



Martin Luther: Roots of the Reformatio

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)

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This book collects four key works authored by Martin Luther that form the framework of the Reformation and the theological underpinnings of Protestantism.

The Ninety-five Theses, also titled *Disputation on the Power of Indulgences*, is a list of propositions intended for academic debate that created a division in the Catholic Church that became the Reformation. It objected to the practice of the church selling indulgences, with which buyers could reduce the punishment in purgatory for sins. Luther argued that indulgences led to Christians to avoid the inner spiritual repentance required by Christ. Legend has it that the list was posted on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517.

To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation is the first of three foundational works written by Martin Luther in 1520. He sets forth the radical doctrines of the priesthood of all believers, that all baptized Christians are “priests” and “spiritual” in the eyes of God, as opposed to the traditional division of the Church into “spiritual” officers of and “secular” followers. He also articulates the doctrine of two kingdoms of God, the left-hand secular, physical world of things and action, and the right-hand world of the spirit, gospel and grace. Both were radical breaks that directly challenged the “three walls” of church doctrine: that secular authority had no jurisdiction over the church; that only the Pope could explain Scripture; and that nobody but the Pope was empowered to call a church council.

On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, the second of Luther’s 1520 works, is a theological treatise in which he examined the seven sacraments of the Church in the context of his reading of the Bible. Angry and harsh in tone, Luther criticizes the Pope of being the Antichrist. He limits the true “divinely instituted” sacraments to Baptism, Eucharist, and Penance, deeming Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders and Extreme Unction.

On Christian Liberty is the third of Luther’s 1520 works and appeared in a short German version and a more elaborate Latin version. In it he elaborates the notion of justification by faith alone and the seeming paradox of Christians as fully forgiven children of God who nevertheless willingly serve God and their neighbors, encapsulated by his famous statement. “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”