

Document A: The Introduction to the 95 Theses (Modified)

As a young man, Martin Luther became increasingly bothered by the practice of granting sinners indulgences to buy their way out of punishment for their sins. In 1517, Luther decided to write up his criticisms of indulgences and to send them to the Archbishop of Mainz. Luther's criticisms, known as The 95 Theses Against Indulgences, eventually made their way to the Pope, who responded by attacking Luther and eventually excommunicating him from the Catholic Church. The passage below is an excerpt from the letter Luther sent to the Archbishop of Mainz with the 95 Theses.

The grace of God be with you in all its fullness and power!

Spare me, Most Reverend Father in Christ and Most **Illustrious** Prince, that I, the **dregs** of humanity, have so much boldness that I have dared to think of [writing] a letter to someone of your **Sublimity**. . . .

Papal indulgences for the building of St. Peter's are circulating under your most **distinguished** name. I do not bring accusation against the outcries of the preachers, which I have not heard, so much as I grieve over the wholly false impressions which the people have conceived from [the indulgences]. The unhappy souls believe that if they have purchased letters of indulgence they are sure of their salvation.

Source: *Martin Luther's letter to the Archbishop of Mainz, 1517.*

Vocabulary

illustrious: respected and admired

dregs: a worthless part of something

sublimity: something of pure beauty or grandeur

distinguished: successful and well-respected

Document B: Against Catholicism (Modified)

As Luther gained popularity, some of his followers began to write down things that Luther said in private. These notes were known as Luther's Table Talk and were collected and published in the 1560s. The following is presumed to be from Luther's Table Talk in 1535.

The main reason I fell out with the pope was this: the pope boasted that he was the head of the Church, and condemned all that would not be under his power and authority. He said, although Christ is the head of the Church, there must be a physical head of the Church upon earth. With this I could have been content, if he had taught the gospel pure and clear, and not introduced human inventions and lies. Further, he took power, rule, and authority over the Christian Church, and over the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. No man can explain the Scriptures. The pope did and he made himself lord over the Church, proclaiming [the Church] at the same time a powerful mother, and empress over the Scriptures. This could not be tolerated. Those who, against God's Word, boast of the Church's authority, are mere idiots. The pope gives more power to the Church, which is begotten and born, than to the Word [the Bible], which has conceived, and born the Church.

Source: *From Luther's Table Talk, 1535.*