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**LIGHT**

on

**MARTIN**

**LUTHER**

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**IMPRIMATUR**

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## NEW LIGHT ON MARTIN LUTHER

### Quizzes to a Street Preacher

#### 1. When did the Protestant Movement begin?

After posting his theses attacking the traditional teaching of Christianity October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, on April 18, 1520, broke away from the Catholic Church, and began to set up a new Church according to his own ideas.

#### 2. Are not Protestants those who protest against the errors of Rome?

Most Protestants today would accept that description of their position. But what they believe to be the errors of Rome are not really errors, if indeed they be the teachings of the Catholic Church. I add that last condition, because many doctrines have been attributed to the Catholic Church which she has never taught, whilst others have been interpreted in a way she herself would condemn. Through misunderstanding, many Protestant writers have wasted their own, and their readers' time, laboriously refuting what the Catholic Church does not teach at all! And their line of approach to the problems of Catholicism badly needs revising.

### 3. What exactly was the origin of the word "Protestant"?

The word is derived from the celebrated "Protest" read by the German princes at the Diet of Spires in 1529. A number of German princes had taken advantage of the religious revolt of Martin Luther to secure the political independence of their States. Naturally, in turn, they supported Lutheranism as a great force amongst their people towards detaching them from former ties, and they commenced suppressing the Catholic religion within their territories. Now the Decree of the Diet of Spires granted religious liberty to such as had already embraced Lutheranism in the States of the German princes, but demanded toleration for Catholics dwelling within their boundaries. The Lutheran princes protested that they would not grant toleration to Catholics, and said that the religion of the people must be the same as that of their princes. "Cuius regio, illius religio," said these princes. "Whoever is the ruler, his must be the religion." In other words, the German princes demanded the right to impose whatever religion they might please upon their people. And their protest was against any obligation to tolerate Catholics. The word "Protestant" therefore, according to its historical and religious meaning, was born of a denial of freedom of conscience; and those who thus protested against liberty of worship for Catholics were termed Protestants.

#### 4. What causes led up to the Protestant Reformation in the first place?

The Protestant Reformation was not really a reform. It was rather a revolution. It tore entire kingdoms from the Catholic Church, and introduced quite new ideas of the religious relationship between Christians and Christ. As for the causes that led up to this revolution, it is certain that there was nothing whatever wrong with the Catholic religion in itself. But there were a good many things wrong with great numbers of Catholics, or Luther could never have attained the success he did. No one simple cause can explain it. We may say that those who left the Catholic Church did so through infidelity to the grace of God in their own personal lives. But that so many should prove unfaithful demands further explanation; and that further explanation is to be found in the religious, cultural, political, and social conditions of the time.

#### 5. What was the religious and cultural state of affairs?

We must remember that, during the century preceding the Reformation, the Renaissance had brought the revival of the pagan Greek and Latin classics, and these not only diverted men's minds from the study of Catholic philosophy, but led to corruption of life amongst the educated classes. Moreover, many of the bishops and priests, far removed from Rome, had been too subservient to secular authority,

and had neglected to enforce the discipline of the Church, thus weakening their hold upon the people. Laxity amongst the clergy had given great disedification; and the delay in their reformation had paved the way for a wrong reformation by breaking away from the Church. Careless priests had left the people uninstructed, and incredibly ignorant of their religion; and, not knowing their own faith, great numbers of simple Catholics did not discern the real evil of the separatist movement. Not knowing the truth, they were swayed by the ideas of the reformers, who denounced Rome without demanding any higher standard of virtue than that which had prevailed.

## 6. You admit then that the fall of the Catholic Church was due to its own depravity?

The Catholic Church did not fall. Many of her members had fallen from her standards of virtue, and this was made an excuse by multitudes to abandon the faith for heresy. One of the great opponents of Martin Luther was Sir Thomas More, in England. Sir Thomas More was as aware of the sad state of affairs as Luther, but he did not make the mistake of blaming the Church for the lax members in it. Nor would it be right to imagine that there was nothing but laxity in the Church immediately prior to the Reformation. There were Saints in those days as well as sinners. Read that marvellous little book, "The Imitation of Christ," by Thomas a Kempis. That spiritual treasure

was written by a Catholic monk during those years of supposed universal corruption. And that book reflects the true ideals of the Catholic Church.

7. Would you say that Luther was wrong in declaring a reformation to be necessary?

I do not deny that a reformation was necessary. There were many abuses to be corrected. But Luther did not introduce a movement of real reform. He made prevalent abuses an excuse to leave the Church altogether, instead of remaining in it and trying to effect the conversion of its lax members to better ways. Moreover, he retained many of the very abuses, merely seeking to justify them by denying that they were wrong, and sanctioned yet further departures from the standards of true Christianity.

8. You have said that, besides religious and cultural factors, political conditions contributed towards Luther's success.

That is so. The prestige of the Papacy in affairs of State throughout Europe had steadily diminished during the two centuries prior to the reformation, and the authority of the Emperor had also been greatly undermined. As regards the prestige of the Papacy, it must be remembered that, for the greater part of the

fourteenth century, the Popes had been compelled to live away from Rome at Avignon in France, leaving themselves open to the charge by other nations of being under French political influence. Almost immediately after their return to Rome there came what is known as the "Great Western Schism," when besides the lawful Pope there were two anti-Popes, each pretending to possess supreme authority over the Church. In their acknowledgment of these Popes the nations divided on political lines, and this greatly weakened the influence of the Papacy in Europe. After this disaster was healed by the election of Pope Martin V, in 1417, and the elimination of all rival Popes, money troubles arose. The Papacy was impoverished. Money was needed for the building of St. Peter's in Rome, and appeals were made to the whole of Christendom, indulgences being granted to all who would contribute towards the cause. The charge of traffic in these indulgences was made the immediate reason for Luther's revolt, but if he met with such success it was because Rome had long since lost love and respect to a great extent. Meantime, the imperial authority was only a shadow of what it had been. Feudalism was breaking up in Europe. Vassal rulers in the provinces were growing more and more restive, and independent. Luther had but to breathe on flames already enkindled; and he did so by appealing to the ambition and spirit of independence amongst the German princes, urging revolt against the Emperor. And he flattered their cupidity and pride by advising them to despoil the Church of its property in



their domains, and to take upon themselves the control of the doctrine and morals of their subjects.

### 9. How did the general state of society contribute towards Luther's success?

By the mere fact that discontent pervaded its every phase. Society is diseased when large numbers are discontented with their lot. Yet clergy, princes, and peasants were alike dissatisfied. Bishops were worldly, enjoying rich benefices, whilst ignorant and poverty-stricken priests abounded as a "clerical proletariat." The Monasteries, too, resented the interference and exactions of Bishops; and were themselves of lax observance, with consequent internal dissensions. Many of the clergy, therefore, both diocesan and regular, were ready to throw off their cassocks and follow the still more lenient gospel of Luther. Amongst the petty German princes jealousy and anarchy reigned, and they were more than ready for the wars of religion which were soon to follow. The peasants, downtrodden and miserable, thought that they too might gain by the Protestant revolution, though in reality they found themselves duped and massacred.

### 10. Was not the power of Romanism shattered by Martin Luther, of immortal memory?

Martin Luther is undoubtedly an outstanding

figure in history. But, as I have explained it, the whole situation constituted the moment in history when one man could launch the tempest. Meantime, the immortal memory of Luther will become less and less pleasant as the facts concerning him become known. Those who idealize him can do so only by ignoring an immense amount of inconvenient information.

