luther was the Duke of Saxony. He insisted that the Pope should send someone to Germany to answer Luther's arguments. In 1518 Cardinal Cajetan went to Augsburg (a city in Germany) to argue with Luther; but this only resulted in Luther growing even more apart from the Catholic Church. In June 1519 Luther made the claim that **"the authority of the Bible was greater than that of the Pope"**.

## SOURCE 2 E

**"We see there is no gold, and almost no silver in our German land. What little there is left is taken away by the Church in Rome. Would you know, dear German, what they do with our money? It does not lie idle! Leo the Tenth gives part to his nephews, relatives, cardinals, secretaries, and other officials. They build marble homes. They have precious stones, are clothed in purple and fine linen, and live in luxury. In short, a vast number of the worst of men are supported in Rome in idle life by means of our money."**

## Questions

1. How does Source 2E support Luther's attack on the Church. What is the author of Source 2E trying to do.
2. a) How would a man like Luther make his ideas known today?  
b) How were new ideas spread before the invention of printing?  
c) What difference did printing make to the spread of new ideas?
3. Make a list of reasons which help to explain why a number of German princes supported Luther and his views on religion.

# POLITICS IN GERMANY

By Mr Yelland  
www.SchoolHistory.co.uk

Germany at the time was not one huge country as it is today, but a collection of very small independent countries, all with their own rulers. One man had the loyalty of all these German princes and he was called **‘The Holy Roman Emperor’ (HRE)**. This Emperor was elected by a collection of Princes, Kings and Archbishops – all in Germany. The HRE Maximilian I had died and the German Princes were very anxious about who would be their new Emperor. The Pope wanted King Francis I of France to be elected HRE and he therefore did not want to be seen interfering in German affairs so he left Luther alone. In the end King Charles I of Spain was elected HRE and the Pope now had nothing to lose by attacking Luther. But because of the election of the HRE it was two years before the Pope started to do anything – and in that time, support for Luther and his views had increased.

## **SOURCE 2 F**

**“Luther, relying upon the Duke of Saxony’s protection, wrote and published new attacks on the Catholic faith. The Pope launched a most severe bull against Luther and his supporters. Then Luther proclaimed the Pope himself a heretic. Not content with this, he publicly burned all the books on Church law he could find in Wittenberg.”**

**“The report of these events, spread throughout all Germany, stirred up the Germans against Rome. If the Pope does not come to the relief of these evils, I fear, and I do very much fear, that this evil will spread so widely as to be absolutely incurable.”**

**“Many of the German rulers also welcomed Luther’s views. They hoped they might bring an end to the Church taking wealth from their lands to spend in Rome. Luther appealed to them in a leaflet called ‘To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation.’ He urged them to make the church truly German. He wanted it to be independent of Rome.”** Attributed to Alfonso de Valdes.

Many German Princes supported Luther. They were fed up with the Church taking money from their lands in the form of taxes. They saw this as a way of becoming independent of the Catholic Church, and Rome. Luther wanted their support to make the German church independent of Rome.

## **Questions**

4. Why is Alfonso de Valdes, - Source 2F, worried?
5. Look at Sources 2E and 2F. How can you tell that the two writers were biased, one in favour and the other against the Catholic Church.

The Pope now threatened to excommunicate Luther (not allow him to take the sacraments and throwing him out of the church). He issued an edict (command) called a **“Papal Bull”** to announce this threat – Luther burned the paper on which the Papal Bull was written in public to show what he thought of it. By this time Luther had become a national hero.

## **THE DIET OF WORMS 1521**

The new HRE Charles was a very good Catholic and he decided that something had to be done to try and stop Luther’s criticisms of the Church and the Pope. He called a meeting (Diet) at Worms, a city near Mainz in Germany. He promised Luther that he would be safe if he went to this meeting. At the meeting the HRE insisted that only the Pope had the authority to say what the Bible meant – not Luther, or anyone else. Luther refused to take back anything he had said.

### **SOURCE 2G**

“Unless I am proven wrong by the Bible and by plain reason, I cannot and I will not go back on anything, Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

The whole point of the meeting, however, was to insist that only the Pope had the authority to say what the Bible meant, not Luther. As a result Charles V issued the Edict of Worms.

### **SOURCE 2H**

“If you have sufficient force, you shall take Luther prisoner and deliver him to us. In like manner you shall proceed against his friends, patrons, and followers.”

## **Questions**

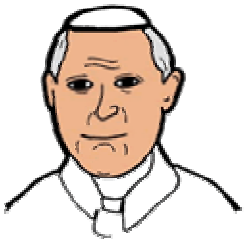
6. What was the most important reason why the HRE called the Diet of Worms?
7. Look at the portraits of Luther p12. Give a possible reason for the main change in his appearance between 1520 and 1522.
8. How does Source 2G prove that Luther was defying the Pope?
9. Look at the picture on p19. How does this picture tell you who the artist thought was right – the Pope or Luther? Who had a direct line of communication with God?

As a result of the Edict of Worms Luther was no longer safe. On his way back from Worms he was taken by the Duke of Saxony’s men to Wartburg Castle to live in safety until things calmed down. Luther was lucky in that the HRE was too busy at home in Spain to insist that his edict was carried out.

Luther lived at Wartburg for a year where he translated the New Testament from Latin into German so that ordinary people could read what the Bible said. Luther’s ideas spread

quickly across Germany. Church services were made simpler and the preacher spoke in German, not Latin.

**(Look at Questions 1 & 2 together).**



1. What was the main reason for the Church selling Indulgences?
2. What was the main reason people bought Indulgences?
3. Look at Source 2A again. How does this source show that the church was trying to be fair to everyone?
4. What was Tetzel promising the people who bought his “Indulgences?”
5. Luther claimed that the money which was being collected was “coming out of the pocket of poor believers”. Is there any evidence from Source 2A to disprove his claim?