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Luther and Hitler: A Linear Connection between Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler's Anti-Semitism with a Nationalistic Foundation

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Luther and Hitler:
A Linear Connection between Martin Luther and Adolf
Hitler's Anti-Semitism with a Nationalistic Foundation

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Liberal Studies

by

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December 2011

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Reader: Dr. Barry Levis

Rollins College
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Master of Liberal Studies Program

Winter Park, Florida

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Preface

Anti-Semitism is defined as “discrimination against or prejudice or hostility toward Jews.”¹ Unfortunately, this hatred and judgment toward the Jewish people is not a recent phenomenon and it is not uncommon. Anti-Semitism has its origins as early as paganism, even before the existence of Christianity; however, the roots of Christian anti-Semitism lie in the belief that the Jews killed Christ, the divine Savior.² This belief made the Jews the enemy of Christians, causing a hatred that has lasted centuries. Two of the most notoriously unshakable Anti-Semites were the Protestant reformer Martin Luther and German Chancellor-turned dictator Adolf Hitler. But who exactly were Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler? Do we really know either man well enough to explain who they were? There are arguably two versions of each man.

Luther is renowned still today as the initiator and leader of the Protestant Reformation. Centuries later, Lutherans and Germans alike admire and honor him for his bold and daring actions against the Catholic Church in the 1500s. The pervasive portrayal of Luther is simple; the young, impassioned monk who took on the Roman Catholic Church and won. However, Luther is much more complex, with a darker side that is much less well-known. Hitler remains one of the most hated men in history. Sometimes referred to as an evil genius, but mostly just evil, Hitler is more notorious than celebrated. Hitler was adept at hiding who he really was; he was careful not to let people get too close, to see behind the façade. Protestant Christians were careful to let only Luther’s legacy live on, while downplaying the less favorable version. While there

¹ “Antisemitism,” *Dictionary.com*, Accessed 25 November 2011, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/antisemitism>.

² William Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993), xix.

is no hiding the evil that occurred under Hitler's reign, the sinister side of Luther has been well-hidden since his time, allowing only his enlightened and reformist persona to be remembered and hailed. Many people would be surprised to find out that Martin Luther was extraordinarily anti-Judaic, becoming increasingly more vile as he aged. Wanting early on to convert the Jews so that they can be saved by Christ, Luther took their refusal personally and eventually became consumed with bitter hatred. This rage eventually led to texts and sermons that explicitly detailed why the Jews were wicked and what should be done with them. Was this normal behavior for Luther's time, or were his views considered extreme? One might even argue that there is little difference between the anti-Semitic ideologies of Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler.

In addition to his anti-Judaism, Martin Luther was also highly nationalistic, with many of his undertakings done specifically for the betterment of his fellow German people. The descriptions of Luther continue to fit the other well-known anti-Semitic revolutionary with affection for the German people, Adolf Hitler. The significant similarities between Luther and Hitler deserve thorough exploration. Although four centuries apart, both Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler had a remarkable impact on both Germany and the world. What exactly was it about these two men that allowed them to start a rebellion and garner support from their fellow Germans? More importantly, what led them to live a life filled with rage and hatred, and why was it directed toward the Jews? Was there something about the German people in particular that allowed them to be susceptible to the leadership of Luther and Hitler? This paper will explore the connection between Luther and Hitler; it will attempt to illustrate the similarities between

their German nationalism and anti-Semitism, and explain how Luther laid the foundation for Hitler's holocaust.

MARTIN LUTHER

LIFE OF LUTHER

“I feel much freer now that I am certain the Pope is the Antichrist.”

~ Martin Luther

It is quite difficult to get a complete understanding of Martin Luther’s childhood because the information is limited. Many biographies focus on his adult life, emphasizing his work as a monk and instigating what would eventually become the Protestant Reformation. Erik Erikson, author of *Young Man Luther*, explains,

The literature on Luther, and by Luther, is stupendous in volume. Yet it adds up to very few reliable data on his childhood and youth. His role in history, and above all his personality, remains ambiguous on a grandiose scale.³

Despite the lack of a detailed understanding of Luther’s childhood, many scholars have studied his early life and are able to shed light on the nebulous early years of Martin Luther and how he became the foremost leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany.

Martin Luther was born November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany to Hans and Margarethe Luther. Luther’s father was a copper miner and his mother would often help by gathering wood in addition to caring for their family, which consisted of Martin, his three sisters, and a younger brother.⁴ The family has been described as “rugged, rough, at

³ Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1993), 13.

⁴ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1985), 1-6.

times coarse, credulous, and devout,”⁵ just like Martin. Based on his own references and recollections, Luther was raised in an extremely strict environment, receiving whippings both at home and school. In 1532, Luther was quoted as saying,

One shouldn't whip children too hard. My father once whipped me so severely that I ran away from him, and he was worried that he might not win me back again. I wouldn't like to strike my little Hans very much, lest he should become shy and hate me. I know nothing that would give me greater sorrow.⁶

Disturbing details of Luther's childhood punishments describe a child “flogged until he bled” at home or “whipped as often as fifteen times a day for ridiculous offenses”⁷ at school. Modern psychologists have analyzed that his strict upbringing caused Luther to isolate himself from his parents and perhaps even led him to choose the life of a monk. It has been argued that the severity of his upbringing caused Luther to have a neurotic temperament and that, as a child, he was “timid, wild, and mistrustful” and suffered from an “uneasiness of spirit.”⁸ Undoubtedly, combined with his melancholia, these sufferings would impact Luther's later life. Furthermore, Luther also suffered from extreme mood swings, which have been attributed to his childhood upbringing. Luther, in regards to these abrupt fluctuations in behavior, has been described as “extraordinarily sensitive and subject to recurrent periods of exaltation and depression of spirit.”⁹ Yet despite these

⁵ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press: 1950), 26.

⁶ *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. By John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (Vintage Spiritual Classics: New York), 305.

⁷ Peter F. Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor* (New Jersey: American Athiest Press, 1990), 19.

⁸ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor*, 19-20.

⁹ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 28.

struggles (or perhaps because of them), Luther was given the opportunity to receive a university education at the University of Erfurt and became highly educated.

As a young man, Martin Luther studied to become a lawyer. Having already received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in the field, he suddenly abandoned this career path to become a monk, much to the chagrin of his father. As the story goes, young Luther was walking home July 2, 1505 when a severe thunderstorm unexpectedly appeared. As lightning crashed nearby, Luther was thrown to the ground. He prayed to St. Anne for help: "St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk."¹⁰ He survived the thunderstorm and resolved to become an Augustinian monk. As a scholar, Luther completed his doctorate in Theology in 1512, after which he gave numerous lectures on the Bible.¹¹ He also delivered many sermons, led various prayers, and wrote countless letters; he had an incredible talent for connecting with listeners who heard him speak. In 1517, however, the event occurred for which Martin Luther is most renowned; he posted his ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg. With the help of the printing press, his grievances were quickly spread and debated throughout Germany.

Der mißbräuchliche Ablasshandel veranlaßte Luther, am 31. Oktober 1517 von Wittenberg aus 95 Thesen über den Ablass zu veröffentlichen, um zu Gelehrten-Disputation aufzufordern. Wie ein Lauffeuer verbreiteten sich die Thesen durch ganz Deutschland.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

¹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹² Fernis/Haverkamp, *Grundzüge der Geschichte: Von der Urzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Verlag Moritz Diesterweg: Frankfurt am Main, 1975), 143.

The improper selling of indulgences caused Luther to publish, on October 31, 1517 in Wittenberg, his 95 Theses about the indulgences to invite debate. The theses spread throughout all of Germany like a wildfire.

The popularity of Luther's theses subsequently prompted the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.¹³ Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses because he was terribly disturbed with many of the practices of the Catholic Church, and he used his skills as an orator and a writer to have his concerns heard. Luther was particularly perturbed by the Church's use of indulgences. An *indulgence* is defined by the Catholic Encyclopedia Online as a "remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has been forgiven."¹⁴ Therefore, an indulgence essentially renders a soul spotless. Luther believed that the consequences of sin could only be removed by faith in the gospel, and not by words, confessions, payments, or other good works. Indulgences have perhaps best been described as "the bingo of the sixteenth century."¹⁵ The Catholic Church used the payment of indulgences to fund churches, monasteries, and other projects. Especially irritated with the treatment of the Germans by the Italian papacy, Luther used his sermons as a venue to speak out against the Pope, pastors, and bishops, and to criticize their use of indulgences. In 1516 Luther was recorded as condemning the practice of collecting money to be used for war and controversy, as opposed to building churches and helping the poor. Luther's biggest concern with the practice of indulgences, however, was that people were taught to fear the punishment rather than the

¹³ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 79.

¹⁴ "Indulgences," *Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, Accessed 4 August 2011, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm>.

¹⁵ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 72.

sin itself.¹⁶ In 1517, Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church to invite debate and discussion among those who read them. The main points of the theses have been summarized as follows: “an objection to the avowed object of the expenditure, a denial of the powers of the pope over purgatory, and a consideration of the welfare of the sinner.”¹⁷ Luther had become the voice of the German people that had not been heard for centuries. People not only discussed Luther’s theses, but translated and distributed them throughout the German territories. It was not Luther’s intention for his grievances to circulate and to start a reformation, but his fellow Germans needed a spokesperson and Luther inadvertently volunteered.

Luther’s popularity increased exponentially after the nailing of his ninety-five theses. In 1521 he arrived for the Diet of Worms in “triumphal procession.”¹⁸ Arriving at the outskirts of the city, he was escorted to the gate by one hundred mounted soldiers.

Two thousand townspeople came out to accompany him to his lodgings. Peasants and burghers alike hailed him as champion of the gospel and champion of the German people. To his astonishment, he had become a celebrity overnight. His profession marked the beginning of an era in which the name *Luther* would symbolize faith, freedom, and the defiance of religious authority.¹⁹

In Luther’s Germany, a class struggle was ongoing between the upper classes, the “princes,” and the lower classes, the “peasants.”²⁰ The life of a sixteenth-century German peasant was almost intolerable, owing to the taxes, work, and oppression suffered at the

¹⁶ Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*, 185.

¹⁷ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 81-83.

¹⁸ *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, xiii.

¹⁹ *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, xiii.

²⁰ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor*, 50.

hands of the princes. With the great social unrest already taking place along with the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, the peasants thought it was a good time to voice their grievances against an oppressive feudal society. Frustrated with a lack of a true place in society, they called for increased democracy in the town councils and less restrictive memberships in the guilds.²¹ They considered Martin Luther their leader, the man of greatness and courage. Luther called the princes “the greatest fools and the worst scoundrels on earth. The people cannot, will not any longer, endure your tyranny and your presumption.”²² With this encouragement and a united front from the peasants, a revolt ensued in 1525; however Martin Luther refused to officially stand as the peasants’ leader, asserting that it was not his place as a minister to “take the sword,” and he instead sided with the princes.²³ Moreover, Luther wrote *Against the Murderous and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*, of which the most infamous line read, “Therefore, let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel.”²⁴ To Luther, if a peasant was willing to rebel, then he was outside of the law of God and deserved what was coming to him. When it was all over, a total of 100,000 peasants were killed and Luther was labeled a traitor by the peasants, while the Catholic princes held Luther responsible for the entire episode.²⁵ Nothing, however, compares to Luther’s vicious attitude toward the Jews, which he chronicled in his own sermons and books.

²¹ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 269.

²² Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor*, 51.

²³ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 277.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

²⁵ Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, 280-281.

LUTHER'S NATIONALISM

“I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.”

~ Martin Luther

Martin Luther and German nationalism are inextricably linked. In addition to initiating the Protestant Reformation, Luther accomplished other tasks, all for the benefit of the German people. It has been argued that Luther's message was “not for Christendom, but for the German people – for he was not a Christian, he was first and foremost a German.”²⁶ Luther considered himself the Prophet of the Germans:

I seek the welfare and salvation of you Germans, as I am the Prophet of the Germans, I will act as a faithful teacher and warn my staunch Germans of the danger in which they stand. I have been born for my beloved Germans, for them will I die!²⁷

Anyone who disagreed with him, he called into question their patriotism and refused them the right to be called a German. Some have argued that Luther was not the champion of freedom and liberty after all, but that he was rather the voice of *Germanism*, which dreams that in matters of religion, culture, government, and race, it should be the master of mankind.²⁸ There is no denying the passion Luther had for his fellow countrymen. His translation of the Bible into German is an example of the strong sense of nationalism he felt for Germany. During Luther's time Germany was not a united

²⁶ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor*, 80.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

country but rather was divided into numerous provinces, which caused a division of the German language into numerous different dialects. Wanting *all* Christians in Germany to have access to the gospel, Luther created a translation of the Bible into German, therefore allowing all Germans to read and understand it, and thereby uniting them. In every house one could find a copy of Luther's Bible, whose teachings became an integral part of the German national heritage.²⁹ By listening to Germans speaking in the streets and combining a variety of dialects, Luther created a new, distinct language for all Germans, and thus earned the label "The Father of the German Language." Most importantly, the majority of people could understand Luther's language, in all parts of the German lands. Luther completed the translation of the New Testament in only twelve weeks. Through his sermons and his Bible translations, Luther "created the modern German language, aroused in the people not only a new Protestant vision of Christianity [with] a fervent German nationality [but] taught them, at least in religion, the supremacy of the individual conscience."³⁰ He not only created an accessible Bible for all Germans, and with it a unified German language, but he also established the foundation for a new sense of nationalism.