### **11. Catholic historians, of course, paint Luther in the blackest colors.**

I am quite willing to admit that many Catholic writers have given a biased account of Luther, even as books written by Protestants have given a distorted view of the Catholic position—and to a far greater extent. But I still say that an impartial study of history cannot but discredit Luther as a religious reformer.

### **12. You will never undo memories of the past in Protestant minds.**

We can correct those memories. We can point out that text-books perpetuating false views of history do not give a genuine knowledge of the past. We can show that in histories of the Protestant Reformation feeling and sentimental loyalties have again and again got the better of dispassionate reason.

### **13. History is history, and the record of truth.**

You forget that historians do not always tell

the truth. The text-books of history in the English language have for the most part been written by men Protestant by conviction, or at least infected by the Protestant tradition, however impartial they may think themselves to be. If only unconsciously, bias and prejudice creep into their writings, and the full truth is not to be found in their works. Often things are repeated as facts which are not facts. Where undisputed facts are concerned, a selection is made, inconvenient facts being omitted, whilst those chosen are interpreted to suit the theories of the writer. Our complaint is never with history, often with historians.

#### 14. Does not your own Catholic prejudice make you speak like that?

No. Listen to the words of a Protestant, the Rev. Dr. Goudge, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. In a plea for a better understanding between Protestants and Catholics, he begs us to drop the prejudices of the sixteenth century when the Reformation occurred. "The whole spirit of the controversies," he writes, "was wrong. They were black with hatred and misrepresentation, and largely conducted in theological Billingsgate . . . If we base our statements upon sixteenth century sources, we generally base them upon poisoned sources. At best they leave out half the truth and at worst they are lying." (The Church of England and Reunion, p. 28.)

#### 15. Are you impartial when you im-

## pute unworthy motives to the Protestant Reformers?

Yes. The Rev. Dr. Goudge writes in the book I have just quoted, pp. 41-42, "No instructed Roman Catholic now denies the appalling condition of Western Christendom at the beginning of that century, or the failure of the Conciliar and other reforming movements to deal successfully with it. No instructed Protestant now denies that political and personal motives bulked very large in the Protestant Reformation . . . It is the duty of the better informed members of all communions to correct the errors of the less informed, especially when these errors lead them to misjudge those from whom they are separated."

## 16. How much of his life did Martin Luther spend as a Catholic, and how much as a Protestant?

Martin Luther spent thirty-seven years as a Catholic, and twenty-six years as a Protestant. He was born at Eisleben, in Germany, on November 10, 1483. He declared that he had an unhappy childhood, and that in a mood of depression, driven by the brutality of his home and school life, he entered an Augustinian Monastery. There he was happy enough at first. He lived a fervent and strict life, and was eventually ordained a priest in 1507. But he had a neurotic temperament, probably the effect of an over-repressed infancy, and gradually became the victim of scruples and melan-

choly. He alternated between fits of complete neglect of his duties, and of violent penance for his infidelity. Nobody could regard him as a man of well-balanced judgment. The crisis in his life came with the publication of the Papal Bull of Indulgences, granted to those who would subscribe towards the building of St. Peter's in Rome. He made that an excuse for an attack on the whole penitential system of the Church, and on all ecclesiastical authority. On October 31, 1517, he affixed to the door of the Church at Wittenberg his famous 95 Theses, challenging the teaching of the Church. He was not profoundly versed in that teaching. In his pamphlet "Hans Worst," published in 1541, he was to write, "As truly as Our Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed me, I did not know what an indulgence was." But he obstinately persisted in his rebellion against the Church, and in 1520 was excommunicated by the Pope, being then thirty-seven years of age. At the Diet of Worms, in 1521, he is reported to have said, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me God." But Protestant researches have proved the words unauthentic, and a mere legend. In 1525 he married Catherine von Bora, an ex-nun. He died on February 18, 1546.

17. Did not Luther visit Rome in 1511, and lose his faith in the Catholic Church because of the scandals he saw there?

In 1511 he visited Rome on Monastic busi-

ness, but he did not lose his faith because of any abuses he saw there. He returned to Germany as strong in his Catholic faith as he had been prior to his visit. It was only years later, after he had been excommunicated from the Church, that he wrote to say he had found Rome "a sink of iniquity, its priests infidels, the Papal courtiers men of shameless lives," and that his reverence for Rome had been turned into loathing. But he was interpreting an earlier state of mind in the light of subsequent prejudices. In reality, letters written by Luther after his return from Rome speak of the Pope with the utmost respect.

### 18. Having lost his faith in the Catholic Church, Luther was converted then and there to the true gospel.

The story is told that he was climbing the "Scala Santa" on his knees, when the thought suddenly flashed through his mind, "The just shall live by faith." But nowhere, in any of his writings, does Luther himself mention that. The incident is not historical, but a legend originated by his son Paul, who was drawing upon his own imagination.

### 19. However it came about, you cannot deny the reality of Luther's conversion.

I do not deny that a change came over him some four or five years after his visit to Rome, and that whilst he was a Catholic until finally

excommunicated by the Church in 1520, he was thenceforth a Protestant. But I deny that this change was a supernatural conversion due to the grace of God. Luther had failed in his own life to live up to the ideals of holiness the Catholic Church had put before him. To attain peace of mind in his own low standards he persuaded himself that the Church was wrong in demanding any good works at all. He convinced himself that man is totally depraved, that he has no freewill, that all man's works are evil, and that God does not expect a man to be anything but depraved. Then he invented the consoling gospel that man is saved by faith only, and not by works. Belief, and not good behavior, was the secret of salvation henceforth taught by Martin Luther.

**20. Was not Luther a brave man to follow his convictions despite the opposition of the Catholic Church?**

He had a natural courage. But that was no more a virtue than the courage often found in evil-doers. Merely human courage is not the sign of a good Christian man.

**21. Why do Catholics say that Luther was so bad?**

Protestants who idealize Martin Luther urge his supposed sanctity as an argument in favor of the Protestant Reformation. To meet that argument Catholics have no choice but to produce evidence that Luther was not a holy man

at all. Catholics argue that one who claims to be commissioned by God to reveal Christ to a degenerate world should himself exhibit a Christ-like life. But Luther did not; and it is inconceivable that such a type of man as he should have been chosen by God to reform the Church of Christ.

## 22. Protestants have always been taught that Luther was truly a man of God.

There are two Luthers, the Luther of glamorised fiction, and the Luther of history and fact. The Luther of fiction appears in the Protestant pulpit, in the Sunday School, and in partisan biographies. But the real Luther will be found in his writings—I mean, of course, in the unexpurgated editions of them. Well-informed Protestants no longer speak of his "saintliness." They dwell upon his championship of free-thought, and on his success in overthrowing the tyranny of Rome. For whilst Luther was undoubtedly a religious man, he was also a very unbalanced man who failed to regulate his religious inclinations in accordance with God's laws, and who indulged other inclinations in equally inexcusable ways. Luther had a strangely complex character. H. A. L. Fisher speaks of his "vast animal power, of his gaiety and wit, his coarseness and humor, his wild vein of romance and crabbed scholasticism, his naive peasant superstitions, and morbid self-criticism." (A Hist. of Europe. p. 543.) Luther was kind, generous, tender, and



sentimental, but he was also proud, incredibly vain, and headstrong. "Self" was supreme in him. All opposition to the "Self" of Luther was an affront to "Christian Liberty"; doctrine had to be adjusted to suit the "Self" of this introspective man; and he demanded an "absolute assurance" for himself that he vehemently denied to the Church. Luther's personal character discredits him forever as a religious teacher.

