

JOHANN TETZEL'S

Rebuttal

AGAINST LUTHER'S

Sermon on Indulgences and Grace

Translation and Introduction by Dewey Weiss Kramer

An Occasional Publication of the Pitts Theology Library

Tetzel, Johann, 1460–1519

Johann Tetzel's rebuttal against Luther's sermon on indulgences and grace / Translation and introduction by Dewey Weiss Kramer.

32 p. cm.

1. Luther, Martin, 1483–1546. 2. Reformation—Germany—Sources. 3. Indulgences. I. Kramer, Dewey. II. Occasional Publications of the Pitts Theology Library.

BR334.A2 T48 2012

230.41—dc22

OCCASIONAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE PITTS THEOLOGY LIBRARY

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since 1987 and the gift of forty-one early German Reformation imprints by Richard and Martha Kessler, the Pitts Theology Library has worked alongside the Kesslers and their friends and other supporters to build the current body of more than 3,500 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts that comprises the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection. While more than a thousand items in the collection were written by Martin Luther himself, hundreds of others were issued by his Catholic opponents. Such diversity in collecting was part of the plan from the beginning, carefully articulated by Pitts Librarian Channing R. Jeschke in collaboration with the Kesslers and the Standing Advisory Committee for the Kessler Collection. The aim was always to enable researchers to hear both sides of the sixteenth-century debates.

This acquisition of rare and important materials related to the German Reformation has been accompanied over the past quarter century by the lecture and musical programs of the annual Reformation Day at Emory University, the creation of the Digital Image Archive with its thousands of Reformation woodcuts and engravings, and by a series of print and electronic publications intended to make the riches of the Kessler Collection more widely known and accessible. The current publication of Prof. Kramer's translation is the latest of such efforts.

Johann Tetzel's *Vorlegung or Rebuttal* (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1518) was purchased in 2001 at a German auction and was valued as a representative of the early Catholic opposition to Luther and his reforms. Printed only six months after the issue of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* and written by one of the reformer's most notable early opponents, it was indeed a signature piece. I am deeply grateful to Professor Dewey Weiss Kramer for her willingness to undertake the translation of this pamphlet, since it enables English readers for the first time to hear Tetzel for themselves, rather than relying on the reports of his critics. It has been a labor of love for her, extending over several years and involving considerable research and consultations with other scholars, and has now yielded an important contribution to the study of the German Reformation. Without the unselfish efforts of Professor Kramer and other such friends, the Kessler Collection could never achieve its aim of nourishing the efforts of all those engaged in Reformation studies.

In addition to the contributions of Professor Manfred Hoffmann and Professor Kurt Hendel, which Kramer notes in her introduction, I would express thanks to G. Gordon Boice and the staff of Emory Creative Group for taking the text provided and working their magic to transform it into a beautiful pamphlet, almost five hundred years after Melchior Lotter issued Tetzel's original.

M. Patrick Graham
Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography
Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Vorlegung gemacht
von Bruder Johan Tetzel Prediger
Dides Ketzermeister: wyder eynen
vormessen Sermon von tzuentsig
irrigē Artickeln Hebstlichen ablas
vñ gnade belangēde allen cristglau-
bigē menschē tzuwissen von notten.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSLATION

Early Spring 1518—Two Publications

The theological debates sparked by Martin Luther's posting of ninety-five theses on a church door in Wittenberg 1517 picked up new strength in 1518, as Luther published his *Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*,¹ which was enthusiastically received and went through twenty-two printings by 1520. Luther's opponent, Johann Tetzel, Order of Preachers, inquisitor of heretics, subcommissioner for the preaching of the St. Peter's indulgence in the Dioceses of Mainz and Magdeburg, responded just a month later with the publication of his *Rebuttal*.² This work was far less popular, and although it was reprinted in a few sixteenth-century editions of Luther's collected works, it has remained little noticed, not easily accessible, and never translated into either modern German or English. Only three extant copies are known today, two in German libraries (Staatsbibliothek, Munich and Universitätsbibliothek, Würzburg) and one in the Kessler Reformation Collection of Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

With the digitization of Tetzel's original German pamphlet (www.pitts.emory.edu/DigiTexts/SCScanDocuments/1518Tetzel.pdf) and its translation into English here, readers can for the first time read the actual words of this much excoriated Dominican. Appearing simple at first glance, the scrutiny demanded in working with the original source both reveals unexpected insights into factors that had a bearing on the initial conflict and foreshadows issues to come.

A brief analysis of the language and format of Tetzel's work is followed here by an explanation of the translation of the title. Then the Luther-Tetzel exchange, which generated the pamphlet, is outlined to illuminate its historical-chronological setting. Finally, the introduction proposes a reevaluation of Tetzel, based on a careful reading of his own words rather than on rumor and the charges of his opponents.