Martin Luther's nationalism stemmed in part from the fact that Germans were despised by other nationalities. According to conversations recorded by John Schlaginhaufen, one of the young men who lived in Luther's home in the 1530s, Luther believed that no nation was as hated as the German nation; Italians referred to Germans

²⁹ Gerhard Ritter, *Luther: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 216.

³⁰ Jim Walker, "Martin Luther's Dirty Little Book: On the Jews and their Lies – a Precursor to Nazism," *No Beliefs.com*, Updated 20 November 2005, <http://nobeliefs.com/luther.htm>.

as beasts and all other nationalities mocked them.³¹ During a dinner conversation in April 1532, Luther was quoted as saying, “Who knows what God intends to do and will do with the Germans, though in God’s eyes we’ve undoubtedly deserved a beating.”³² Luther’s own opinion of Germans, of course, was considerably more favorable. When comparing Germans to other nationalities, he found Germans to be much simpler and more truthful. He argued that the way Germans spoke was indicative of this and that the German language was the most perfect of all, most likely because of the resemblance to Greek.³³ When speaking of Germany, Luther often referred to the Roman historian Tacitus and his text *Germania*. Tacitus described the Germans as “loyal” and praised them for their chastity and “marital fidelity,” for Germans “excelled all other nations” in this regard.³⁴ Luther also shared with others the nationalistic sentiments that he observed in fellow Germans. One such reflection was when Bishop Nicholas von Schönberg declared to the Pope that he should make concessions to the Germans, for “the Germans are men who won’t yield in a just and honorable cause, nor can they be overcome with guile or with force.”³⁵ Luther exemplified Schönberg’s description of a German when he rebelled against the Catholic Church and initiated the Protestant Reformation.

This is the well-known part of Martin Luther. The trailblazer of the Protestant Reformation, creator of the German Bible, and faithful leader of the German people; that is the Martin Luther people know and revere.

³¹ Helmut T. Lehmann and Theodore G. Tappert, *Luther's Works: Table Talk* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 151.

³² *Ibid.*, 151.

³³ *Ibid.*, 309-310.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 278.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

Luther was shown to us as a great man fighting for freedom, tolerance, independence – the man who exclaimed ‘Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, May God help me, Amen!’ Luther, the honest, cheerful, decent German who fought a corrupted, immoral Rome. Luther, honored by Protestants everywhere – the hero of Germany and the Protestant world. A terrifying, dirty, dishonest Luther appeared, a Luther much blacker and more hideous by far than all his former opponents taken together had depicted him.³⁶

There was a time when young German students would look up to Luther with “overwhelming enthusiasm as a ‘German hero’ – as the ideal German manhood.”³⁷ Less familiar is the moody, erratic, and anti-Judaic Martin Luther. The unpredictable mood-swings that afflicted him as a child continued throughout his entire life, with examples of Luther’s frenzy often recorded by those who knew him well. Dr. Paul J. Reiter, a psychiatrist and one of Luther’s students, dissects Luther’s life into phases: the period between age twenty-two and thirty-six is the *Krankheitsphase*, followed by a period of “manic productivity”, and a breakdown in his forties.³⁸ The *Krankheitsphase*, which describes a state of sickness, is what Reiter defines as “one drawn-out state of nervous disease.”³⁹ The renowned, dynamic Martin Luther that is studied and epitomized, therefore, only existed for a short time, between periods of “neurotic tensions” and a

³⁶ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor*, 4-6.

³⁷ Ritter, *Luther: His Life and Work*, 214.

³⁸ Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

“severe breakdown.”⁴⁰ The life of the older, post-breakdown Luther included an amplified agitation with the Jewish population and increasing anti-Judaic sentiments.

⁴⁰ Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, 27.

LUTHER'S ANTI-JUDAISM

*"What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the
Jews."*

~ Martin Luther

Martin Luther dealt with many afflictions during the course of his lifetime, both personal as well as public. To make Luther's life even more challenging, he was constantly tormented by the Devil. To Luther, Satan was not simply a symbol of evil but was a physical reality to be dealt with on a daily basis. Luther used a variety of metaphors to describe the complex relationship between God, the Devil, and humans. In one such metaphor, humans are simply a horse to be ridden by either God or Satan, while another describes humans as God and Satan's battlefield.⁴¹ His fear of the Devil prejudiced his feelings toward the Jews; Luther believed that the Jews, like all his enemies, were devils.⁴² Moreover, he spent numerous years trying to convert Jews to Christianity, but to no avail.

Luther's early tolerant attitude toward the Jews will develop into a fierce hostility when he comes to view them as obdurate foes of God who persist in rejecting the Father of Jesus Christ, who in Luther's eyes is their own God. He will consider them as public enemies of Christianity who deserve mercy only if they convert. Luther will strive to protect Christianity from what he perceives as their blasphemous denunciations of Christian beliefs.⁴³

⁴¹ *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, xvii-xviii.

⁴² Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor*, 71.

⁴³ *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, xli.

Martin Luther is so admired by Protestant Christians to this day that there are few well-known books that detail his anti-Judaic beliefs, if they are mentioned at all. From the books that do mention his anti-Judaism, many attempt to justify it. This has resulted in a fairly biased view of Luther, portraying him as good and righteous while hiding his darker and more sinister side.⁴⁴ The Martin Luther that we have come to know and understand is only one part of the whole man.

Luther was not the first person to have such strong anti-Judaic feelings, but he has been described as being the first to spread these beliefs in Germany; he not only spoke of Jews in his sermons, but he also wrote three anti-Jewish books, the most famous of which is *Of the Jews and their Lies*.⁴⁵ While a highly controversial book, *Of the Jews and their Lies* is not a well-known text. In fact, a translator of the text argues that “we became increasingly convinced that a well-organized plot to keep this book hidden exists.”⁴⁶ Whether or not such a plot exists, Luther’s anti-Judaic texts and beliefs remain in the shadow of his accomplishments.

The conflict between Christians and Jews was not a new phenomenon in Luther’s time. Early Christians, including Jesus himself, were actually Jews; these Christians believed that Jesus was the messiah promised to the Jews, but most other Jews refused this belief.⁴⁷ The difference of opinion led to centuries of violent conflict and oppression, and Luther added fuel to the fire. Luther became increasingly more angry and anti-Judaic with age. As a younger man, Luther simply attempted to convert Jews to Christianity,

⁴⁴ Walker, “Martin Luther’s Dirty Little Book: On the Jews and their Lies – a Precursor to Nazism,” *No Beliefs.com*, <http://nobeliefs.com/luther.htm>.

⁴⁵ “On the Jews and their Lies,” *Humanitas International.org*, Accessed 4 August 2011. <http://www.humanitas-international.org/showcase/chronography/documents/luther-jews.htm>.

⁴⁶ Martin Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies* (South Carolina: Liberty Bell Publications, 2004), 3.

⁴⁷ Mark U. Edwards, *Luther’s Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531-46* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 115.

but his efforts proved futile. As his frustrations continued to grow with the Jews' refusal to accept Christ as their Savior, Luther argued that stronger actions were required to deal with the Jewish problem. He declared to his fellow Christians, "next to the Devil you have no more bitter, more poisonous, more vehement an enemy than a real Jew who earnestly desires to be a Jew."⁴⁸ In order to spread his vicious anti-Judaic sentiments, he requested that other pastors and preachers follow his example and issue warnings of their own against the Jews. In 1543 he his anti-Jewish texts, which spelled out exactly what should be done with those Jews that refused to convert to Christianity.

- † ...*die Synagogen mit Feuer anzustecken*
- † ... *ihre Häuser zu zerbrechen und zu zerstören*
- † ... *die religiösen Schriften wegzunehmen*
- † ...*zum Lehrverbot für die Rabbiner*
- † ... *nach Aufhebung des Geleitschutzes und Reiseverbot*
- † ... *den Wucher zu verbieten*
- † ...*Arbeitspflicht für junge Juden und Jüdinnen*⁴⁹

- † ... burn their synagogues
- † ... break into and destroy their houses
- † ... take away their prayer books
- † ... forbid their rabbis to teach
- † ... abolish their escort and ban travel
- † ... prohibit the usury
- † ... force young Jewish girls and boys to work

Luther viewed Jews as "heavy burden to [Germans] in [their] country, like a plague, pestilence, and nothing but misfortune."⁵⁰ Luther passed away only three years after writing his violently anti-Judaic texts, in 1546. Four days before his passing, he gave one last sermon; it was against the Jews. Luther's hatred for the Jews was taken to an

⁴⁸ Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*, 27-28.

⁴⁹ *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*, Martin Luther 1543 - Gif-Faksimile Belege, Accessed 23 October 2011, <http://www.scipt.org/sonstig/metaph/luther/lvdjuil.htm>.

⁵⁰ Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*, 35.

unprecedented level. Although anti-Judaism was not unique to Luther, his texts were so “violent and vulgar that they offended contemporaries and remain offensive to this day.”⁵¹ Arguably, this powerful, deep-seated loathing toward Jews has been uncharacteristically virulent to Germany; it flourished again in the early 1900s with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, who greatly admired Martin Luther and his anti-Semitic views.

⁵¹ Mark U. Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531-46*, 3.

ADOLF HITLER

LIFE OF HITLER

“The art of leadership... consists in consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up that attention.”

~ Adolf Hitler

Unlike Martin Luther, there is ample information available on Adolf Hitler’s childhood and adult life. Several centuries after Martin Luther died in 1546, Adolf Hitler was born in the small Austrian town Braunau am Inn, located very close to the Austrian-German border, on April 20, 1889.⁵² The “little city on the Inn,” as Hitler called it, was “German Bavarian by blood and Austrian only by borders.”⁵³ His father worked for the State and retired at the young age of fifty-eight, and was determined that Hitler would follow in his footsteps and work for the State as well. Young Hitler, however, who was both a choir boy and an acolyte at the local Catholic Church, had developed an interest in art and decided at the early age of eleven that he would become an artist instead.⁵⁴ According to Hitler himself, his decision caused an ongoing struggle between father and son, as this was the first time Hitler had ever opposed his father. What originated as an ambition in painting eventually transformed into a talent and interest in architecture, and when his father passed away unexpectedly, and his mother two years later, Hitler finally had the opportunity to explore a career in art and he applied to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna at the age of sixteen. Unfortunately, his talent was not enough for the painting program at the Academy and the required schooling was lacking for the architecture

⁵² Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, Translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 17.

⁵³ Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Michael Ford. United States: Elite Minds, Inc. 2009, 48.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

program, leaving Hitler to become a wanderer around Vienna, working odd-jobs and painting.⁵⁵

Very similar to Martin Luther, there are two version of Adolf Hitler. There is the Adolf Hitler that is portrayed in *Mein Kampf* (portrayed by none other than Hitler himself) and then there is the Adolf Hitler described by others that knew him and/or researched him. The two versions are quite different. Contrary to the stories he portrayed in his own book, Hitler did not get along well with other children, who described him as “stiff, aloof, [and] a stranger.”⁵⁶ In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler told stories of the other children looking to him as their ringleader, succeeding in school, and needing to survive on his own at a young age after his parents passed away. However, it would seem he exaggerated these stories in an attempt to portray himself in a way that differed from reality. The act of creating a façade and blurring reality became normal for Hitler, as no one was able to really know the real Hitler. In actuality, as a child he was a “lively and obviously able pupil whose gifts were undermined by an incapacity for regular work.”⁵⁷ This behavior exhibited itself in Hitler during childhood but was a continuing struggle throughout his adult life. In addition to his inability to fit in and follow any will but his own, Hitler battled the uncertainty of where his life was going for many years. Until his decision to become a politician, Hitler still planned on attending the Academy, but with no plan on how to achieve it. This “uncertainty of his personal future nevertheless depressed him,”⁵⁸ until he decided on a life of politics. It was then that he was able to unleash all of his frustrations and put into action the anti-Semitic hostilities

⁵⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 58.

⁵⁶ Fest, *Hitler*, 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

he had been carrying with him for years. Moreover, it was often difficult for Hitler to be taken seriously, as he was easily dismissed simply because of his appearance and personality. This personal inner conflict is one that started in childhood. Despite these conflicting portrayals of Adolf Hitler, one is still able to get a thorough understanding of the man and his ideology.