**23. You say that well-informed Protestants have modified their estimate of Luther as a man of God. Can you quote one of them?**

Dean W. R. Inge, of St. Paul's, London, is undoubtedly a scholar. He is also undoubtedly a Protestant who takes no pains to conceal his antipathy towards the Catholic Church. Yet here is his estimate of Luther, as given in his book "Protestantism," p. 28: "Luther, then, was a reformer who was not a philosopher or theologian. He was reactionary in several ways, and the Humanists, who at first had hopes of him, soon discovered that there could be very little sympathy between them. By exalting faith and disparaging works, and by using "Glaube," with its intellectual associations, he attached more importance to correct belief than even the Catholics had done. He wished to extend no tolerance to the Anabaptists and other sectaries, and had in principle no objection to persecution. His attitude during the Peasants' Revolt remains a blot upon his career, though it must be admitted that his

position was extraordinarily difficult. The whole future of his life's work seemed to depend on the successful vindication of their authority by the princes. Lastly, in spite of the strongly ethical character of his teaching, there was a grossness in his treatment of sexual questions which has reacted unfavorably on the morals of the German people."

#### 24. Do you know of any good in Luther?

Yes, but not enough to compensate for vices quite out of place in one who is regarded as a well-balanced and saintly reformer. The "strongly ethical character" which Dean Inge detects in his writings occurs only in places. Often enough Luther teaches the most immoral doctrines, and put them into practice in his own life. St. Paul says that those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences. Gal. V, 24. Yet that Luther indulged his vices and concupiscences is clear from his own writings, where he gives disgraceful descriptions of his own indulgence in everything passionate. His diaries record shocking excesses of sensuality, which could not be printed in any decent book today. A true apostle of Christ does not give vent to such expressions as, "To be continent and chaste is not in me," or, "Why do I sit soaked in wine?" Self-control was not in Luther. He gave free rein to his lower passions, calmly saying that a man has to do so, and will not be responsible for such conduct.

25. Luther wrote the most beautiful hymns, and it seems strange that such a bad man as you portray could be so religious as to write those.

Yet side by side with his beautiful hymns Luther wrote coarse and shocking filth not so publicized. Psychologically, he was a strange character, almost a Jekyll and Hyde by turns. In religious moments his imagination poured itself out in poetry and hymns. But these, and many other beautiful passages that can be gathered from the writings of Luther, were merely the remnants of his Catholic inheritance. In sensual moments he wallowed in his passions. When melancholy came he got drunk. In belligerent moments he was stubborn to a degree, and flayed his opponents with violent streams of abuse. Luther's greatness was neither a truly human greatness, nor a truly Christian greatness. It was merely, as Maritain and Fisher have pointed out, an animal greatness—a greatness of force, energy, and vehemence of character.

26. I challenge you to produce evidence that Luther ever uttered any evil language.

It is clear that you know only the legendary Luther. No decent Protestant could read the booklet, "Hans Worst," written by Luther in 1541, without utter disgust. Zwingli, his fellow

Protestant reformer, complained of the vile language in this dirty little pamphlet. Again, no decent Protestant could read Luther's "Table Talk" without shame and indignation. D. P. Smith, the Protestant biographer, in his book "Luther," p. 321, writes, "It strikes the modern reader with no less than astonishment, almost with horror, to find the great moralist's private talk with his guests and children, his lectures to students, even his sermons, thickly interlarded with words, expressions, and stories, such as today are confined to the frequenters of the lowest bar-rooms." There is no doubt that Luther's teachings and practical advice, and example in conversation, were infinitely below the moral standards of the Catholic Church he reviled, and below even the standards now generally accepted by Protestants themselves.

**27. A fountain cannot send forth from the same tap both salt water and fresh.**

It can, if the fountain is filled alternately with salt water and fresh. And the thoughts that arose in Luther's mind were alternately good and bad. Almost all Luther's biographers admit that his language was invariably coarse and vulgar, imprudent and impetuous. But their descriptions fall short of reality, either because they did not want to show the true character of Luther, or because they did not want to offend their readers' sense of decency. Yet Luther was capable of low, gross, and shameless utterances that would have startled even a pagan.

**28. Well, either Catholics are right, or Protestants are right, in their estimates of Luther. But which?**

I have given you several Protestant estimates substantially in agreement with the Catholic estimate. On the one point that could remain in dispute, I can merely say that any Protestants who say that Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church was inspired by God are undoubtedly mistaken.

**29. How do you justify that statement?**

That Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church was not inspired by God should be evident to anyone who believes in Christ, and has a knowledge of the Gospels. Christ Himself said, "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Anyone who says that the Church as Christ established it so failed later on that men had to leave it, and begin new Churches, contradicts Christ. Yet that is what Luther did. Saying that the forces of evil had prevailed against the Catholic Church, he left it to start a new Church of his own. That meant that Christ could not keep His promise to protect the Church against such radical corruption. That there were abuses amongst Catholics, both clergy and laity, in Luther's time, no one could deny. Christ Himself predicted such abuses when He said that His Church would be like a net holding good and bad fish. There were plenty of bad fish inside the net at the time of the Reformation.

But bad fish do not mean a bad net. Where Luther made the mistake was in condemning the net as well as the bad fish, and going off to make a net of his own. If he really wanted a reformation, he should have stayed inside the net guaranteed by Christ, and spent his energies turning the bad fish into good ones. Realizing this, good Protestants today should get back to the net Luther abandoned—the Catholic Church.

30. If ever Luther wrote the disgraceful things you attribute to him, it was doubtless before God said to him, "The just shall live by faith, not by penance."

God never said that to Luther. Luther attributed to God the fruits of his own imagination. But let us take your point. Luther began his career as a so-called reformer from 1517 onwards. His filthy book, "Hans Worst," was written in 1541. His "Table Talk" is full of unseemly and lascivious expressions and sentiments uttered after he had set up as a reformer. Bullinger, the Swiss Protestant reformer, wrote of Luther, "Alas, it is as clear as daylight and undeniable that no one has ever written more vulgarly, more coarsely, more unbecomingly, in matters of faith, and Christian modesty, and in all serious matters, than Luther. There are writings by Luther so muddy, so swinish, so vulgar and coarse, which would not be excused in a shepherd of pigs rather than in a shepherd of souls." Preaching at Wittenberg,

after he had left the Catholic Church, Luther said, "If Moses should attempt to intimidate you with his stupid Ten Commandments, tell him right out—chase yourself to the Jews." How many Protestants would support words like those?

31. Even if Martin Luther cannot be defended, why should his evil character be an argument against the Protestant Church, yet bad Popes be no argument against the Catholic Church?

Because bad Popes did not pretend to be the founders of new religions, as did Luther. The one founder of the Catholic Church remained, and He was undoubtedly holy, for He was Jesus Christ Himself. Again, no bad Pope ever pretended that his sins were in accordance with the teachings of Christ and of the Catholic Church; nor did any Pope teach officially that the members of the Church were free to behave in such a way. But Luther corrupted the very doctrines of Christ, and gave permission to others to sin. Finally, the Popes who did not live good private lives did possess apostolic authority for their official legislation in the name of the Church—legislation which was in itself all right. But Luther had no apostolic authority for his heretical and schismatical innovations.

