

**Grady Laksmono**

221318327

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## The Rise of the Protestant Church

Martin Luther was a priest who was taught at a Catholic University in Württemberg, Germany. Like many others, Luther feared that the Roman Catholic Church would become corrupt because of its power in providing the guidance to the people to obtain salvation. Luther felt that the approaches of the Roman Catholic Church to salvation through sacraments and rituals are unnecessary. Martin Luther also wrote the ninety-five theses, which express his concerns about the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church. (Jones) Martin Luther believed that the justification of mankind from sin is through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and that people should not be relying on the priest to seek salvation.

Faith, in the Protestant conception is not simply a matter of belief or acceptance of knowledge held with certainty yet not with evidence, but a response of the entire self or “A totality-act of the whole personality.” It includes a movement of the mind in assent, conviction of God’s limitless, omnipresent creative power, affections in love and trust, and the will in desire to be an instrument of God’s redeeming love. When Martin Luther said that mankind is justified by faith, it meant that such restoration requires a movement of the total self, in mind, will, and affection. (Smith, 357) “Before humankind, we are justified by works, but before God, we are justified by faith alone.” (Brecht et al, 132) The ignorance of Christian faith and liberty are diligently promoted by the teaching of many blind pastors, who stir up and urge the people to a zeal of work of doing service to our neighbor, praising them, and puffing them up with the indulgences, but never teach faith. (Luther, 54)

When Luther was a young monk, he experienced attacks of severe spiritual anxiety about his soul. He was not certain about the sincerity of his own sorry and repentance, so he repeatedly punished himself in order to make up for that and to gain merit before God. Instead of loving

God and finding God as graciously heavenly Father, Luther feared God and come to hate God because Luther only sensed God's wrath. Luther took the most severe approach possible just to be safe side and relieve his doubts about God's mercy. Johannes Staupitz, who is Luther's confessor in monastery, did not agree with Luther's perspective on God and took more lenient approach of emphasizing God's grace and mercy. Staupitz decided to send Luther out of the monastery to study philosophy, theology, and the Bible at the University of Erfurt with a hope that he could change his perspective on God. Luther was given a thorough nominalist education that puts emphasize on God's absolute freedom, who actually reveals himself in grace, love, and mercy. Completing his educations at the University of Erfurt eventually developed Luther's new perspective in God and eventually leads him to his reformation movement. (Olson, 375 – 376)

In 1517, Luther issued a list of Ninety-five theses that called for an end to the selling of the indulgences, expensive piece of paper that assured them or a deceased relative of relief from punishment after death for sin, by the Roman Catholic Church. (Luther et al, ix) "If however you wish to pray, fast, or establish a foundation in the church. I advise you to be careful not to do it in order to obtain some benefit, whether temporal or eternal, for you would do injury to your faith which alone offers you all things. Your one care should be that faith may grow, whether it is trained by works or sufferings. Make your gift freely and for no consideration, so that others may profit by them and fare well because of you and your goodness. In this way you shall be truly good and Christian." (Luther et al, 61) Indulgences was a byproduct of the Crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which the Catholic Church promised the Crusaders for immediate salvation if they died when they fought in the liberation of the Christian's holy city of Jerusalem. Based from this argument, paying money to support good works would do the same. The justification of selling indulgences are argued by the Church leaders who claimed to

inherited an unlimited amount of good works from Jesus, and the credit of these good works could be sold to believers in form of indulgences. (Jones) “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none... A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” (Luther et al, 2)

After nailing the Ninety-five theses to the door of the Württemberg University Cathedral, Martin Luther advocated and defended the right of priest to marry in June 21, 1521. “From all this it follows, that the doctrine which forbids priests and the clergy to marry, and all Christians to eat meat and food, also all cloister-life and vows, are altogether damned and hellish-doctrine, since through them grace and salvation are sought, and they are not left free, as Paul says in 1 Tim 4, that Christ alone is the only way to grace and salvation.” (Stuckenberg, 317) In July 22, 1521, Luther called for removal of all pictures in statuary and church. “The reform of worship, and in particular the removal of images, the suspension of infant baptism and the reform of the Mass, must be introduced without delay.” (Dixon, 88) In May 13, 1521, Luther made a public protest against the reservation of the Blessed sacraments, the Elevation of the Host, and denounced the withholding of the chalice from the laity. In March 1, 1521, Luther inveighed prayers for the dead and demanded for the Mass ritual to be spoken in the vernacular German. (Ganss et al)

The corruptions within the Roman Catholic Church are the ground of the Martin Luther’s reformation movement. Different perspectives of the justification to obtain salvation between the Roman Catholic Church and Martin Luther reinforced the Protestant reformation. Martin Luther believed that justification from sin and salvation are free and can be obtained by no other means, other than faith in Jesus Christ alone. “He discarded the holy sacrifice of the mass, fasting,

confession, prayers for the dead, and many other pious practices; he declared good works to be useless, and taught that man is justified and saved by faith alone” (Painter, 11)

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