Despite his rejection from the Academy of Fine Arts, Hitler was a passable artist; and, although his formal schooling was cut short by dropping out, he was still remarkably intelligent. During his days in Vienna, Hitler spent most of his free time reading books, newspapers, and periodicals to learn about current events, history, and philosophy, among a variety of other topics. Hitler spent ample time reading and studying for a better understanding of the social and political context afflicting Germany and Austria at the time. He followed every event with “burning concentration, whether political or cultural.”⁵⁹ During his time in Vienna, Hitler struggled to understand the Jewish question; he heard people speak unkindly of the Jews but did not understand why, as he himself was not yet entirely anti-Semitic. According to *Mein Kampf*, after considerable research and discussion, Hitler “recognized the Jew as the leader of the Social Democracy, the Marxists, and that is when the blinders fell from my eyes. Suddenly, a long, spiritual struggle came to an end.”⁶⁰ After his epiphany, Hitler “turned away from a weak set of political notions and into a fanatical anti-Semite.”⁶¹

When the First World War started in 1914, Hitler left Vienna to join the military as a soldier and he fought on the front lines, becoming injured twice. Because of his

⁵⁹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 81.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

experiences on the battlefield, Hitler took it personally when Germany surrendered at the end of the War in 1918, and he became even more embittered when he learned of the restrictions against Germany with the Treaty of Versailles. Germany's bitter defeat in World War I left the country in shambles. Once on its way to developing into a great nation, Germany was completely thrown into turmoil; "there was chaos in the streets, prolonged hunger, massive unemployment on an unprecedented scale, and social unrest that swept through entire provinces."⁶² The Treaty of Versailles only exacerbated the distress of the country. In addition to the humiliation and guilt felt from the defeat, the Treaty expelled Germany from the union and was left insolvent, in a prime position for a fierce leader to lead them from the rubble.⁶³ The combination of events caused Hitler to abandon the artistic career path he was so determined to have; instead, he "resolved to become a politician."⁶⁴ Consequently, Germany found her leader in Adolf Hitler, who wanted to raise his beloved nation out of the ruins and bring it to greatness no matter what the cost. A life of politics, as leader of the National Socialist Party, would eventually give him the power to confront the so-called Jewish problem head-on.

⁶² Joachim Fest, *Inside Hitler's Bunker* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), 2002, 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁴ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 188.

HITLER'S NATIONALISM

“Germany will either be a world power or will not be at all.”

~ Adolf Hitler

Even as a young boy growing up in Austria, Hitler longed for the unification of Austria and Germany. He believed that Austria must return to the “Great German mother country, not for economic reasons, but because common blood belongs in one common realm.”⁶⁵ Hitler viewed Austrian history as completely intertwined with that of Germany and found it pointless to even attempt to separate them; everything must be done to unite the Germanic states.⁶⁶ A united Germany had the potential for being a superpower comparable to England, France, and other elite countries of the time.⁶⁷ The reunification of the German countries and greatness of Germany became Hitler’s single, lifelong goal. In his manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler declares that as a boy and young man, he often wished that he could “demonstrate that my nationalistic enthusiasm was no empty obsession.”⁶⁸ His intense nationalism and hatred for non-Aryan people were the catalysts for the extreme methods for attaining the dream of a united and superior German people for which Hitler has become notorious. Hitler vowed to raise Germany from its ruins and put it back on track to becoming the great superpower it was destined to become. It was exactly what the German people needed to hear, and Hitler eventually won the support of the German people with his emotionally-charged speeches. Becoming both the leader of the Nationalist Socialist (Nazi) Party and Chancellor of Germany gave Hitler the

⁶⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 47.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 47, 54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 243-245.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

influence and authority to attain his goals. However, there was something more sinister brewing beneath the surface of which the German people were not aware.

Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* in 1923 while he was in prison for attempting to incite a violent takeover of Germany from a beer hall. Therefore, the memoir was written well before he rose to power, generated a large-scale ethnic cleansing campaign, and led Germany into another World War.⁶⁹ The text is autobiographical but also reads as a conglomeration of Nazi Party pamphlet and an historical and philosophical manuscript. While Hitler is notorious for the inhumane massacre of millions of people, he also had many great skills and accomplishments that are overlooked and hidden behind his shroud of evil.

Adolf Hitler's most striking skill was perhaps his oratory ability. For a man that was less than impressive in person, described as rather ordinary, awkward-looking, and plain, Hitler was an orator unlike any other. According to a close comrade of Hitler, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, who specifically wrote about *The Führer as Orator*, Hitler was the first person in the "evolution of Germany to use speech as a tool in order to make history."⁷⁰ Goebbels argues that there are two types of orators: those that speak from the intellect and those that speak from the heart. These two types of speakers are very different from one another and are able to extract very different reactions from their audiences. Hitler had the rare ability to be both a speaker of intellect as well as a speaker of the heart.⁷¹ In the Nazi Party's early years, Hitler spoke to beer halls full of people, often filled with hundreds of opponents rather than followers. In later years, as the Chancellor of

⁶⁹ Jane Shuter, *Life and Death in Hitler's Europe* (Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003), 8.

⁷⁰ Joseph Goebbels, "Führer as Orator" in *Adolf Hitler: 1931-1935: Pictures from the Life of the Führer*, 31.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

Germany, he gave speeches to hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people, usually without notes or other assistance (which Goebbels corroborates). People cheered, cried, and absolutely fell over themselves in the Führer's presence in such a way that there is little to compare with today.

Hitler had a unique understanding of human perception and became quite adept at understanding the impact of propaganda and how to manipulate its usage. In fact, Hitler himself took charge of all the Nazi propaganda in the early stages of the party and he incorporated this knowledge into his speeches.⁷² Purposefully using red posters to specifically attract communists to National Socialist Party meetings is an example of his propaganda manipulation. Red was the color of the Communist party, and the intent was to attract the enemy while bringing awareness to the Nazi party.⁷³ The objective was to entice the communist Germans into attending the Nazi meetings by mistake in hopes of reevaluating their sense of nationalism. Moreover, Hitler understood the emotional impact of symbols and insisted that the party must have their own unique flag, symbol, and colors to feel united and be taken seriously. Always the artist, he himself designed the red, black, and white flag (the most striking and harmonious color combination, according to Hitler) with the *Hakenkreuz* (swastika). The red represented the socialist ideals of the movement, while the white represented the nationalist. The *Hakenkreuz* represented the fight of the Aryan man.⁷⁴ With his entry into politics, Hitler combined his intellect and insight into the German peoples' needs with his uniquely influential oratory skills. Hitler went to such extremes with his deeply-rooted anti-Semitism,

⁷² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 310, 386.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 404-408.

however, that it is almost impossible to think of anything positive about the man; the name Adolf Hitler has become synonymous with evil.

HITLER'S ANTI-SEMITISM

“Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live.”

~ Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler is notorious for his desire to propagate the purity and superiority of the Aryan race, which included extreme anti-Semitic treatment toward Jews and other people he deemed inferior. Adolf Hitler is without a doubt considered the most prominent and most fanatical anti-Semite in the history of the world. Hitler, however, would presumably have given Martin Luther that honor. Becoming Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and gaining complete control of the country allowed Hitler to release all of his frustrations and put into action the anti-Semitic thoughts he had been harboring within himself for years.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler blames both the conspiratorial Jews and what he considers the race problem as primary causes for Germany's downfall in World War I. However, Hitler also points out one more reason for Germany's depressing defeat: the Marxists. The resentment felt towards the Jews and the Marxists because of Germany's ruin after World War I explains the incredible actions that Hitler took during his dictatorship. The Marxists, with their communist ideology, were gaining momentum in Europe before, during, and after the First World War. Hitler would see Marxists as Jews; not only because Karl Marx was Jewish, but also because many writers for the Marxist press were Jewish. As Hitler turned “away from a weak set of political notions and into a fanatical anti-Semite,”⁷⁵ the synonymous relationship between Marxists and Jews for Hitler would

⁷⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 88.

only deepen his hatred for communism. At a time when Germany was at its weakest, Hitler wanted the Fatherland to rise above its ruin to great heights. Even as a young child, Hitler developed a strong sense of nationalism that acted as a catalyst for all of his life decisions. Communism threatened Hitler's German ideals and he did everything in his power to keep their control at bay. To combat the perceived evils of capitalism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, authors of *The Communist Manifesto*, devised ten measures that would be applicable in the most advanced communist countries, acknowledging that they will vary from country to country. The ten measures are as follows:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries: gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of population over the country.

10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, and so forth.⁷⁶

Communism essentially preaches for all members of the working-class to unite, regardless of nationality, which acts in direct opposition to Hitler's nationalistic ideals. Hitler did not simply detest communist ideals because Karl Marx was Jewish and communism was anti-nationalistic; he believed that communism would eventually lead to the collapse of human civilization. He regarded Marxism as "the end of any order conceivable to man. The result of applying such a law could only be chaos" and "the desolation of the world."⁷⁷ As an early politician, Hitler found it necessary to study the enemy as much as possible, to understand him and not underestimate him. In this case, Hitler's enemy was Marxism; more specifically, his enemy was Karl Marx.⁷⁸ Hitler took many opportunities to study Marx's doctrine and his life's work. Hitler found Marxism to be a "cursed movement" and believed it was every man's duty to "prevent it from going to extremes."⁷⁹ Because of his aggressive view of communism, when Hitler took complete power in 1933, "he arrested most German communist leaders almost immediately" and "shipped most of them to concentration camps."⁸⁰ The result of Hitler's immediate retaliation upon receiving complete political control resulted in "a generation of German communists [seeing] its ranks decimated by both the war and the Nazi extermination campaign."⁸¹

⁷⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Communist Manifesto" in *Classics of Western Thought: The Modern World*, Edited by Edgar K. Knoebel (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers) 387.

⁷⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 88-89.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁸⁰ Rodden, John. "Report Card from East Germany." *Global Society*. Published online 3 June 2010.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Hitler's methods of handling the "Jewish problem" involved a number of steps. The Nazis first began passing laws that denounced the Jews' German citizenship and prohibited them from working specific professions. Additional laws also segregated Jews from using the same "transportation, schools, public facilities, even park benches" as non-Jews.⁸² In one night in 1938 known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), the Nazis carried out a widespread night of violence against the Jews. They burned down over 1,000 synagogues and looted even more.⁸³ Hitler's anti-Semitism became much more extreme as crueler methods were developed such as ghettos, forced sterilizations, mercy killings, work camps, and extermination camps, all in an effort to cleanse and purify the Aryan race. The cleansing process was based on eugenics, the "principle of strengthening a biological group on the basis of ostensible hereditary worth."⁸⁴ In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler acknowledged that, to avoid blood pollution by mixing with lesser races, restrictions must be made to determine who can procreate; after all, according to Hitler, "the great civilizations of the past have all been destroyed simply because the original creative race died out as a result of pollution of their blood lines."⁸⁵ To ensure effective enforcement of Hitler's race law, sterilizations were carried out on a large scale. Those designated as "hereditarily sick" and "life unworthy of life" were sterilized, to include people with the following difficulties: mental deficiency, schizophrenia, manic depressive insanity, epilepsy, Huntington's chorea, hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, bodily malformation, and hereditary alcoholism. An estimated 410,000 people

⁸² Shuter, *Life and Death in Hitler's Europe*, 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁴ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 24.

⁸⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 248-249.

were initially sterilized.⁸⁶ Sometimes the sterilization was rather simple and consisted of only a vasectomy or a ligation of the ovarian tubes, but they often preferred to completely remove the uterus or use irradiation for sterilization.⁸⁷ The ultimate goal, not only of the Nazi regime but also of the state health officers, was to have as many unfit people as possible sterilized.⁸⁸ Hitler's racial cleansing was not only focused on the ill and deformed; the biggest victims were the Jews, to ensure they did not pollute the pure Aryan race. In 1935, laws were passed that prohibited Jews from marrying or having any sexual relations with Aryans.

Sterilization was simply the introduction, with more extreme measures to come. The vilest example of Hitler's anti-Semitic behavior was the Nazi euthanasia program, which consisted of "eliminating the incurably ill" and "mercy killings" for those deemed unfit, which included the Jewish population.⁸⁹ It was determined that sterilization alone was insufficient and that the program was not aggressive enough; the point had come where "psychopaths, the mentally retarded, and other inferior persons must be isolated and killed."⁹⁰ The Jewish population fell into the category of "unfit" or "inferior." In the beginning, the Nazis attempted to shroud these killings behind the veil of mercy, declaring that the people would eventually die anyway, and that killing them was merciful and humane. Children were easy to "put to sleep" by ingesting luminal, which

⁸⁶ Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, 25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

would give the child the appearance of simply being sedated.⁹¹ The killing of the adults was not so simple, however.