32. You deny, then, that Luther was

**a man sent by God, or that he had any divine mission at all?**

I do. He persuaded himself that he had a divine mission. But that was not a difficult thing for a man of his temperament to do. And there are no more grounds to believe in the divine mission of Martin Luther than to believe in the divine mission of Mrs. Eddy to propagate Christian Science, or of Judge Rutherford to establish the Witnesses of Jehovah. Luther was as deluded in his claim to a divine mission as he was in so many other matters.

**33. Do you deny his sincerity?**

Not entirely. He was not out solely for his self-interest. He had sincere convictions, if very unreasonable ones. But he was quite unscrupulous as to the means he employed to attain his ends. He was a strange mixture of mysticism and realism. And if in some he catered for a genuine desire for reform, in others he catered for their appetite for scandals, their love of novelty, and their nationalist passions. His ways were very far from resembling those of Christ.

**34. No one can say that Luther was not in deadly earnest.**

Unfortunately, in his case, it was zeal without knowledge, and without charity. In defending his Theses against the Catholic authorities, he adopted an attitude of pride and arro-



gance, abandoning reason for invective. He poured contemptuous scorn on his critics, and soon manifested a blind hatred of Rome and of the Pope. Nor did he behave differently afterwards towards other Protestant teachers who disagreed with him. His sermons were obstinate and dogmatic. He brooked no contradiction. He tolerated no rival. He arrogated to himself the very infallibility he denied to the Pope.

### 35. He wished merely to correct abuses and reform men.

He would never have been condemned as a heretic if he had wished merely to correct abuses and reform men. He went further. He said that Catholic doctrine itself had become corrupted, and that HE had rediscovered the Gospel. But the new principles he taught were very flattering to human nature. They appealed strongly to the spirit of independence, and opened the way to still greater laxity. Men saw in them an emancipation from the authority of the Church, and from all moral restraint.

### 36. Do you offer that explanation as the secret of Luther's influence?

Partly. Another, and greater factor, was the political situation at the time. Luther was not a profound thinker, but he had the insight to see the religious unrest that prevailed in Germany, and the political ambitions of the German princes. Germany was, in fact, a politico-

religious volcano, and Luther had but to give passionate contagious expression to recriminations against Rome and to aspirations towards political independence already very widespread. He therefore set to work to stir up a hurricane of religious and racial hatred, to play upon political and national feeling, and to enkindle the whole of Germany against both the Emperor and the Pope. Luther the reformer became Luther the revolutionary, and the hero who stood for national opposition to Rome. There were no signs of a purely religious and spiritual mission received from God!

**37. It seems strange that others have not arrived at your interpretation of history.**

These facts seem strange to those who know only the Luther of legend, and have never studied the subject for themselves. But Protestant scholars are quite ready to agree with the explanations I have given. In his book, "A History of Europe," p. 500, H. A. L. Fisher writes that Luther "was a self-experiencing religious genius who, in his search for personal salvation, was led by degrees to take up an attitude which made him the champion of the German nation against the claims of the Roman Church." When the Jews wanted Christ to become the champion of their nation He refused. It was not by such means that the Kingdom of God was to be established.

**38. Did not Martin Luther at least force**

## the Catholic Church to reform itself?

The multitudes swept from the Catholic Church by the Lutheran revolt certainly brought home to her leaders the urgent need for real reform; and that real reform was effected by the Council of Trent. The severe legislation and disciplinary decrees of that Council eradicated the pronounced abuses which gave occasion to the Protestant landslide from the Church; and there has been no such movement since. Protestantism spent its force, so far as the Catholic Church is concerned, in the first years of revolt; and it has not been any real danger on a large scale to the faith of Catholics since. The notable tendency today is for Protestants to become Catholics; not for Catholics to become Protestants.

### 39. Surely, then, you owe some thanks to Martin Luther.

Luther we cannot respect. He had no right to leave the Catholic Church, and commence a Church of his own under the pretense of reform. He should have remained in the true Church and labored to reform lax Catholics within it. You wash a plate that needs cleansing; you do not smash it. As a matter of fact, in 1521, the wordly-minded Pope Leo X died, and was succeeded by the German Pope Adrian VI. Adrian was just such a Pope as Luther pretended to demand. He was austere and holy, and at once set to work to reform the

members of the Church, beginning with the Cardinals themselves, and battling against Italian laxity. The brave old Pope would have been vastly aided by German support, and the cessation of opposition in the North. But Luther made no effort to help a true reformer set in the very See whence reform ought to have come. Instead of helping a compatriot who was just such a head of the Church as he had declared to be necessary, he continued to pour forth abuse against the Pope as if he were the devil. Adrian VI died broken-hearted, and the real Counter-Reformation came with the Council of Trent nearly twenty years later. The widespread chaos compelled action then; but reform was due to the innate power of the living Church to renew her own vitality.

40. At least God made use of Luther to provoke in the Church a salutary reaction. From your own point of view you should admit his divine mission to do that.

Indirectly, in God's Providence, Luther's revolt forced the Authorities in the Catholic Church to undertake the work of reform. But he is no more worthy of respect because of that than was Attila, in the fifth century, who swept through Italy devastating the country and wrecking the churches even to the gates of Rome. The Catholics of the fifth century regarded Attila's invasion as a punishment of their sins and a warning to do penance; and they spoke of Attila as the "Scourge of God."

No Christian would admit that Attila had received a divine mission to murder, pillage, and desecrate, even though God permitted the disaster and made use of it, drawing good out of the evil. In the same way, God permitted the defection from the Church of Martin Luther, and made use of his revolt to bring Catholic leaders to a sense of responsibility. But the true reform was accomplished, not by Luther, but by others; and it was accomplished not only without Luther, but against Luther.

41. What would you regard as Luther's distinctive doctrines, constituting a departure from true Christianity?

The more important ones are as follows. He declared that the Catholic Church had fallen into doctrinal error. He denied that the Church was ever meant to be a visible Institution. He rejected the existence of any special priesthood in the Church. He insisted that the Bible must be the only Rule of Faith. Moreover, according to Luther, each man has the right to interpret the Bible for himself. Justification is attained by faith without works. The justified soul is granted a personal assurance of salvation. The Christian Faith neither needs, nor can have, any rational foundation.

42. You blame Luther for having left the Catholic Church. But in view of the abuses you have admitted,

## was not a reformation necessary?

Undoubtedly. But there was not need for what is called the "Protestant Reformation." Any abuses amongst the members of the Church will always cry out urgently for reform. But Protestantism was not a movement of real reform. It made prevalent abuses an excuse to abandon the Church altogether, instead of remaining with it, and trying to effect the conversion of its lax members to better ways. Moreover, Protestantism retained many of the very abuses, and merely sought to justify them by denying that they were wrong. That the Catholic Church will never do. She may have to admit sadly that her children at times fall into sin; but she will never say that what is sin is not sin, as did many of the reformers.

### 43. You deny, then, that the Catholic Church as such proved to be an unreliable guide?

I do. Christ said, "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. XVI, 18. Any man who says that the Church failed at any period in its career asserts that the gates of hell did prevail against it! Christ was either God, or He was not. If He was not, He was an imposter and a blasphemer, and we should renounce belief in Him entirely. But if He was God, then He could do what He said He would do—preserve His Church through the ages against all the forces of evil. It is not faith in Christ, but lack of

faith in Christ, that has led men to abandon the Church He established.

