

Martin Luther

The name of Martin Luther is inseparably united to the Protestant Reformation because he was a man bold enough to declare his simple faith regardless of the consequences.

Dr. Luther, Professor of Biblical theology at the University of Wittenburg, had advanced in great measure since his birth in 1483 of peasant parents. Having been ordained a priest when he was twenty-four years of age, he soon was to become a public figure because of his fearless courage in denouncing the practices of the Roman Church which appeared to him as unscriptural.

The Bible was his guidebook, and as he dealt with Romans 1:17, “the just shall live by faith,” he could not reconcile this teaching with the sale of indulgences. Upon a certain payment of money to the Church the purchaser of the indulgences was assured that the time of his punishment for sin in Purgatory would be shortened. The power to grant this greatly desired release from punishment was in the hands of the Pope and his agents the priests, who had in their control the treasury of the unused merits of Christ and other holy saints.

This great reformer assailed these abuses when he saw that the people were being encouraged to buy more indulgences so that the proceeds could help pay for the buildings of St. Peter’s Church. On October 31, 1517, he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenburg Church. These propositions were not conceived to declare any disloyalty to the Roman Church. He had none. They were simply to challenge the thinking of devout men concerning the evils of indulgences.

The voice of Martin Luther was not to be silenced. In spite of the heresy trials, he refused to recant his views unless they were refuted by Biblical arguments. They were not then, and they have not been since. And even now, in our day, in our annual celebration of the Reformation we remember this man of God, who in the midst of corruption within the Church, was led to rediscover the New Testament teaching of salvation by faith in the Grace of Almighty God.

October 28, 1956
William Allen Zulker