When it came to euthanizing the adults, the Nazis tried a variety of methods to determine the quickest and most efficient way to euthanize the largest number of people. According to an article that appeared in a 1939 Nazi magazine, the goal was to exterminate one million people.⁹² When the Nazi soldiers were in control of the killing, their methods were brutal and bloody, with their procedures including hanging, shooting, and explosives. However, the cleanup was too time-consuming and inefficient.⁹³ Nazi doctors eventually took over the killing process, turning the process into medical killing and giving the doctors full advantage to experiment with a variety of killing techniques. One such method included starvation, leaving the victims to perish from malnutrition, infections, or other illnesses. While this type of torture killing was too time-consuming to be efficient, it did allow the doctors to observe the effects of starvation and malnutrition on the human body at various stages. Another type of euthanasia came in the form of injections; doctors would inject a variety of medications, including but not limited to: “morphine, scopolamine, veronal (Barbital), luminal (Phenobarbital), or a combination of these.”⁹⁴ Injections proved to be effectual and many doctors were able to inject many patients in a short amount of time. However, the most well-known of part of Hitler’s extermination plan were the concentration camps, for which the Jewish people were the biggest target and the gas chambers, the most notorious method of killing.

⁹¹ Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, 57.

⁹² *Ibid.*,65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*,70.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*,100.

The Nazis first created ghettos to force the Jews into restricted areas and labor camps to use Jews for work. The most infamous camps, however, were the extermination camps where millions of Jews were killed by a variety of methods. Hitler did not even consider German Jews as German. He viewed the Jew as the “most extreme contrast to the Aryan” and therefore the Jewish people were his biggest enemy and number one target. The first concentration camps were created shortly after Hitler’s rise to power as Chancellor in 1933. They began on the local level but were eventually replaced with central camps that were under the power of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). Six years after the original camps were built, a total of seven camps had been established.⁹⁵ In addition, six specific extermination camps were created in former Polish territory. The extermination camps were simply “killing centers designed to carry out genocide.”⁹⁶ The Nazis experimented frequently to increase the number of people they could kill each and every day. The most effective method proved to be the gassing process. Even with the gassing technique, they continued to refine the methods to kill as many Jews and others in as short of time as possible. By 1942, several of the extermination camps did their mass killing with gas, executed in stationary gas chambers with carbon monoxide gas from diesel engines. The victims were told that they were going to disinfecting showers but they were gassed instead. They soon discovered that the more people that were packed into the gas chambers, the faster they suffocated.⁹⁷ By the time the World War II

⁹⁵ “Introduction to the Holocaust – Nazi Concentration Camps.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Updated 6 January 2011,

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=373.

⁹⁶ “Introduction to the Holocaust – Extermination Camps,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Updated 6 January 2011,

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=427.

⁹⁷ “Gassing Operations,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Updated 6 January 2011, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005220>.

ended and survivors were saved from the concentration camps, an estimated six million Jews were killed by Hitler and his Nazis.

Hitler's plan ultimately failed, however. Despite his concerted efforts to purify the Aryan race, reunite and expand Germany, and exterminate the Jews, World War II ended with the following sequence of events: Hitler's suicide, the fall of Berlin, and the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945. Germany once again suffered a devastating defeat and was left in shambles. The Potsdam Conference of 1945 divided Berlin among three countries, including the United States, Great Britain, and the communist Soviet Union (France was added later). Because the Soviet Union had already occupied much of Germany and Eastern Europe before Germany's defeat, it was agreed that the Soviet Union would also take parts of prewar Germany that were east of the Soviet zone.⁹⁸ As time went on, however, hostilities grew between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, which eventually led to the separation of the Soviet zone from the Western zones and the creation of two separate German nations.⁹⁹ Consequently, in 1949 the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*), also known as West Germany, was formed. Only a few months thereafter, the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*), or East Germany, was created.¹⁰⁰ Hitler's dream of a powerful and united Germany was officially shattered with the separation of Germany into two separate countries; the people of the newly formed East Germany, who just survived the oppression of the Nazi regime under Hitler, were about to face oppression under

⁹⁸ Eric Pace, "Clamor in the East: Legacy of Yalta and Potsdam; Cold War Sealed Germany's Division" *New York Times*, November 14, 1989.

⁹⁹ Pace, "Clamor in the East: Legacy of Yalta and Potsdam; Cold War Sealed Germany's Division," *New York Times*.

¹⁰⁰ "Timeline of East Germany," *East Germany Info*, Accessed 10 July 2011.
<http://eastgermany.info/TimeLine.htm>.

communist rule. Hitler's dream officially turned into his worst nightmare.

LUTHER & HITLER

“The line of anti-Semitic descent from Luther to Hitler is easy to draw.”

~ Lucy Dawidowicz

Luther and Hitler were not the first two men to face a Jewish problem, and their views regarding the Jews were not necessarily Protestant; Popes have been known to use stronger language, and ghettos and segregation originated in Rome by papal edict.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, they were the two men who took their anti-Semitism to extreme measures. Few men in history have documented such abhorrence toward a people that has spanned decades and centuries. Hatred as intense as Luther's and Hitler's toward the Jews was not only unprecedented and has rarely been duplicated since. While the anti-Jewish sentiments were not unique to Luther and Hitler, the extremes to which both men went to spread their beliefs and call upon others for action was unparalleled. The level of bitter loathing and anti-Jewish ideology was virtually the same, despite a four century gap. The similarities shared between Luther and Hitler were not limited to their hatred for anything Jewish, however. Both men were led by a strong sense of German nationalism and a yearning for unity among their fellow Germans.

Why was such romantic nationalism anti-Semitic in particular? Why single out the Jews? The answer is quite clear: everybody 'knew' that the Jews were the enemy of German civilization, because the Germans, like other Europeans, had been taught over the long Christian centuries that the Jews were the enemy of Christian civilization.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*, 5.

¹⁰² Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate*, 346.

Anti-Semitism has been in existence as long as Christianity, and even before it.

According to Elaine Pagels, author of *The Origins of Satan*,

As the Christian movement became more Gentile during the second century and later, the identification of Satan primarily with the Jewish enemies of Jesus, borne along in Christian tradition over the centuries, would fuel the fires of anti-Semitism.¹⁰³

While the Holocaust and Hitler's killing of six million Jews can easily be described as "the greatest outpouring of evil in the history of the planet," Hitler was only original in his "single-minded determination with which he proceeded to put into effect ideas of the removal or extermination of the Jews that others had toyed with, without seriously considering how they could be implemented."¹⁰⁴ Ideas that Martin Luther harbored and shared, but that he himself did not execute; Hitler simply used Luther's original concepts of handling the Jewish problem and put them into action. Looking back upon Luther's instructions on what should be done with the Jews, it would seem that Hitler followed them rather closely. During the *Kristallnacht* of 1938, the Nazis burned thousands of synagogues. The creation of ghettos simultaneously allowed the Nazis to break into the houses of the Jews and destroy their property, while restricting their mobility and travel. New laws constrained the professions Jews were allowed to possess. Concentration camps forced all Jewish boys and girls, men and women, to work.

- † ... burn their synagogues
- † ... break into and destroy their houses
- † ... take away their prayer books
- † ... forbid their rabbis to teach

¹⁰³ Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonize Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 34.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate*, xvii, 345.

- † ... abolish their escort and ban travel
- † ... prohibit the usury
- † ... force young Jewish girls and boys to work

Once Luther's initial steps were followed, Hitler went beyond and added his own to the list:

- ☠ Prohibit Jews from marrying or having relations with Aryans
- ☠ Move Jews into designated ghettos
- ☠ Sterilize those deemed inferior, including Jews
- ☠ Exterminate life unworthy of life, including Jews

Concerning the treatment and solution to the Jewish question, Hitler "continued and achieved the worked of Martin Luther."¹⁰⁵ While German Jews considered themselves Germans, neither Luther nor Hitler viewed them as such. They were Jewish, not German. Luther and Hitler viewed the Jewish community not only as a religious congregation but as a separate race. By default, then, Jewish meant anti-German. Hitler explains as follows:

The Jews, although they are a people whose core is not entirely uniform in terms of race, are nevertheless a people with certain essential particularities that distinguish it from all other peoples living on earth. Judaism is not a religious community; rather, the religious ties between the Jews are in reality the current national constitution of the Jewish people. The Jew has never had his own territorially defined state like the Aryan states. Nevertheless, his religious community is a real state because it ensures the preservation, propagation, and future of the Jewish people.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor*, 78-79.

¹⁰⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, Translated by Gerhard L. Weinberg (New York: Enigma, 2003), 229-230.

Hitler argues that the Jewish people are parasites to other cultures because they lack their own territory, surviving only by enslaving the members of the other civilization with their cleverness. Martin Luther's sentiments were very comparable; he also considered Jews as parasitic foreigners.

They live among us in our homes, under our protection, use land and highways, market and streets. Princes and government sit by, snore and have their mugs open, let the Jews take from their purse and chest, steal and rob whatever they will. That is, they permit themselves and their subjects to be abused and sucked dry and reduced to beggars with their own money, through the usury of the Jews. For the Jews, as foreigners, certainly should have nothing; and what they have certainly must be ours.¹⁰⁷

The positive spirit of nationalism typically brings forth a sense of pride in one's country; but on the opposite side, destructive nationalism can create disdain for other cultures. At what point does nationalism do more harm than good? Many scholars have attempted to understand the "destructive nationalism of the Germans and the Nazis." Some argue that it all goes back to Martin Luther, for he was "the first true nationalist of this kind of modern times [and] through him German nationalism was preached to the people, a new religion was founded, a German god created."¹⁰⁸ Initially, both Luther and Hitler were able to bring unification amongst their fellow people. Luther's Bible translation brought a synthesized German language and a sense of nationalism to the German folk. For the first time, all Germans had the ability to read and understand the

¹⁰⁷ Luther, *The Jews and their Lies*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor*, 79.

gospel. Centuries later, Hitler's rally for a more powerful Germany evoked patriotic feelings from his fellow Germans, who came together with the same dream in mind. Millions supported Hitler in hopes of rising Germany to superpower status. Unfortunately, the initial unity that each man brought to Germany did not last; eventually, both Luther and Hitler caused more division than unification.

The Protestant Reformation resulted from the desire to allow people the ability to follow their faith independently from the corruption of the Catholic Church. While Luther is most popularly known for his theological work with the Protestant Reformation, he was just as much a political and social figure as religious. In the same sense, the Protestant Reformation had a political and social impact, in addition to the theological. In the process of producing the Reformation, Luther created a divide between the Catholic Germans and the Protestant Germans. He further generated separation between Germans during the Peasants' War. With 100,000 casualties, Luther was labeled as the instigator of the war by the Catholic princes, while the peasants believed him to be a traitor to their cause. Without actually being an active participant, Luther was an enemy to both sides, creating a larger rift between the princes and the peasants.

Hitler was able to create even more unity among his fellow Germans and, on the opposite side, created even more separation when it was all concluded. Hitler, like Luther, was a powerful political and social figure. His passion for the German people was evident, and it translated easily to his audience during his speeches. The German people supported him and they wanted what he wanted. For several years, things seemed to be going well (at least that is how it looked to the German people). Germany was rising from the ruins and gaining prominence with Hitler as Chancellor. However,

Hitler's continued bitterness and hatred kept him from contentment and he constantly wanted more; more power, more land, more Aryanism. His desire for more and the inability to stop the excesses eventually led to Germany's entrance into World War II and finally the surrender of Germany. Despite Hitler's strongest efforts to build his beloved Germany into a supreme power with its master Aryan race, the ultimate division of Germans came in 1949 when the Federal Republic of Germany and Democratic Republic were created. The ultimate division occurred with Germany becoming two completely separate countries, with East Germany falling under Communist rule.

By far the most striking similarity between Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler is their exceptional hatred toward the Jews. Such a hate is not frequently broadcasted in texts, sermons, and speeches; but Luther and Hitler were not shy with their beliefs. Furthermore, the fact that both men were German and had such similar ideologies makes them a wholly unique duo. It is impossible to assume that Luther did not have any influence on Hitler and his views. Hitler refers to Martin Luther as one of the great reformers of history, and as such, one of the "great warriors of this World."¹⁰⁹ It cannot be mere coincidence that Hitler's anti-Jewish sentiment of the 1930s and 1940s mirrors that of Luther's anti-Semitism of the 1500s. In fact, the Nazis themselves acknowledged Martin Luther as their spiritual leader. When on trial in Nuremberg, Germany after World War II, one of Hitler's top officials declared,

Dr. Martin Luther would very probably sit in my place in the defendants' dock today, if this book had been taken into consideration by the prosecution. Dr.

¹⁰⁹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 192.

Martin Luther writes that the Jews are a serpent's brood and one should burn down their synagogues and destroy them.¹¹⁰

Although Martin Luther has never been put on trial, the Nazis seemed to think that he was just as guilty as they (or, that they were just as innocent as he was). Some people in Hitler's time went so far as to believe that Hitler was the reincarnation of Luther; the Minister of Education in Nazi Germany wrote:

Since Martin Luther closed his eyes, no such son of our people has appeared again. It has been decided that we shall be the first to witness his reappearance... I think the time is past when one may not say the names of Hitler and Luther in the same breath. They belong together – they are of the same old stamp.¹¹¹

However people like to believe it, there is no denying the fact that Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler are inseparably linked with their extreme anti-Semitism and nationalism. It is because of this link that “the line from Luther to Hitler runs straight; and that one of the main causes which turned Germany into a country of barbarians, was Martin Luther and his German Reformation.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Walker, “Martin Luther’s Dirty Little Book: On the Jews and their Lies – a Precursor to Nazism,” *No Beliefs.com*, <http://nobeliefs.com/luther.htm>.