**44. Luther declared that the visible Church failed, but not the invisible Church; and that the true Church is necessarily invisible.**

He found it necessary to invent that theory to justify his rebellion against the visible Catholic Church. But he was not consistent. When he wished to suppress the Anabaptists, he appealed to the authority of a visible Church, known by baptism, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the preaching in it of his own gospel. But he found in the end that, in order to enforce his ideas, he had to appeal to the State. Papal authority having been repudiated, civil authority alone remained.

**45. We hold with Luther that the Church is in the souls of men.**

If the Church is an invisible quality confined to the souls of men, then no human being could say where the true Church is to be found, and no one could hear its voice or obey its precepts. No. Our Lord established a visible society in this world, though not of this world. And He compared it to a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid. One of the visible and organized Churches in this world today is His. And the Catholic Church alone can show the characteristics which He declared His Church would possess.

46. The Church is formed, not of those who belong to a visible organization, but of those who are born of the Holy Spirit.

Such a Church could not be judged by men. No one could then say who belonged to the true Church, and who did not. Christ established a visible Church, and appointed visible Apostles to rule that Church. In Acts, XX, 28, we read, "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, where the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God." How could the bishops rule the Church if they did not know who belonged to it?

47. Christ said, "The kingdom of God is within you."

The kingdom of God as established by Christ is at once a visible Church in this world, and an invisible kingdom of grace within the soul. External adherence to the visible kingdom demands also that Christ reign by grace within the soul. But this interior grace does not dispense a man from accepting the will of Christ once he is aware of it, nor from the obligation to join the visible kingdom established by Him in this world. Christ said, "If a man will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen." He was obviously referring to the authority of a visible Church. He also likened His Church to a net holding good and bad fish. This cannot refer to a kingdom of spiritual and invisible grace only, for bad fish are not in a state of grace.



48. Is not the idea of a visible priesthood, distinct from the laity, bound up with the doctrine of a visible Church?

It is. And it is equally the teaching of the New Testament that there must be a visible priesthood in the Church.

49. But Luther proved from the New Testament that there is no priesthood distinct from the laity. He brought out its clear teaching that all Christians are a holy priesthood.

That is but part of the teaching of the New Testament, not the whole of it. Baptism implies a certain priestly consecration to God, and the obligation to offer the sacrifice of praise by a sincere life of prayer and good works. But from amongst the baptized certain men must be chosen and specially ordained to offer the continued Sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood, and to forgive sins. In this further sense, not all Christians are priests.

50. Where in the New Testament is there mention of such a special priesthood?

What is a priest? He is one chosen from among men, dedicated to God by consecra-

tion, and deputed to offer sacrifice to God, to teach and to sanctify men. Now Christ certainly made a special choice of certain men. St. Luke, VI, 13, says, "He called together His followers, and chose twelve." He consecrated them. He gave them His own mission, saying, "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." He communicated to them His own power. "He breathed on them and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (Jn. XX, 21-22). Having chosen and consecrated them, He commanded them to teach and sanctify men. In St. Matthew, XXVIII, 19, He said to them, "Go, teach all nations." As regards sanctifying them, "Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. XXVIII, 19). Again, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (Jn. XX, 23). St. James (V, 14) writes, "Is any man sick? Let him call in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Finally, Christ ordered them to offer sacrifice to God. At the Last Supper He said, "This is My body which is given for you. This is My blood which is shed for you. Do this in commemoration of Me, and as often as you do it you shall show the death of the Lord." As often as a lawfully ordained priest celebrates the Mass he offers this sacrifice. The same Victim is offered, Jesus Christ, and by the priesthood of Christ in the celebrant. Only by a successive and perpetual priesthood by choice, consecration, and divine commission can this be done.

51. If it is all so clear as you say, why

## would Luther have denied it?

Luther ignored the evidence of the New Testament, in favor of his own new theories, which absorbed him to the exclusion of all else. The key to his position is to be found in his personal history. Obsessed by the violence of his own passions, and by the consciousness of his many sins, Luther was driven to a state of dejection, melancholy, and despair. Craving for an assurance that he would not be damned, he argued that original sin had totally vitiated man's nature and will, and that it was impossible for him to live a good life. It was useless to try. Man, therefore, can do nothing towards accomplishing his own salvation. But what man cannot do, God can do. We must simply believe in the power of Christ to effect our redemption by imputing to us His own goodness. Though we cannot but go on sinning, we can at least put our complete trust in Christ, and by doing so we are saved. In this doctrine of justification by faith alone is contained in germ the subsequent denial of the visible Church, of the priesthood, of sacramentalism, of free will, and the assertion in the end of predestination itself.

52. If Luther's theory was new, it was because people did not know the Bible. It took Luther to discover the Bible, and give it to the world.

After he had left the Church, Luther said that in the Monastery he had discovered a Bible, "a

book he had never seen in his life before," and that "he alone in the Monastery" read. But this is contrary to demonstrable facts. The Rule of the Augustinian Order to which Luther had belonged included the command that all the members must "read the Scriptures assiduously, hear it devoutly, and learn it fervently." Biblical studies flourished, and biblical commentaries existed in profusion. Luther was not telling the truth, and the myth of his discovery of an unknown Bible has been abandoned by all reliable Protestant scholars.

53. He was the first to translate the Bible into German, so that the ordinary people might read it for themselves.

There were twenty-seven editions of the Bible in German before Luther published his own translation. That translation was made at Wartburg but, whilst its literary value was high, it was spoiled by garbling and mistranslations. Luther was not above tampering with the very Word of God in the interests of his own doctrines. He rejected the Epistle of St. James as an "Epistle of Straw" because it did not fit in with his denial of the necessity of good works. In Romans III, 28, St. Paul had written, "We account a man to be justified by faith." In his own translation, Luther added the word alone," to make the sentence read, "We are justified by faith alone." Challenged with this perversion of the text by Emser, Luther wrote, "If your Papist annoys you with the word

(alone), tell him straightway: Dr. Martin Luther will have it so. Whoever will not have my translation, let him give it the go-by; the devil's thanks to him who censures it without my will and knowledge. Dr. Martin Luther will have it so, and he is a doctor above all the doctors in Popedom." (Amic. Disc. I, 127.) Luther was not reliable as a translator of the Bible.

#### 54. Luther at least vindicated the right of private judgment.

On that score he repudiated the authority of the Catholic Church, only to find that, on the same plea, others repudiated his. Thus he smashed the unity of Christendom in Europe, which split up into warring sects which Luther denounced more intolerantly than the Catholic Church had ever treated him. And his doctrine led to the most frightful moral and political disorders. A direct result of his teachings were the Peasant Revolt, and the appalling fate of the Munster Anabaptists.

#### 55. From Luther we have learned to read the Bible for ourselves, and accept as true what we discover in its pages.

That is an unsound principle. Many people fail to understand the true sense of the Bible, and still more read positively wrong meanings into it. Thus St. Peter says that there are many things in Scripture hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to

their own destruction. II Pet. III, 16. The very fruits of such private interpretation should be sufficient proof that God could never have intended such a method. For men have made the Bible support the most opposed doctrines, and have established hundreds of distinct and irreconcilable sects, each claiming to represent the true religion of Christ. God could never have intended a principle which would lead to such chaos.

