

WC 399-413 PP 420-425: Luther, "Large Catechism"

### Chronology

1517	Luther posts 95 Theses
1520s	Lutheranism becomes official religion of Scandinavian countries
1521	Luther is excommunicated at Diet of Worms
1524-6	Swabia's Peasant revolt
1534	Henry VIII established Church of England

<p><b>Star Terms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indulgences</li> <li>• 95 Theses</li> <li>• Condemnation at Worms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Geog. Terms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hapsburg Empire</li> <li>• Denmark</li> <li>• Norway</li> <li>• Sweden</li> </ul>
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#### A. Working model of a Gutenberg printing press (c. 1455) currently in Germany

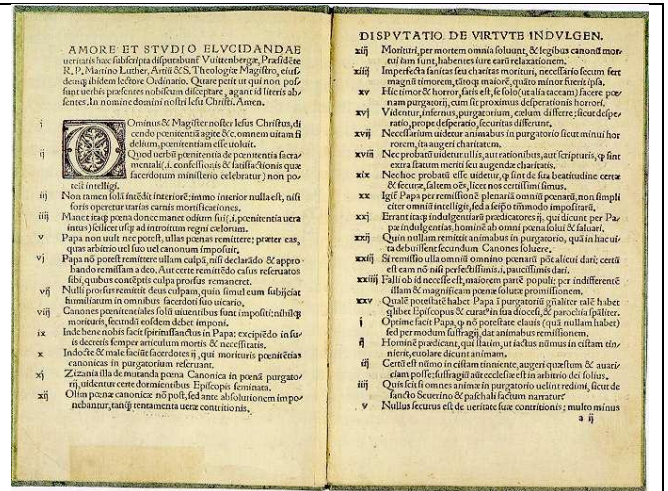


When Johannes Gutenberg began working on the printing press in 1436, he created what can be considered one of the most ingenious inventions of all time. It would lead the way for a massive wave of printed books to be sold all across Europe. This revolutionary invention paved the future for many great writers. It also paved the way for the rise in fame of one German priest in particular. That man was Martin Luther. Martin Luther was not only a priest, but a professor of theology who started the Protestant Reformation. For him to be credited with this, he needed something to help spread his preaching out across Europe. That ended up being Gutenberg's invention, the printing press. In 1517, Martin Luther wrote to his bishop, Albert of Mainz, protesting his dislike of buying indulgences.

He added something in the letter, which would later become the famous Ninety-Five Thesis. Luther would argue that the sale of indulgences was a violation of the original intention of confession, and that Christians were being lied to by their own church.

B. *Ninety-Five Theses*, Wittenberg Germany (1517)

On 31 October 1517, Luther wrote to Albert of Mainz, protesting against the sale of indulgences. He enclosed in his letter a copy of his "Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," which came to be known as The Ninety-Five Theses. Luther objected to a saying attributed to Johann Tetzel that "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory [also attested as 'into heaven'] springs." He insisted that, since forgiveness was God's alone to grant, those who claimed that indulgences absolved buyers from all punishments and granted them salvation were in error. Christians, he said, must not slacken on account of such false assurances. On that same day Luther posted the *Ninety-Five Theses*, which he had composed in



Latin, on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, according to university custom. With the use of the printing press copies of the Theses had been translated into vernacular German and spread throughout Germany within two weeks. Within two months his treatise had been translated and spread throughout Europe.