¹¹¹ Walker, “Martin Luther’s Dirty Little Book: On the Jews and their Lies – a Precursor to Nazism,” *No Beliefs.com*, <http://nobeliefs.com/luther.htm>.

¹¹² Wiener, *Martin Luther: Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor*, 17.

CONCLUSION

There are hardly two men in history like Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler, for they are both phenomenons unto themselves. Both have left a remarkable impact not only on Germany, but on the history of the world. If either Luther or Hitler had not existed, the world might be very different today. One might even ask if Luther had not written *On the Jews and Their Lies*, would Hitler have become as fanatically anti-Semitic and murderous? Luther is still remembered, discussed, and debated centuries after his life, and the same is true for Hitler, who is still a controversial figure decades after his death. What exactly is it about these two men that is so fascinating that scholars and everyday people continue preoccupying themselves with two men that have been gone for decades and centuries? Hatred alone is a fascinating thing, but coupled with the ability to persuade and convince others to follow these extreme beliefs makes it a tragic phenomenon. Both Luther and Hitler were multifaceted and had much to offer their fellow Germans. After all of these years, what do we remember more, their talents or their torments? Perhaps it is easier to forgive Martin Luther because almost 500 years have passed, and it is not so easy to forgive and forget the actions of Adolf Hitler that took place only sixty-six years ago. One must remember, however, that Luther's works influenced Hitler and the Nazi party, and that by prosecuting one the other must be prosecuted as well.

With such unprecedented devastation, how are those responsible for the Holocaust expected to be held accountable? Hitler ensured that he would never suffer at the hands of anyone but himself. Rather than see Germany's final descent into utter ruin, Hitler decided to go down with his beloved country by ingesting poison and shooting

himself. Although Hitler would never answer for the pain and suffering he inflicted, there were still dozens of high ranking Nazi officers, doctors, and other officials who could legally be held responsible for the millions of lives lost and ruined. Therefore, the International Military Tribunal was created shortly after World War II, “designed to document and redress crimes committed in the course of the most massive conflict the world has ever known.”¹¹³ The defendants were indicted on the following four counts: crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit these crimes. The first group to be tried was the twenty-one major war criminals, which included Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy and Nazi Party leader, Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of Staff of the German High Command, and Hermann Goering, Chief of the *Luftwaffe* (Air Force). Out of the twenty-one defendants, eleven were sentenced to death and Goering committed suicide; therefore only ten were hanged.¹¹⁴ The Nuremberg Trials lasted a total of four years. Twenty-three Nazi physicians, fourteen *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units), seven doctors, ten officials, and nineteen other Nazis were sentenced by the time the trials concluded in 1949.¹¹⁵ It was during the trial that Julius Streicher, one of Hitler’s top officials and the publisher of *Der Stürmer*, an anti-Semitic newspaper, was quoted as saying that Martin Luther would be on trial as well, if *On the Jews and Their Lies* had been taken into consideration.

¹¹³ “The Nuremberg Trials and Their Legacy,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Updated 6 January 2011, <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/warcrimetrials/>.

¹¹⁴ “The Nazi Defendants in the Major War Criminal Trial in Nuremberg,” *UMKC School of Law*, Accessed 9 December 2011, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/meetthedefendants.html>.

¹¹⁵ “The Nuremberg Trials: A Chronology,” *UMKC School of Law*, Accessed 7 December 2011, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/NurembergChronology.html>.

One wonders how Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler surface in the long German history, as villains, with such common features, centuries apart. Are there warning signs to prepare the German people for the next rogue, anti-Judaic revolutionary? Both Luther and Hitler were egomaniacs who felt superior to the current political and religious systems that regulated the masses. Each man felt that he alone had the correct political and religious process for Germany at the time. Luther and Hitler both used the guise that their revolutions were in the best interest of the German people, but they cared not for the victims that would suffer from their extreme behavior. Both men struggled, personally as well as professionally, their struggles affecting their every decision and therefore affecting the German people. The end result for Germany was the same: bias and hate toward a specific ethnic group, the Jews. Where Luther saw the Jews as being under a divine curse by the Devil, Hitler saw the Jews as a nationalistic threat. To the more religious-oriented Martin Luther, the Jews were the enemy to Jesus, while the politically-focused Adolf Hitler saw them as the enemy to Germany. In both cases the victims were Jews; they have been victims throughout Christian history (though never to the same extent as the Holocaust).¹¹⁶ The Nazi attack on Jews was simply a manifestation of an old hate.

The era immediately following the Holocaust saw recognition of the existing anti-Semitism by the non-Jewish world and an attempt to undo it.¹¹⁷ However, anti-Semitism is far from eliminated. The Holocaust brought anti-Semitism to the world's attention, but it was not enough to purge it entirely. In fact, the Holocaust allowed new forms of anti-Semitism to emerge. Despite being one of the "most documented events in human

¹¹⁶ Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate*, 351.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 385.

history, supported on the one hand by numerous eyewitness testimonies of survivors and liberators, and on the other by German records, written and photographic,” there are those who deny the existence of the Holocaust.¹¹⁸ The inspiration for this denial is simply anti-Semitic hate. The majority of Holocaust deniers sympathize with the Nazis, while the most well-known are in fact outright neo-Nazis.¹¹⁹

Those who want to deny the Holocaust allege either that it did not take place at all, that Hitler never ordered it, that there were no gas chambers or crematoria in the death camps, or that the deaths of Jews occurred on a much smaller scale than they really did, being due to poor living conditions, and not to a deliberate policy of extermination. The account the rest of the world believes was made up in order to legitimate the Zionist state. Sometimes there is a less-explicit subtext – if the Holocaust didn’t happen, it ought to have; Hitler didn’t finish the job.¹²⁰

There also exists the anti-Semitic behavior known as Anti-Zionism. Zionism is the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel; anti-Zionism, therefore, is the movement against it.¹²¹ According to William Nicholls, author of *Christian Anti-Semitism*, argues that the “history of the Middle East conflict is being rewritten to make it appear that in all the five wars between the Arab powers and Israel, Israel was always the aggressor and always more militarily powerful.”¹²² By denouncing Zionism, Jews are categorized simply as a people of faith and not as a nation. While all Jews might not

¹¹⁸ Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate*, 392.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 393.

¹²² Ibid.

consider themselves direct descendants of Israel, the majority of Jewish people regard Israel as “a necessary and central expression of life.”¹²³

Unfortunately, an event with such a magnitude as the Holocaust was not enough to eradicate Anti-Semitism entirely. Anti-Semitism has existed for centuries, and it will most likely continue to exist in one form or another for future centuries. Martin Luther and Adolf Hitler are in the past, and one can hope that such extreme Anti-Semitism has died with them, along with their frightening ability to rationalize their behavior and influence their supporters.

¹²³ Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate*, 394.

APPENDIX

PHOTOS

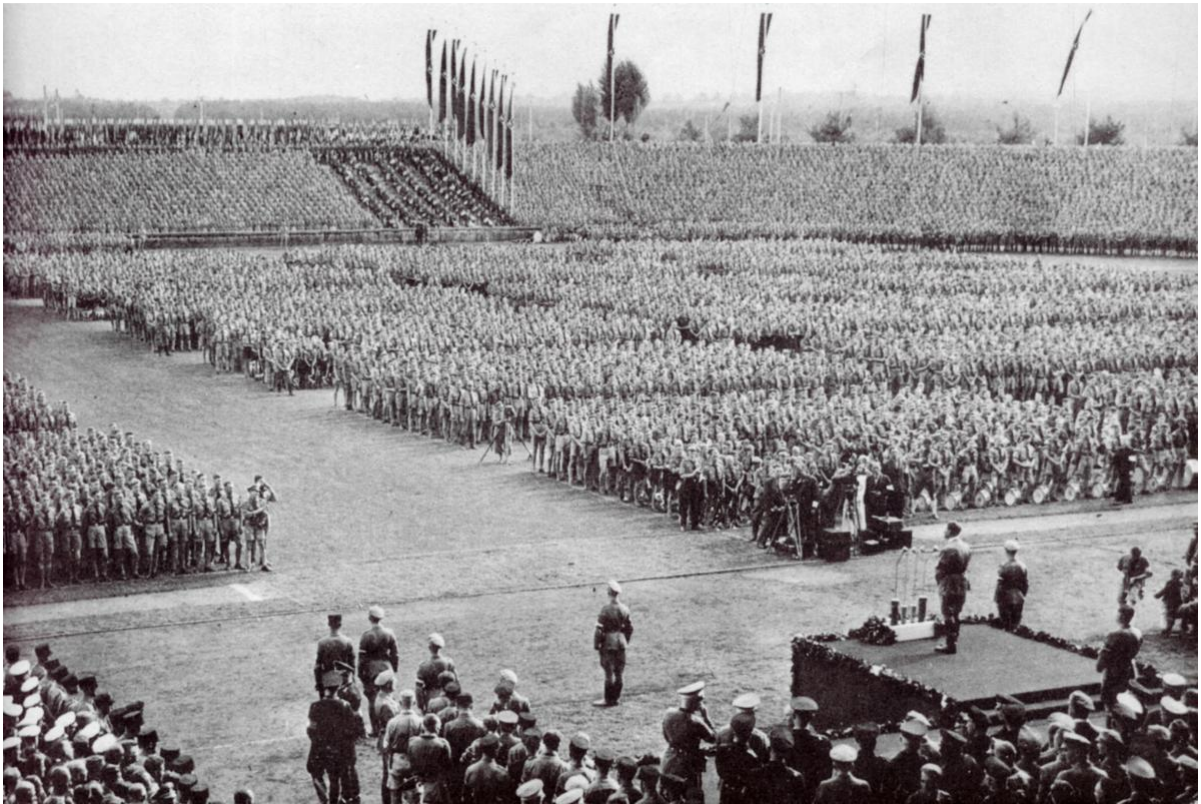
Martin Luther & Adolf Hitler



Martin Luther as a young man



Martin Luther's death portrait



Hitler speaking at a Nazi rally circa. 1935

“EIN VOLK!

EIN FÜHRER!

EIN REICH!

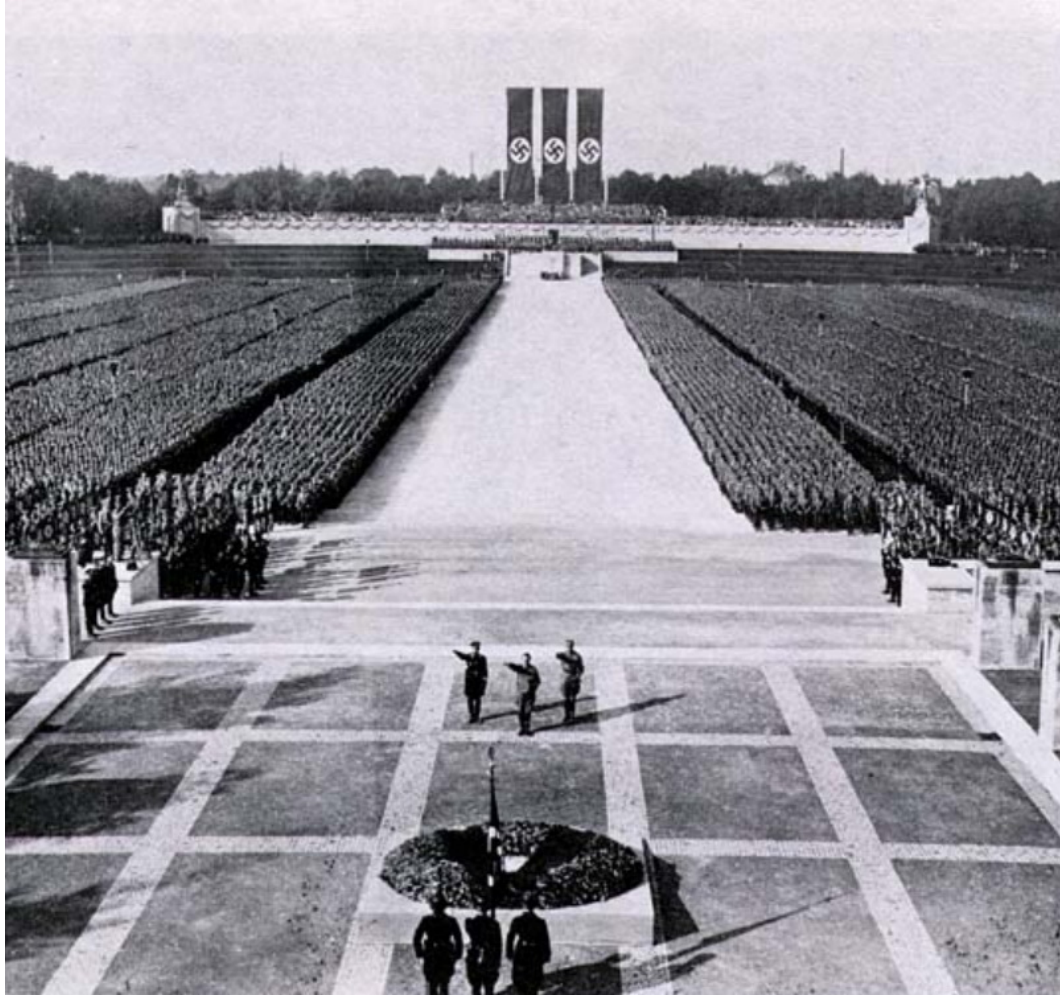
EIN DEUTSCHLAND!”