## 56. When we read Scripture, we have only to be led by the Holy Spirit.

By what test do you decide that it is really the Holy Spirit leading you? Other people, just as sincere, arrive at other conclusions. Why accept your conclusion rather than theirs? All kinds of strange religions have been given to the world by men who have declared with the utmost confidence that the Holy Spirit is responsible for their ideas. St. John gave the test of truth when he wrote, "He that heareth not us, is not of God. By this we know the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error." I Jn. IV, 6. St. John appeals to the teaching of the Apostles as constituting the teaching Church—that Catholic Church of which Christ said, "If a man will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen." Matt. XVIII, 17. The authority of the teaching Church is the only sane test. Commenting on the state of affairs outside the Catholic Church, Rosalind Murray writes in her book, "The Life of Faith," p. 46, "When we contrast the rigorous regulations against unquali-

fied medical practitioners, with the absolute liberty accorded to wholly unqualified religious practitioners, the differential treatment is striking. The bodies of the community are safeguarded with painstaking and relentless vigilance from the adventures of unorthodoxy, their minds and souls are abandoned without compunction to the mercies of the unqualified charlatan." But that is the logical consequence of Luther's teaching.

**57. Has the ordinary reader no chance whatever of arriving at the correct sense of Scripture?**

In many passages of Scripture he could certainly do so. But in many others he would have no chance at all. There is no doubt whatever that the Bible is one of the most difficult books to understand. One needs a vast knowledge of ancient languages, history, and customs; and must be quite at home with Hebrew and Greek allegorical, metaphorical, and typical expressions, quite apart from the spiritual insight required to penetrate the loftiest mysteries. How many individuals are thus qualified?

**58. The Gospel of Christ is simplicity itself.**

In one way it is. It tells us clearly that Christ established a definite Church which He commissioned to teach all nations. It is very simple from this point of view, for men have but to ac-

cept the Catholic Church and be taught by that Church. But the Gospel is not simplicity itself in the way you intend. For a fuller treatment of this subject of Luther and the Bible, read the pamphlet "Bible Quizzes," obtainable from the publishers of this booklet.

### **59. Luther taught that one has but to believe on Christ and be saved.**

It is no wonder that he secured followers, with such an easy doctrine. Men, not living up to their religion, grasped at so simple a way out. But such a doctrine is opposed to the teaching of Christ. "If thou wilt enter into life," He said, "keep the commandments."

### **60. Luther believed that he is happy whose conscience alloweth the thing that he doth.**

That would be all right if it meant, "Happy is he whose conduct never goes against what a right conscience allows." But Luther meant, "Happy is he whose conscience has been reduced to silence, whatever evil one wishes to do."

### **61. Did not Luther preach the Law?**

He did, but not that it must be observed. He taught that it could not be observed, and that its purpose is only to bring home to men how depraved and sinful they are. "The Law," he wrote, "points out what man has to do, where-



as the Gospel unfolds the gifts God is willing to confer on man. The former we cannot observe, the latter we receive and apprehend by faith." (Tischreden I, c. XII, 7.) In "Table Talk," p. 137, we read, "He that says the Gospel requires works for salvation, I say, flat and plain, is a liar." Again, "Faith alone is necessary for justification. All other things are completely optional, being no longer commanded or forbidden." (Commentary on Gal. II.) In "The Babylonish Captivity," C. 3, Luther wrote, "The Christian or baptized man cannot, even if he would, lose his soul by any sins however great, unless he refuses to believe; for no sins whatever can condemn him, but unbelief alone." Logically, in accordance with these false principles, he wrote to Melancthon from Wartburg, October 1, 1521, "Be a sinner, and sin boldly, but believe more boldly still . . . We must sin, as we are what we are . . . Sin shall not drag us away from Him, even should we commit fornication or murder, thousands and thousands of times a day." (Briefwechsel, Vol. III, p. 208.)

## 62. As a Catholic, you have to say these things of Luther.

I have quoted Luther's own words. But listen to these words from a Protestant writer. In his book, "The Re-Creation of Man," p. 24, T. M. Parker writes, "Luther refused to admit that it was possible for fallen man to be sanctified by grace. The most God could do for him, so to speak, was by a fiction to account him righteous, to hide his filth with the garment of

the righteousness of Christ, the real man all the time remaining beneath the disguise what he was before. If the Liberal view of man dishonors God by suggesting that man can do without Him, the Lutheran view does so no less by teaching that the divine image is utterly defaced in man by sin, and that it is beyond the power of God to remake His creature. God has failed in His dealings with man, and the most He can do is to cover up His failure by imputed righteousness, as the unskillful artist hides away his rejected portrait."

63. Luther denied all need of our trying to make satisfaction for our sins, and that is why he attacked the sale of indulgences.

Luther attacked far more than the need of making satisfaction for our sins; but you are right in saying that the attack on indulgences was a logical outcome of his theory that we are justified by faith alone. That theory, however, is false.

64. Do you deny that indulgences gave Luther sufficient reason for his revolt?

I do. He made them one of his excuses for revolt, but they were not a sufficient reason.

65. Did not indulgences give Catholics permission to commit sin?

No. Ever the teaching of the Catholic Church has been that sin is essentially evil. At all costs people are obliged to avoid sin. Never can any permission be granted to do what is sinful. If anything, it was Luther himself who granted a wholesale indulgence to commit sin. The doctrine of justification by faith only, denying the necessity of good works, was logically an indulgence to do as one pleases.

66. On what grounds does the Catholic Church claim to be able to grant indulgences?

On the grounds that a mutual communication of spiritual goods exists between Christ and the Christian, as also between all who are members of Christ. This is simply an application of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints in which all profess to believe who recite the Apostles' Creed. And that the Church has the power to apply the satisfactory value of Our Lord's sufferings, and those of the Saints and Martyrs, to her children on earth, is evident from the fact that Christ gave her the power both to bind and loose in His name. He said to her, not only, "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound in heaven," but also, "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." Matt. XVIII, 18. By an indulgence the Church remits for us a certain amount of the expiation we must offer for our sins, either in this life or the next. For further information read "Indulgence Quizzes" by Radio Replies Press, St. Paul 1, Minn., U.S.A.

**67. Did not Pope Leo X sell indulgences in Germany to get money for St. Peter's?**

No. He granted indulgences to those who gave alms towards the building of St. Peter's. But a spiritual blessing granted to those who give alms towards a good work is not to be ranked as the sale of spiritual blessings. Christ had a special blessing for the widow who gave her mite to the Temple. You would not accuse Him of selling that blessing for a mite!

**68. All historians speak of abuses in Germany, in connection with the traffic in indulgences.**

There were undoubtedly abuses. Some of those deputed to collect alms for St. Peter's were more anxious about the revenue than about spiritual considerations, and they adopted unwarranted means to obtain that revenue. In their preaching they went far beyond the teaching of the Church. But they had no authority to behave in such a way. The Council of Trent later condemned all such abuses, forbade them absolutely, and demanded that the bishops should exercise strict supervision over those in charge of pious causes and charitable works for the support of which indulgences could be gained.

**69. Luther could not bear all the anxious strain to provide for one's salvation.**

St. Paul did not hesitate to write to the Philip-  
pians, "With fear and trembling work out your  
salvation." Phil. II, 12.

70. When the sight of his sins tempt-  
ed him to doubt his salvation, he  
exclaimed, "Write across all my  
sins: The Blood of Christ cleanseth  
me."