”One people!

One leader!

One empire!

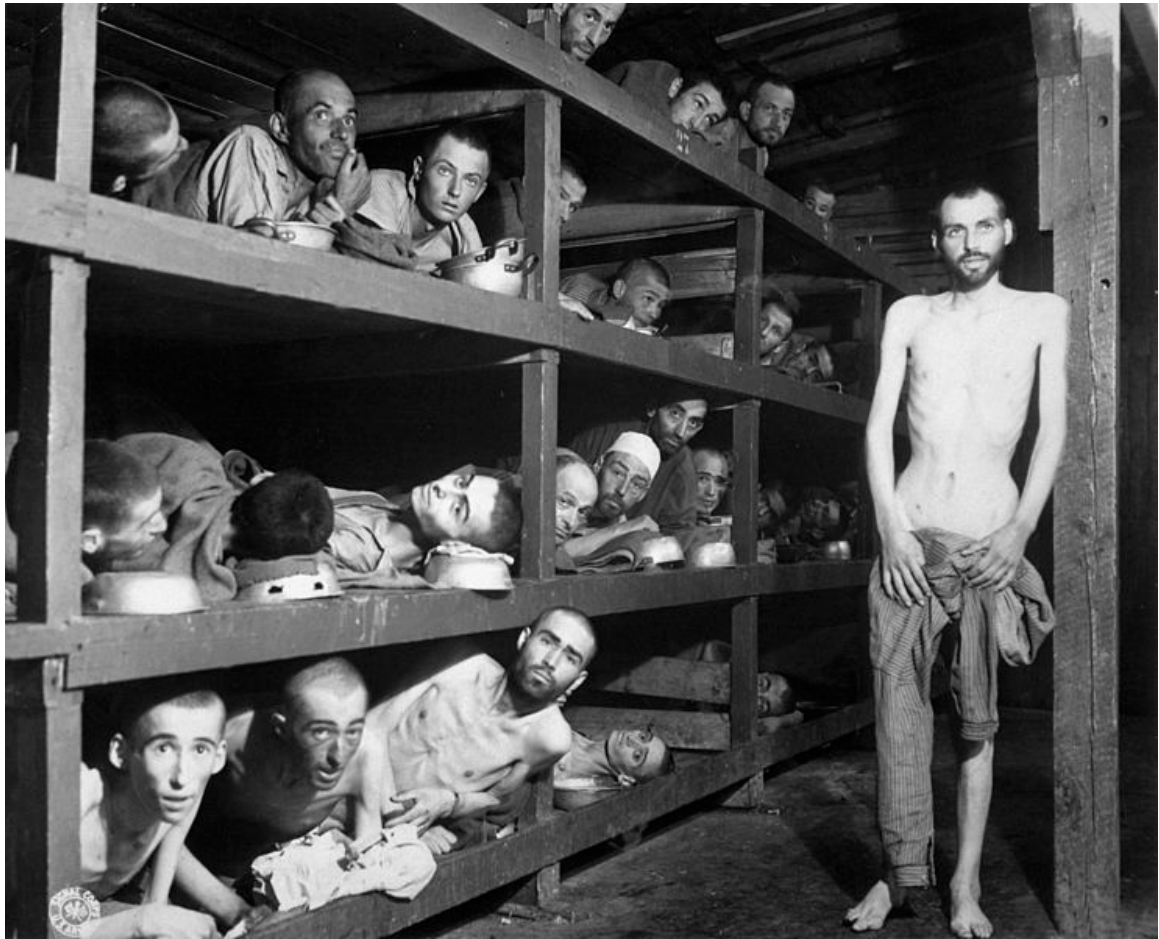
One Germany!”



Hitler at Nazi Party Day in Nuremberg, 1934



Adolf Hitler



Buchenwald Concentration Camp, 1945

(Author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel is in the second second row, seventh from the left)

NUREMBURG TRIALS

Major War Criminals – Quotes

Karl Doenitz:

- Nazi Navy Commander
- Chosen to succeed Hitler as Führer
- Served a 10-year sentence

"Politicians brought the Nazis to power and started the war. They are the ones who brought about these disgusting crimes, and now we have to sit there in the dock with them and share the blame!"

Hans Frank:

- Governor-general of Nazi-occupied Poland
- Known as the “Jew butcher of Cracow”
- Sentence to death - hanged in Nuremberg

"Don't let anybody tell you that they had no idea. Everybody sensed there was something horribly wrong with the system."

"Hitler has disgraced Germany for all time! He betrayed and disgraced the people that loved him! I will be the first to admit my guilt."

Wilhelm Frick:

- Minister of the Interior
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"Hitler didn't want to do things my way. I wanted things done legally. After all, I am a lawyer."

"The mass murders were certainly not thought of as a consequence of the Nuremberg Laws, [though] it may have turned out that way."

Hans Fritzsche:

- Head of Radio Division – a department of propaganda
- Acquitted by IMT but later tried and convicted by a German court.

"I have been tricked and trapped by the Himmler murder machine, even when I tried to put a check on it... Let us explain our position to the world, so that at least we won't die under this awful burden of shame."

"I have the feeling I am drowning in filth....I am choking in it."

Walther Funk:

- Minister of Economics
- Sentenced to life imprisonment – released in 1957 for poor health

"I signed the laws for the aryianization of Jewish property. Whether that makes me legally guilty or not, is another matter. But it makes me morally guilty, there is no doubt about that. I should have listened to my wife at the end. She said we'd be better off dropping the whole minister business and moving into a three-bedroom flat."

Hermann Goering:

- Reichsmarschall and Luftwaffe (Air Force) Chief
- President of Reichstag
- Director of "Four Year Plan"
- Committed suicide the day before his scheduled hanging

"I joined the Party precisely because it was revolutionary, not because of the ideological stuff."

"The whole conspiracy idea is cockeyed. We had orders to obey the head of state. We weren't a band of criminals meeting in the woods in the dead of night to plan mass murders... The four real conspirators are missing: The Führer, Himmler, Bormann, and Goebbels."

"This is a political trial by the victors and it will be a good thing when Germany realizes that..."

Rudolf Hess:

- Deputy to Hitler
- Nazi party leader
- Sentenced to life imprisonment – committed suicide in 1987

"It is just incomprehensible how those things [atrocities] came about... Every genius has the demon in him. You can't blame him [Hitler]--it is just in him... It is all very tragic. But at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that I tried to do something to end the war."

Alfred Jodl:

- Chief of Operations for the German High Command
- Sentence to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"The indictment knocked me on the head. First of all, I had no idea at all about 90 per cent of the accusations in it. The crimes are horrible beyond belief, if they are true. Secondly, I don't see how they can fail to recognize a soldier's obligation to obey orders. That's the code I've lived by all my life."

Ernst Kaltenbrunner:

- Chief of Security Police and Gestapo organizations
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"When I saw the newspaper headline 'GAS CHAMBER EXPERT CAPTURED' and an American lieutenant explained it to me, I was pale in amazement. How can they say such things about me?"

"I have only done my duty as an intelligence organ, and I refuse to serve as an ersatz for Himmler."

Wilhelm Keitel:

- Chief of Staff of the German High Command
- Sentenced to death – hanged in the Palace of Justice

"We all believed so much in him [Hitler]--and we stand to take all the blame--and the shame! He gave us the orders. He kept saying that it was all his responsibility."

"I will suffer more agony of conscience and self-reproach in this cell than anybody will ever know."

"The only thing that is impossible is for me to be there [in court] like a louse and lie."

Konstantin von Neurath:

- Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1938
- Reich Protector for Bohemia and Moravia
- Sentenced to fifteen years in prison – released because of poor health in 1954

"Hitler was a liar, of course--that became more and more clear. He simply had no respect for the truth. But nobody recognized it at first... He must have done his conspiring with his little gang of henchmen late at night. Sometimes he would call at 1, 2, or 3 in the morning."

Franz von Papen:

- Reich Chancellor prior to Hitler
- Vice Chancellor under Hitler
- Ambassador to Turkey
- Acquitted

"I think [Hitler] wanted the best for Germany at the beginning, but he became an unreasoning evil force with the flattery of his followers--Himmler, Goering, Ribbentrop, etc...I tried to persuade him he was wrong in his anti-Jewish policies many a time. He seemed to listen at first, but later on, I had no influence on him."

Erich Raeder:

- Commander in chief of the German Navy
- Sentenced to life in prison – served nine years

"I have no illusion about this trial. Naturally, I will be hanged or shot. I flatter myself to think that I will be shot; at least I will request it. I have no desire to serve a prison sentence at my age."

Joachim von Ribbentrop:

- Foreign Minister
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"We are only living shadows--the remains of a dead era--an era that died with Hitler. Whether a few of us live another 10 or 20 years, it makes no difference."

Alfred Rosenberg:

- Chief Nazi Philosopher
- Reichminister for the Eastern Occupied Territories
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"I didn't say that the Jews are inferior. I didn't even maintain they are a race. I merely saw that the mixture of different cultures didn't work."

"We let 50,000 Jewish intellectuals get across the border. Just as I wanted Lebensraum for Germany, I thought Jews should have a Lebensraum for themselves--outside of Germany."

Fritz Sauckel:

- Chief of Slave Labor Recruitment
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"I was given this assignment which I could not refuse--and besides, I did everything possible to treat [the foreign slave laborers] well."

Hjalmar Schacht:

- Reichsbank President
- Minister of Economics before the war
- Found not guilty by IMT – later convicted by a German court and sentenced to eight years

"I have full confidence in the judges, and I am not afraid of the outcome. A few of the defendants are not guilty; most of them are sheer criminals."

"All I wanted was to build up Germany industrially....The only thing they can accuse me of is breaking the Versailles Treaty."

Baldur von Schirach:

- Hitler Youth Leader
- Sentenced to 20 years in prison

"I had no reason to be anti-Semitic... until someone made me read the American book, *The International Jew*, at the impressionable age of 17. You have no idea what a great influence this book had on the thinking of German youth...At the age of 18, I met Adolf Hitler. I must admit I was inspired by him...and became one of his staunchest supporters."

Arthur Seyss-Inquart:

- Austrian Chancellor
- Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"The southern German has the imagination and emotionality to subscribe to a fanatic ideology, but he is ordinarily inhibited from excesses by his natural humaneness. The Prussian does not have the imagination to conceive in terms of abstract racial and political theories, but when he is told to do something, he does it."

Albert Speer:

- Reichminister of Armaments and Munitions
- Served a 20-year sentence

"I would like to sit down and write one final blast about the whole damn Nazi mess and mention names and details and let the German people see once and for all what rotten corruption, hypocrisy, and madness the whole system was based on! I would spare no one, including myself."

Julius Streicher:

- Editor of *Der Stürmer*
- Sentenced to death – hanged in Nuremberg

"The Jews are making a mistake if they make a martyr out of me; you will see. I didn't create the problem; it existed for thousands of years."

"I am the only one in the world who clearly saw the Jewish menace as an historical problem."¹²⁴

¹²⁴ The Nazi Defendants in the Major War Criminal Trial in Nuremberg," *UMKC School of Law*, Accessed 9 December 9 2011, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/meetthedefendants.html>.

95 THESEN

Aus Liebe zur Wahrheit und in dem Bestreben, diese zu ergründen, soll in Wittenberg unter dem Vorsitz des ehrwürdigen Vaters Martin Luther, Magisters der freien Künste und der heiligen Theologie sowie deren ordentlicher Professor daselbst, über die folgenden Sätze disputiert werden. Deshalb bittet er die, die nicht anwesend sein und mündlich mit uns debattieren können, dieses in Abwesenheit schriftlich zu tun.

Im Namen unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, Amen.