Exclaiming that would not make it true.  
When Luther was reproached by his con-  
science, as he had every reason to be, he  
blamed the devil for his uneasy thoughts, and  
so justified himself in ignoring them. And even  
as he spoke of God's mercy, he made that  
mercy an excuse for continuing in his evil con-  
duct, and offending God the more. To find  
peace of soul, Luther preferred to adjust his  
conscience to his conduct, rather than adjust  
his conduct to his conscience; and instead of  
forsaking his sins and doing penance for them,  
he went on with them, crying out, "But Christ  
died for me," as a boy would whistle in a  
cemetery to keep up his courage.

71. He taught us that we are sure we  
are accepted by God when we  
feel the assurance of it in our  
hearts."

A Protestant writer, Dr. Claude Beaufort  
Moss, declares, "The doctrine of assurance is  
extremely dangerous, for 'the heart is deceitful

above all things'. (Jer. XVII, 9), and the feelings are most untrustworthy guides. It is this doctrine of assurance which lies at the root of the individualism and subjectivity which are the bane of all the heirs of the Reformation, and of Lutheranism in particular." (The Christian Faith, p. 198.)

## 72. The sense of assurance has produced the most fervent Protestant preachers.

That is no guarantee of the truth of their teaching, and gives no assurance to others that they are reliable guides. In her book, "The Life of Faith," p. 46, Rosalind Murray rightly remarks, "What should we feel in the hands of a surgeon who, having studied no anatomy, should venture to cut our bodies open, and practice on them on the strength of a 'sort of feeling', a kind of vague emotional assurance that 'there must be some sort of thing' inside us?" In the serious things of life, to abandon reason for sentiment is folly.

## 73. Luther may at times have been mistaken; but would you question his innate honesty and sincerity of purpose?

His utterances and his conduct on many occasions forfeit any claim to our trust and confidence. No one could say that he was habitually careful to tell the truth. He must have known that he was not telling the truth when he said

that the Bible was unknown to his fellow priests in the Monastery he abandoned. He certainly knew that he had falsified the text of Sacred Scripture to justify his new doctrines. He consciously exaggerated the scandals of the Papacy. To justify his marriage to the ex-nun, Catherine von Bora, he gave to different people seven different reasons for his step. He said the first plausible thing that came into his head. When Philip, Duke of Hesse, a supporter of the Reformation, asked Luther's permission to take a second wife in addition to the one he already had, Luther gave him permission to commit bigamy provided Philip told no one about it. But the matter became public, and Luther told Philip to deny that he had married a second wife and was living with both. "What would it matter," he wrote to Philip, "if for the greater good one were to tell a big round lie?" In 1522 he attacked Henry VIII as the chosen "vessel of Satan," and made all kinds of damning charges against him. Two years later, hearing that Henry was wavering in his allegiance to Rome, and hoping to gain a convert, he wrote to Henry and offered to recant publicly all he had previously said. It was simply "artful hypocrisy," as his biographer Dr. P. Smith admits. Truth for truth's sake meant very little to Martin Luther.

#### 74. We have to thank him at least for religious liberty.

Luther certainly liberated people from the Catholic Church. But that was a liberation from the restraints of truth revealed by Christ,

and from His moral laws. Meantime, he himself did not grant liberty to those who followed him out of the Catholic Church. He substituted his own authority for that of the Pope. He urged the German princes to use force to uphold his own doctrine and suppress that of other would-be reformers. He wrote to the Elector of Saxony, Feb. 9, 1526, to permit no doctrine save his own. "In one place," he said, "there should be one kind of sermon only." And he demanded that, if one did not desist from preaching a different doctrine, "the authorities will commend such a fellow to the proper master, the Master Executioner." (Erlangen, Vol. 39, pp. 250-254.) The Protestant historian, P. Wappler, speaking of the persecution of the Anabaptists, insists that "Luther approved the death penalty, inflicted for the exclusive reason of heresy." (Die Stellung Kur-sachsens, p. 125.)

## 75. Luther was the very champion of freedom of thought!

That is a legend. Hallam, in his "Introduction to the History of Literature," writes as follows: "The adherents to the Church of Rome have never failed to cast two reproaches on those who left them; one, that the Reform was brought about by intemperate and calumnious abuses, by outrages of an excited populace, by the tyranny of princes; the other, that after stimulating the most ignorant to reject the authority of their Church, it instantly withdrew this liberty of judgment, and devoted all who presumed to swerve from the line drawn by



law to violent obloquy, and sometimes to bonds and to death. These reproaches, it may be a shame to us to own, can be uttered and cannot be refuted." (Vol. I, p. 200, sec. 34.)

## 76. He advocated complete separation of Church and State.

His doctrine applied only to rulers opposed to his teaching. Then he would bid temporal princes not to meddle with spiritual things, and declare the State to be of "the devil," and that Christians had no moral obligation to obey any of its laws. But he took the opposite stand when the German princes were favorable to Lutheranism. Then the ruler was the "agent of God," rightly using the power of the sword to enforce religion. The prince was then the sole spiritual authority as well as temporal of his subjects! Luther contradicted himself in this matter, according to the dictates of expediency.

## 77. He wanted freedom for all men.

That he certainly did not advocate. Luther was a strong defender of slavery. "Because God has given the law, and nobody observes it," he wrote. "He has in addition instituted rod-masters, drivers, and urgers; so then are rulers to drive, beat, choke, hang, burn, behead, and break upon the wheel the vulgar masses." (Erlangen, Vol. XV, 2, p. 276.) Again, he declares, "Slavery is not against the Christian Order, and he who says so lies." Weimar, Vol. XVI, p. 244.

**78. It is to Luther that we owe democracy.**

His principles lead directly to totalitarianism. Luther simply delivered to temporal rulers political despotism over the consciences of men when he delivered religion into the hands of the State. Scherr, in his book "German Culture," p. 260, writes, "Luther was the originator of the doctrine of unconditional surrender to civil power." Nowhere is this clearer than in the history of the Peasants' War. In 1524 the peasants of Germany revolted against oppression by the nobles, and demanded the abolition of serfdom. They were encouraged by revolutionary preachers who advocated the Lutheran doctrine of Christian liberty. But Luther needed the support of the princes, and he urged them to slay the peasants mercilessly. The scandal was enormous, and the feelings of the peasants towards Luther turned to bitter hatred. If ever anything served to confirm the people of Southern Germany in their determination to remain Catholics, it was this treachery of Martin Luther. And it is noteworthy that, in our own days, the Nazi Socialists of Germany, in their repudiation of democratic principles, found their greatest opponents in Germany to be the Catholic population.

**79. Is not that a biased account of Luther's attitude towards the Peasant War?**

**No.** The Protestant historian, H. A. L. Fisher,

writes, "The manner in which he dissociated his movement from the peasant rebellion . . . and the encouragement he gave to a course of repression so savage that it left the German peasantry more defenseless and abased than any social class in central or western Europe, are serious blots upon his good name. The German peasants were rough men and rough fighters; but their grievances were genuine, and their original demands were just and reasonable." (A History of Europe, p. 506.) In any case, we have Luther's own boast, "I, Martin Luther, have during the rebellion slain all the peasants, for it was I who ordered them to be struck dead. All their blood is upon my head. But I put it all on our Lord God; for He commanded me to speak thus." (Tischreden; Erlangen ed., Vol. 59, p. 284.)