1. Da unser Herr und Meister Jesus Christus spricht "Tut Buße" usw. (Matth. 4,17), hat er gewollt, daß das ganze Leben der Gläubigen Buße sein soll.
2. Dieses Wort kann nicht von der Buße als Sakrament - d. h. von der Beichte und Genugtuung -, die durch das priesterliche Amt verwaltet wird, verstanden werden.
3. Es bezieht sich nicht nur auf eine innere Buße, ja eine solche wäre gar keine, wenn sie nicht nach außen mancherlei Werke zur Abtötung des Fleisches bewirkte.
4. Daher bleibt die Strafe, solange der Haß gegen sich selbst - das ist die wahre Herzensbuße - bestehen bleibt, also bis zum Eingang ins Himmelreich.
5. Der Papst will und kann keine Strafen erlassen, außer solchen, die er auf Grund seiner eigenen Entscheidung oder der der kirchlichen Satzungen auferlegt hat.
6. Der Papst kann eine Schuld nur dadurch erlassen, daß er sie als von Gott erlassen erklärt und bezeugt, natürlich kann er sie in den ihm vorbehaltenen Fällen erlassen; wollte man das geringachten, bliebe die Schuld ganz und gar bestehen.
7. Gott erläßt überhaupt keinem die Schuld, ohne ihn zugleich demütig in allem dem Priester, seinem Stellvertreter, zu unterwerfen.
8. Die kirchlichen Bestimmungen über die Buße sind nur für die Lebenden verbindlich, den Sterbenden darf demgemäß nichts auferlegt werden.
9. Daher handelt der Heilige Geist, der durch den Papst wirkt, uns gegenüber gut, wenn er in seinen Erlassen immer den Fall des Todes und der höchsten Not ausnimmt.
10. Unwissend und schlecht handeln diejenigen Priester, die den Sterbenden kirchliche Bußen für das Fegefeuer aufsparen.

11. Die Meinung, daß eine kirchliche Bußstrafe in eine Fegefeuerstrafe umgewandelt werden könne, ist ein Unkraut, das offenbar gesät worden ist, während die Bischöfe schliefen.
12. Früher wurden die kirchlichen Bußstrafen nicht nach, sondern vor der Absolution auferlegt, gleichsam als Prüfstein für die Aufrichtigkeit der Reue.
13. Die Sterbenden werden durch den Tod von allem gelöst, und für die kirchlichen Satzungen sind sie schon tot, weil sie von Rechts wegen davon befreit sind.
14. Ist die Haltung eines Sterbenden und die Liebe (Gott gegenüber) unvollkommen, so bringt ihm das notwendig große Furcht, und diese ist um so größer, je geringer jene ist.
15. Diese Furcht und dieser Schrecken genügen für sich allein - um von anderem zu schweigen -, die Pein des Fegefeuers auszumachen; denn sie kommen dem Grauen der Verzweiflung ganz nahe.
16. Es scheinen sich demnach Hölle, Fegefeuer und Himmel in der gleichen Weise zu unterscheiden wie Verzweiflung, annähernde Verzweiflung und Sicherheit.
17. Offenbar haben die Seelen im Fegefeuer die Mehrung der Liebe genauso nötig wie eine Minderung des Grauens.
18. Offenbar ist es auch weder durch Vernunft- noch Schriftgründe erwiesen, daß sie sich außerhalb des Zustandes befinden, in dem sie Verdienste erwerben können oder in dem die Liebe zunehmen kann.
19. Offenbar ist auch dieses nicht erwiesen, daß sie - wenigstens nicht alle - ihrer Seligkeit sicher und gewiß sind, wenngleich wir ihrer völlig sicher sind.
20. Daher meint der Papst mit dem vollkommenen Erlaß aller Strafen nicht einfach den Erlaß sämtlicher Strafen, sondern nur derjenigen, die er selbst auferlegt hat.
21. Deshalb irren jene Ablassprediger, die sagen, daß durch die Ablässe des Papstes der Mensch von jeder Strafe frei und los werde.
22. Vielmehr erläßt er den Seelen im Fegefeuer keine einzige Strafe, die sie nach den kirchlichen Satzungen in diesem Leben hätten abbüßen müssen.
23. Wenn überhaupt irgendwem irgendein Erlaß aller Strafen gewährt werden kann, dann gewiß allein den Vollkommensten, das heißt aber, ganz wenigen.
24. Deswegen wird zwangsläufig ein Großteil des Volkes durch jenes in Bausch und Bogen und großsprecherisch gegebene Versprechen des Straferlasses getäuscht.

25. Die gleiche Macht, die der Papst bezüglich des Fegefeuers im allgemeinen hat, besitzt jeder Bischof und jeder Seelsorger in seinem Bistum bzw. seinem Pfarrbezirk im besonderen.
26. Der Papst handelt sehr richtig, den Seelen (im Fegefeuer) die Vergebung nicht auf Grund seiner - ihm dafür nicht zur Verfügung stehenden - Schlüsselgewalt, sondern auf dem Wege der Fürbitte zuzuwenden.
27. Menschenlehre verkündigen die, die sagen, daß die Seele (aus dem Fegefeuer) emporfliege, sobald das Geld im Kasten klingt.
28. Gewiß, sobald das Geld im Kasten klingt, können Gewinn und Habgier wachsen, aber die Fürbitte der Kirche steht allein auf dem Willen Gottes.
29. Wer weiß denn, ob alle Seelen im Fegefeuer losgekauft werden wollen, wie es beispielsweise beim heiligen Severin und Paschalis nicht der Fall gewesen sein soll.
30. Keiner ist der Echtheit seiner Reue gewiß, viel weniger, ob er völligen Erlaß (der Sündenstrafe) erlangt hat.
31. So selten einer in rechter Weise Buße tut, so selten kauft einer in der rechten Weise Ablass, nämlich außerordentlich selten.
32. Wer glaubt, durch einen Ablassbrief seines Heils gewiß sein zu können, wird auf ewig mit seinen Lehrmeistern verdammt werden.
33. Nicht genug kann man sich vor denen hüten, die den Ablass des Papstes jene unschätzbare Gabe Gottes nennen, durch die der Mensch mit Gott versöhnt werde.
34. Jene Ablassgnaden beziehen sich nämlich nur auf die von Menschen festgesetzten Strafen der sakramentalen Genugtuung.
35. Nicht christlich predigen die, die lehren, daß für die, die Seelen (aus dem Fegefeuer) loskaufen oder Beichtbriefe erwerben, Reue nicht nötig sei.
36. Jeder Christ, der wirklich bereut, hat Anspruch auf völligen Erlaß von Strafe und Schuld, auch ohne Ablassbrief.
37. Jeder wahre Christ, sei er lebendig oder tot, hat Anteil an allen Gütern Christi und der Kirche, von Gott ihm auch ohne Ablassbrief gegeben.
38. Doch dürfen der Erlaß und der Anteil (an den genannten Gütern), die der Papst vermittelt, keineswegs geringgeachtet werden, weil sie - wie ich schon sagte - die Erklärung der göttlichen Vergebung darstellen.

39. Auch den gelehrtesten Theologen dürfte es sehr schwerfallen, vor dem Volk zugleich die Fülle der Ablässe und die Aufrichtigkeit der Reue zu rühmen.
40. Aufrichtige Reue begehrt und liebt die Strafe. Die Fülle der Ablässe aber macht gleichgültig und lehrt sie hassen, wenigstens legt sie das nahe.
41. Nur mit Vorsicht darf der apostolische Ablass gepredigt werden, damit das Volk nicht fälschlicherweise meint, er sei anderen guten Werken der Liebe vorzuziehen.
42. Man soll die Christen lehren: Die Meinung des Papstes ist es nicht, daß der Erwerb von Ablass in irgendeiner Weise mit Werken der Barmherzigkeit zu vergleichen sei.
43. Man soll den Christen lehren: Dem Armen zu geben oder dem Bedürftigen zu leihen ist besser, als Ablass zu kaufen.
44. Denn durch ein Werk der Liebe wächst die Liebe und wird der Mensch besser, aber durch Ablass wird er nicht besser, sondern nur teilweise von der Strafe befreit.
45. Man soll die Christen lehren: Wer einen Bedürftigen sieht, ihn übergeht und statt dessen für den Ablass gibt, kauft nicht den Ablass des Papstes, sondern handelt sich den Zorn Gottes ein.
46. Man soll die Christen lehren: Die, die nicht im Überfluß leben, sollen das Lebensnotwendige für ihr Hauswesen behalten und keinesfalls für den Ablass verschwenden.
47. Man soll die Christen lehren: Der Kauf von Ablass ist eine freiwillige Angelegenheit, nicht geboten.
48. Man soll die Christen lehren: Der Papst hat bei der Erteilung von Ablass ein für ihn dargebrachtes Gebet nötiger und wünscht es deshalb auch mehr als zur Verfügung gestelltes Geld.
49. Man soll die Christen lehren: Der Ablass des Papstes ist nützlich, wenn man nicht sein Vertrauen darauf setzt, aber sehr schädlich, falls man darüber die Furcht Gottes fahrenläßt.
50. Man soll die Christen lehren: Wenn der Papst die Erpressungsmethoden der Ablassprediger wüßte, sähe er lieber die Peterskirche in Asche sinken, als daß sie mit Haut, Fleisch und Knochen seiner Schafe erbaut würde.

51. Man soll die Christen lehren: Der Papst wäre, wie es seine Pflicht ist, bereit - wenn nötig - die Peterskirche zu verkaufen, um von seinem Gelde einem großen Teil jener zu geben, denen gewisse Ablassprediger das Geld aus der Tasche holen.
52. Auf Grund eines Ablassbriefes das Heil zu erwarten ist eitel, auch wenn der (Ablass) Kommissar, ja der Papst selbst ihre Seelen dafür verpfändeten.
53. Die anordnen, daß um der Ablasspredigt willen das Wort Gottes in den umliegenden Kirchen völlig zum Schweigen komme, sind Feinde Christi und des Papstes.
54. Dem Wort Gottes geschieht Unrecht, wenn in ein und derselben Predigt auf den Ablass die gleiche oder längere Zeit verwendet wird als für jenes.
55. Die Meinung des Papstes ist unbedingt die: Wenn der Ablass - als das Geringste - mit einer Glocke, einer Prozession und einem Gottesdienst gefeiert wird, sollte das Evangelium - als das Höchste - mit hundert Glocken, hundert Prozessionen und hundert Gottesdiensten gepredigt werden.
56. Der Schatz der Kirche, aus dem der Papst den Ablass austeilte, ist bei dem Volke Christi weder genügend genannt noch bekannt.
57. Offenbar besteht er nicht in zeitlichen Gütern, denn die würden viele von den Predigern nicht so leicht mit vollen Händen austeilen, sondern bloß sammeln.
58. Er besteht aber auch nicht aus den Verdiensten Christi und der Heiligen, weil diese dauernd ohne den Papst Gnade für den inwendigen Menschen sowie Kreuz, Tod und Hölle für den äußeren bewirken.
59. Der heilige Laurentius hat gesagt, daß der Schatz der Kirche ihre Armen seien, aber die Verwendung dieses Begriffes entsprach der Auffassung seiner Zeit.
60. Wohlbegründet sagen wir, daß die Schlüssel der Kirche - die ihr durch das Verdienst Christi geschenkt sind - jenen Schatz darstellen.
61. Selbstverständlich genügt die Gewalt des Papstes allein zum Erlaß von Strafen und zur Vergebung in besondern, ihm vorbehaltenen Fällen.
62. Der wahre Schatz der Kirche ist das allerheiligste Evangelium von der Herrlichkeit und Gnade Gottes.
63. Dieser ist zu Recht allgemein verhaßt, weil er aus Ersten Letzte macht.
64. Der Schatz des Ablasses jedoch ist zu Recht außerordentlich beliebt, weil er aus Letzten Erste macht.

65. Also ist der Schatz des Evangeliums das Netz, mit dem man einst die Besitzer von Reichtum fing.
66. Der Schatz des Ablasses ist das Netz, mit dem man jetzt den Reichtum von Besitzenden fängt.
67. Der Ablass, den die Ablassprediger lautstark als außerordentliche Gnaden anpreisen, kann tatsächlich dafür gelten, was das gute Geschäft anbelangt.
68. Doch sind sie, verglichen mit der Gnade Gottes und der Verehrung des Kreuzes, in der Tat ganz geringfügig.
69. Die Bischöfe und Pfarrer sind gehalten, die Kommissare des apostolischen Ablasses mit aller Ehrerbietung zuzulassen.
70. Aber noch mehr sind sie gehalten, Augen und Ohren anzustrengen, daß jene nicht anstelle des päpstlichen Auftrags ihre eigenen Phantastereien predigen.
71. Wer gegen die Wahrheit des apostolischen Ablasses spricht, der sei verworfen und verflucht.
72. Aber wer gegen die Zügellosigkeit und Frechheit der Worte der Ablassprediger auftritt, der sei gesegnet.
73. Wie der Papst zu Recht seinen Bannstrahl gegen diejenigen schleudert, die hinsichtlich des Ablassgeschäftes auf mannigfache Weise Betrug ersinnen,
74. So will er viel mehr den Bannstrahl gegen diejenigen schleudern, die unter dem Vorwand des Ablasses auf Betrug hinsichtlich der heiligen Liebe und Wahrheit sinnen.
75. Es ist irrsinnig zu meinen, daß der päpstliche Ablass mächtig genug sei, einen Menschen loszusprechen, auch wenn er - was ja unmöglich ist - der Gottesgebälerin Gewalt angetan hätte.
76. Wir behaupten dagegen, daß der päpstliche Ablass auch nicht die geringste läßliche Sünde wegnehmen kann, was deren Schuld betrifft.
77. Wenn es heißt, auch der heilige Petrus könnte, wenn er jetzt Papst wäre, keine größeren Gnaden austeilen, so ist das eine Lästerung des heiligen Petrus und des Papstes.
78. Wir behaupten dagegen, daß dieser wie jeder beliebige Papst größere hat, nämlich das Evangelium, "Geisteskräfte und Gaben, gesund zu machen" usw., wie es 1. Kor. 12 heißt.