## 80. Luther was a social reformer who made many efforts on behalf of the poor.

His very teachings led to greater distress amongst the poor, and hindered all efforts to provide them with relief. The poor had been provided for by the Monasteries, but the princes had confiscated Church property for themselves, leaving the people destitute. And Luther's appeals to his own followers for contributions towards their relief was an utter failure, as he himself had to admit. He had taught that there was no value in good works. He even said, "It is more important to guard against good works than against sin." (Witten-

berg Ed., Vol. VI, p. 160.) For Lutherans there was no "Redeem your sins by almsgiving." They had been taught, "There is no longer any sin in the world except unbelief." It was a comfortable doctrine, but no check on human selfishness. Works of charity diminished under the influence of his teachings in marked contrast with their growth wherever the Catholic spirit prevails.

81. You cannot deny that in the wake of the Protestantism given us by Martin Luther there followed an immense progress in art and literature, in scientific and mechanical progress, in intellectual and material prosperity.

Although there has been an extraordinary progress in these things since the advent of Protestantism, it has not been due to Protestantism, and certainly not to the principles taught by Martin Luther. The impetus given to the study of art and literature, the development of the spirit of inquiry, the rapid advance of educational and scientific interest, date from the Renaissance which had arrived before Protestantism was heard of at all. And the movement would have gone on, whether Luther had abandoned the Church or not. As a matter of fact, Luther's principles were opposed to the progress of knowledge, and all he succeeded in doing was to bring religion into such discredit that he paved the way for an unbeliev-

ing rationalism which corrupted the progressive movement, and led to sheer materialism.

**82. It was Luther who taught men to use their own intelligence.**

That is the very opposite of the truth. In her book, "The Life of Faith," p. 19, Rosalind Murray writes, "The first most general and destructive error is the conception of Faith as opposed to Reason, as an irrational impulse, an emotion alien to the intellect and hostile to it; this is the state of mind for which to support our faith with reason is to destroy it; it found one of its most disastrous expressions in the destructive theology of Luther: "Reason must be left behind, for it is the enemy of Faith . . . there is nothing so contrary to faith as law and reason." (Tischreden, Weimar VI, 143, 25-35.) Erasmus, the humanist, glorified reason. Luther condemned it. And Erasmus wrote, "Wherever Lutheranism prevails, there letters die." Even Melancthon, Luther's fellow reformer, had to admit, "In Germany, all the schools are disappearing."

**83. That is contrary to all that we have been taught.**

It is nevertheless true. Not only Catholics, but rationalists themselves, refuse to acknowledge any educational debt to Luther. H. A. L. Fisher says, "Luther was not a profound theologian; nor was he a philosopher. He did not believe in free inquiry or toleration, and so far from acknowledging the possibility of develop-

ment in religious thought, held firmly to the belief that all truth as to the ultimate problems of life and mind was to be found in Holy Writ. It is not therefore from Luther, a savage anti-Semite, that the liberal and rationalizing movements of European thought derive their origin." (A History of Europe, p. 500.) The era of modern educational progress began before the advent of Protestantism, and would have continued without it. All that Protestantism did was to undermine the very foundations of the Christian Faith, preparing the way for a general driftage from all religion to a secularism which has culminated in the most disastrous consequences to civilization.

#### 84. Such a sweeping conclusion cannot be true!

It seems extravagant only to those who have not made a profound study of the subject. From the very beginning, Luther's teachings led to a disintegration of society, and a degeneration of morals. In the earliest period of the Reformation Martin Bucer wrote, "The greater part of the people seem only to have embraced the Gospel in order to shake off the yoke of discipline and the obligation of fasting and penance, which rested on them in Popery, and that they may live according to their own pleasure, enjoying their lusts and lawless appetites without control. That was the reason they lent a willing ear to justification by faith alone and not by good works, for the latter of which they had no relish." (De Regn. Vol. I, c. I, 4.)

Luther could not deny this charge. He himself wrote, "For after we have learned the Evangel, we steal, lie, deceive, practice gluttony and drunkenness and every kind of vice. Now that one devil has been driven out, seven others, worse than the former, have entered into us, as we can see in princes, lords, nobles, burghers, and peasants. So they act, and so they live, without any fear, regardless of God and His threats." (Erlangen, Vol. 36, p. 411.) And where has it all ended? Rationalism has undermined the Lutheran Faith in Germany, and to a lesser extent throughout the world. In 1935, on his 70th birthday, Ludendorff said, "At the moment we Germans are the people which has freed itself furthest from the teachings of Christianity." (London Times, April 9, 1935.)

## 85. Luther taught belief in the Gospels. He cannot be blamed for the behavior of those who have abandoned belief in the Gospels.

His teaching is responsible for loss of belief in the Gospels. He rejected the one authority capable of preserving sound doctrine—the supernatural and divine authority of the Catholic Church. His principle of private judgment led to all kinds of divergent novelties, and to check these he had no alternative but to appeal to the authority of the State as supreme even in religious matters. That, in turn, led to still worse abuses. The State gladly grasped at the new accession of power; but, if Lutheranism could exist only at the good pleasure of the

State, there is nothing to prevent the State abolishing it in favor of a religion of sheer nationalism invented by itself. It was quite in accordance with Luther's principles of State supremacy that the Nazi Socialists tried to impose on Germany a new religion of "blood and soil," distributing hundreds of thousands of the booklet "Gott and Volk" throughout the country, calling upon the people to choose between Christ and the ancient gods of Germany. Dean Inge, formerly of St. Paul's, London, is thoroughly Protestant in outlook, and has little sympathy with Catholicism; yet he did not hesitate to write, "If we wish to find a scapegoat on whose shoulders we may lay the miseries which Germany has brought upon the world, I am more and more convinced that the worst evil genius of that country is not Hitler or Bismarck or Frederick the Great, but Martin Luther." He gives as his reason that, in Lutheranism, "The Law of Nature, which ought to be the court of appeal against unjust authority, is identified with the existing order of society, to which absolute obedience is due." And he adds, "We must hope that the next swing of the pendulum will put an end to Luther's influence in Germany." (Quoted in "Time" magazine, November 6, 1944.)

86. Protestants throughout the world accept Luther's purely religious principles, not his political principles.

If he was wrong in the latter, there is no



guarantee that he was right in the former. And that his religious principles were unsound is evident from their effects. The divisions of Protestantism into so many conflicting sects, and the prevailing confusion as to what is and what is not essential to be Christian Faith, should be enough to make all thoughtful Protestants reconsider their position. In his book, "Luther and His Work," Mr. Joseph Clayton, a convert to the Catholic Church from Protestantism, writes, "Whither has Luther led his followers? Into what promised land, after the years of wandering outside the Catholic unity, are now brought the Protestants who date their emancipation from Martin Luther? Four centuries of journeying since Luther started the exodus, and yet the promised land of the Lutheran Evangel, so often emergent, fades from sight even as the mirage vanishes in the desert. It is the wasteland of doubt that Protestants have reached—a wasteland littered with abandoned hopes and discarded creeds."

### 87. Protestants today are not responsible for divisions brought about by their ancestors.

That is true. But if we discover that our ancestors were mistaken, there is no reason why we should continue in error merely because they were in error. Nor, in those times of heated dissent, were our ancestors as likely to see the truth as we who can not only look back calmly after all these centuries, but who can see how the principles they accepted have

worked out in practice. It is our duty to study the question with a love of truth for its own sake. Had we lived in the days of Martin Luther, and had we known then all that we know now, would we have abandoned for his new teachings the Church to which all Christians in Europe had belonged throughout the preceding centuries? Or would we have taken our stand with the Church against which Christ had promised that the gates of hell would not prevail, and with which He had promised to remain all days till the end of the world? If the latter, surely it is our duty to return to the Catholic Church which the first Protestants should never have left.

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