79. Es ist Gotteslästerung zu sagen, daß das (in den Kirchen) an hervorragender Stelle errichtete (Ablaß-) Kreuz, das mit dem päpstlichen Wappen versehen ist, dem Kreuz Christi gleichkäme.
80. Bischöfe, Pfarrer und Theologen, die dulden, daß man dem Volk solche Predigt bietet, werden dafür Rechenschaft ablegen müssen.
81. Diese freche Ablaßpredigt macht es auch gelehrten Männern nicht leicht, das Ansehen des Papstes vor böswilliger Kritik oder sogar vor spitzfindigen Fragen der Laien zu schützen.
82. Zum Beispiel: Warum räumt der Papst nicht das Fegefeuer aus um der heiligsten Liebe und höchsten Not der Seelen willen - als aus einem wirklich triftigen Grund -, da er doch unzählige Seelen loskauft um des unheilvollen Geldes zum Bau einer Kirche willen - als aus einem sehr fadenscheinigen Grund -?
83. Oder: Warum bleiben die Totenmessen sowie Jahrfeiern für die Verstorbenen bestehen, und warum gibt er (der Papst) nicht die Stiftungen, die dafür gemacht worden sind, zurück oder gestattet ihre Rückgabe, wenn es schon ein Unrecht ist, für die Losgekauften zu beten?
84. Oder: Was ist das für eine neue Frömmigkeit vor Gott und dem Papst, daß sie einem Gottlosen und Feinde erlauben, für sein Geld eine fromme und von Gott geliebte Seele loszukaufen; doch um der eigenen Not dieser frommen und geliebten Seele willen erlösen sie diese nicht aus freigeschenkter Liebe?
85. Oder: Warum werden die kirchlichen Bußsatzungen, die "tatsächlich und durch Nichtgebrauch" an sich längst abgeschafft und tot sind, doch noch immer durch die Gewährung von Ablaß mit Geld abgelöst, als wären sie höchst lebendig?
86. Oder: Warum baut der Papst, der heute reicher ist als der reichste Crassus, nicht wenigstens die eine Kirche St. Peter lieber von seinem eigenen Geld als dem der armen Gläubigen?
87. Oder: Was erläßt der Papst oder woran gibt er denen Anteil, die durch vollkommene Reue ein Anrecht haben auf völligen Erlaß und völlige Teilhabe?
88. Oder: Was könnte der Kirche Besseres geschehen, als wenn der Papst, wie er es (jetzt) einmal tut, hundertmal am Tage jedem Gläubigen diesen Erlaß und diese Teilhabe zukommen ließe?
89. Wieso sucht der Papst durch den Ablaß das Heil der Seelen mehr als das Geld; warum hebt er früher gewährte Briefe und Ablässe jetzt auf, die doch ebenso wirksam sind?

90. Diese äußerst peinlichen Einwände der Laien nur mit Gewalt zu unterdrücken und nicht durch vernünftige Gegenargumente zu beseitigen heißt, die Kirche und den Papst dem Gelächter der Feinde auszusetzen und die Christenheit unglücklich zu machen.
91. Wenn daher der Ablass dem Geiste und der Auffassung des Papstes gemäß gepredigt würde, lösten sich diese (Einwände) alle ohne weiteres auf, ja es gäbe sie überhaupt nicht.
92. Darum weg mit allen jenen Propheten, die den Christen predigen: "Friede, Friede", und ist doch kein Friede.
93. Wohl möge es gehen allen den Propheten, die den Christen predigen: "Kreuz, Kreuz", und ist doch kein Kreuz.
94. Man soll die Christen ermutigen, daß sie ihrem Haupt Christus durch Strafen, Tod und Hölle nachzufolgen trachten.
95. und daß die lieber darauf trauen, durch viele Trübsale ins Himmelreich einzugehen, als sich in falscher geistlicher Sicherheit zu beruhigen.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ "95 Thesen," *Martin Luther.de*, Accessed 22 October 2011, <http://www.luther.de/leben/anschlag/95thesen.html>.

95 THESES

Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in Ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us, may do so by letter.

In the Name our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said *Poenitentiam agite*, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
 2. This word cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, i.e., confession and satisfaction, which is administered by the priests.
 3. Yet it means not inward repentance only; nay, there is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work divers mortifications of the flesh.
 4. The penalty [of sin], therefore, continues so long as hatred of self continues; for this is the true inward repentance, and continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
 5. The pope does not intend to remit, and cannot remit any penalties other than those which he has imposed either by his own authority or by that of the Canons.
 6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God's remission; though, to be sure, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in such cases were despised, the guilt would remain entirely unforgiven.
 7. God remits guilt to no one whom He does not, at the same time, humble in all things and bring into subjection to His vicar, the priest.
 8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to them, nothing should be imposed on the dying.
 9. Therefore the Holy Spirit in the pope is kind to us, because in his decrees he always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.
 10. Ignorant and wicked are the doings of those priests who, in the case of the dying, reserve canonical penances for purgatory.

11. This changing of the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory is quite evidently one of the tares that were sown while the bishops slept.
12. In former times the canonical penalties were imposed not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.
13. The dying are freed by death from all penalties; they are already dead to canonical rules, and have a right to be released from them.
14. The imperfect health [of soul], that is to say, the imperfect love, of the dying brings with it, of necessity, great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater is the fear.
15. This fear and horror is sufficient of itself alone (to say nothing of other things) to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near to the horror of despair.
16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ as do despair, almost-despair, and the assurance of safety.
17. With souls in purgatory it seems necessary that horror should grow less and love increase.
18. It seems unproved, either by reason or Scripture, that they are outside the state of merit, that is to say, of increasing love.
19. Again, it seems unproved that they, or at least that all of them, are certain or assured of their own blessedness, though we may be quite certain of it.
20. Therefore by "full remission of all penalties" the pope means not actually "of all," but only of those imposed by himself.
21. Therefore those preachers of indulgences are in error, who say that by the pope's indulgences a man is freed from every penalty, and saved;
22. Whereas he remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to the canons, they would have had to pay in this life.
23. If it is at all possible to grant to any one the remission of all penalties whatsoever, it is certain that this remission can be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to the very fewest.
24. It must needs be, therefore, that the greater part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.

25. The power which the pope has, in a general way, over purgatory, is just like the power which any bishop or curate has, in a special way, within his own diocese or parish.
26. The pope does well when he grants remission to souls [in purgatory], not by the power of the keys (which he does not possess), but by way of intercession.
27. They preach man who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].
28. It is certain that when the penny jingles into the money-box, gain and avarice can be increased, but the result of the intercession of the Church is in the power of God alone.
29. Who knows whether all the souls in purgatory wish to be bought out of it, as in the legend of Sts. Severinus and Paschal.
30. No one is sure that his own contrition is sincere; much less that he has attained full remission.
31. Rare as is the man that is truly penitent, so rare is also the man who truly buys indulgences, i.e., such men are most rare.
32. They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon.
33. Men must be on their guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to Him;
34. For these "graces of pardon" concern only the penalties of sacramental satisfaction, and these are appointed by man.
35. They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary in those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessionalia.
36. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without letters of pardon.
37. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.
38. Nevertheless, the remission and participation [in the blessings of the Church] which are granted by the pope are in no way to be despised, for they are, as I have said, the declaration of divine remission.

39. It is most difficult, even for the very keenest theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the abundance of pardons and [the need of] true contrition.
40. True contrition seeks and loves penalties, but liberal pardons only relax penalties and cause them to be hated, or at least, furnish an occasion [for hating them].
41. Apostolic pardons are to be preached with caution, lest the people may falsely think them preferable to other good works of love.
42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend the buying of pardons to be compared in any way to works of mercy.
43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons;
44. Because love grows by works of love, and man becomes better; but by pardons man does not grow better, only more free from penalty.
45. Christians are to be taught that he who sees a man in need, and passes him by, and gives [his money] for pardons, purchases not the indulgences of the pope, but the indignation of God.
46. Christians are to be taught that unless they have more than they need, they are bound to keep back what is necessary for their own families, and by no means to squander it on pardons.
47. Christians are to be taught that the buying of pardons is a matter of free will, and not of commandment.
48. Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting pardons, needs, and therefore desires, their devout prayer for him more than the money they bring.
49. Christians are to be taught that the pope's pardons are useful, if they do not put their trust in them; but altogether harmful, if through them they lose their fear of God.
50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the pardon-preachers, he would rather that St. Peter's church should go to ashes, than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep.
51. Christians are to be taught that it would be the pope's wish, as it is his duty, to give of his own money to very many of those from whom certain hawkers of pardons cajole money, even though the church of St. Peter might have to be sold.

52. The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain, even though the commissary, nay, even though the pope himself, were to stake his soul upon it.
53. They are enemies of Christ and of the pope, who bid the Word of God be altogether silent in some Churches, in order that pardons may be preached in others.
54. Injury is done the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or a longer time is spent on pardons than on this Word.
55. It must be the intention of the pope that if pardons, which are a very small thing, are celebrated with one bell, with single processions and ceremonies, then the Gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.
56. The "treasures of the Church," out of which the pope grants indulgences, are not sufficiently named or known among the people of Christ.
57. That they are not temporal treasures is certainly evident, for many of the vendors do not pour out such treasures so easily, but only gather them.
58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the Saints, for even without the pope, these always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outward man.
59. St. Lawrence said that the treasures of the Church were the Church's poor, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.
60. Without rashness we say that the keys of the Church, given by Christ's merit, are that treasure.
61. For it is clear that for the remission of penalties and of reserved cases, the power of the pope is of itself sufficient.
62. The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.
63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last.
64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.
65. Therefore the treasures of the Gospel are nets with which they formerly were wont to fish for men of riches.

66. The treasures of the indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the riches of men.
67. The indulgences which the preachers cry as the "greatest graces" are known to be truly such, in so far as they promote gain.
68. Yet they are in truth the very smallest graces compared with the grace of God and the piety of the Cross.
69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of apostolic pardons, with all reverence.
70. But still more are they bound to strain all their eyes and attend with all their ears, lest these men preach their own dreams instead of the commission of the pope.
71. He who speaks against the truth of apostolic pardons, let him be anathema and accursed!
72. But he who guards against the lust and license of the pardon-preachers, let him be blessed!
73. The pope justly thunders against those who, by any art, contrive the injury of the traffic in pardons.
74. But much more does he intend to thunder against those who use the pretext of pardons to contrive the injury of holy love and truth.
75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God -- this is madness.
76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.
77. It is said that even St. Peter, if he were now Pope, could not bestow greater graces; this is blasphemy against St. Peter and against the pope.
78. We say, on the contrary, that even the present pope, and any pope at all, has greater graces at his disposal; to wit, the Gospel, powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written in I. Corinthians xii.
79. To say that the cross, emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up [by the preachers of indulgences], is of equal worth with the Cross of Christ, is blasphemy.
80. The bishops, curates and theologians who allow such talk to be spread among the people, will have an account to render.

81. This unbridled preaching of pardons makes it no easy matter, even for learned men, to rescue the reverence due to the pope from slander, or even from the shrewd questionings of the laity.
82. To wit: -- "Why does not the pope empty purgatory, for the sake of holy love and of the dire need of the souls that are there, if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a Church? The former reasons would be most just; the latter is most trivial."
83. Again: -- "Why are mortuary and anniversary masses for the dead continued, and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded on their behalf, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?"
84. Again: -- "What is this new piety of God and the pope, that for money they allow a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God, and do not rather, because of that pious and beloved soul's own need, free it for pure love's sake?"
85. Again: -- "Why are the penitential canons long since in actual fact and through disuse abrogated and dead, now satisfied by the granting of indulgences, as though they were still alive and in force?"
86. Again: -- "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is to-day greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?"
87. Again: -- "What is it that the pope remits, and what participation does he grant to those who, by perfect contrition, have a right to full remission and participation?"
88. Again: -- "What greater blessing could come to the Church than if the pope were to do a hundred times a day what he now does once, and bestow on every believer these remissions and participations?"
89. "Since the pope, by his pardons, seeks the salvation of souls rather than money, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons granted heretofore, since these have equal efficacy?"
90. To repress these arguments and scruples of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the Church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christians unhappy.
91. If, therefore, pardons were preached according to the spirit and mind of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved; nay, they would not exist.
92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace!

93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!
94. Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hell;
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven rather through many tribulations, than through the assurance of peace.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ "Disputation of Dr. Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," *Project Wittenberg*, Accessed 22 October 2011, <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/ninetyfive.html>.

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