Language and Format

The proper understanding of the language and format of Tetzel's pamphlet are crucial for assessing its significance. In robust and formulaic language the *Rebuttal* offers a preview of the intellectual and linguistic sparring that would become the norm in the polemical fireworks to follow. While both Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* and Tetzel's response to them (*106 Theses*)

1 Commonly cited with the German title, *Ein Sermon von Ablass und Gnade*, the first edition was issued as, *Eynn Sermon von dem Ablass vnnd gnade . . .* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, 1518). *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe; Schriften; Schriften*; 69 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–), 1:240ff. (Cited hereafter, WA.)

2 Johann Tetzel, *Vorlegung gemacht von Bruder Johan Tetzel Prediger Orde[n]s Ketzermeister: wyder eynen vormessen Sermon von tzwentzig irrige[n] Artickeln Bebstlichen ablas vn[d] gnade belange[n]de allen cristglaubige[n] mensche[n] tzuwissen von notten* (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1518). See note 14 below.

were composed in Latin, following the established practice for theological and academic exchange, Luther wrote his response to Tetzel's *106 Theses (Eyn Sermon vom Ablass und Gnade)* in vernacular German.

When Tetzel responded to Luther (*Vorlegung wider einen vermessenenen Sermon*), he also resorted to the vernacular, answering Luther's twenty "articles" or theses by first quoting each of them *verbatim*. Thus, within this one volume, the two antagonists are locked in a fateful struggle, inextricably linked by their common German tongue. The exchange of ideas articulated here would have momentous results, not the least of which was the unleashing of the German language as an effective weapon for Luther and many of the antagonists of the Reformation era. After 1518 the vernacular reigns, and for the German language, the foremost molder of that language is Martin Luther.³

Translation of the title of Tetzel's pamphlet proved problematic. *Vorlegung* (the noun of the verb *vorlegen*) in contemporary New High German (NHG) denotes "presentation," as of a document or of a proposed topic for discussion. However, in Early NHG it could denote "contradiction" (*widerlegen* = to contradict). Tetzel's usage of this word contains elements of both meanings. He quite judiciously sets forth the standard Roman Catholic teaching of his day on penance and indulgences (although he goes too far on some points, claiming as doctrinal truth matters open to theological and academic debate).⁴ In this sense, his work is a "presentation."

Nevertheless, Tetzel is presenting his case "against" an opponent's "presumptuous" ideas, and so he and Luther might be heard here as debate opponents, both of whom maintain a somewhat moderate rhetorical level during much of their exchange. Near the end, however, the rhetoric intensifies and concludes with barbed *ad hominem* accusations from both sides.

Thus, even though both connotations of *Vorlegung* are present, this translation uses "rebuttal" as a more appropriate expression of the tenor of the piece and of the attitudes of the author (indeed of both its authors). The reader should bear in mind, however, that the debate is very much Tetzel's presentation of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching of the time.

Historical-Chronological Account

The genesis of this small work extends over just a few months of the earliest days of the Reformation, as the following chronology demonstrates.⁵

3 This has been demonstrated particularly in the analysis of pamphlets from the early Reformation era. Mark U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 21.

4 Nikolaus Paulus, *Johann Tetzel, der Ablassprediger* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1899), p. 52. Paulus' biography covers the whole of Tetzel's life and provides detailed explanation of his teaching on indulgences. Paulus' work offered the first reevaluation of the man based on solid scholarship, and it has provided the foundation for all subsequent serious studies. His discussion of Tetzel's interaction with Luther is found on pp. 45–67 and 80–83.

5 Scott Hendrix's *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) is the definitive study of Luther's developing attitude toward Rome. Pages 34–38 cover specifically Luther's interaction with Tetzel from 1517 to 1519, but the whole of chs. 2 and 3 chronicles the events from October

MARCH 31, 1515 ¶ Pope Leo X issues a Bull granting plenary indulgences for those contributing to the rebuilding of the new basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. Prince-Elector Albrecht of Brandenburg, archbishop of Magdeburg, Mainz, and Halberstadt is granted authority to promote it throughout his dioceses. By early 1517 this indulgence is being energetically preached by the Dominicans of Albrecht's dioceses, under the leadership of Johann Tetzel, the Dominicans' inquisitor of heretics, and the subcommissioner for the promotion of the St. Peter's indulgence.

OCTOBER 31, 1517 ¶ Having become increasingly alarmed at the extravagant and spiritually destructive claims offered by the indulgence preachers to the Christians of Wittenberg's neighboring electorate, Martin Luther presents his *Ninety-Five Theses*, couched in standard academic Latin. He does this as invitation to his intellectual peers for an academic exchange of ideas on the subject of indulgences and the abuses associated with them.

JANUARY 20, 1518 ¶ At their regional chapter meeting in Frankfurt an der Oder, three hundred Dominicans gather to hold a disputation in Latin concerning Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. Subcommissioner Tetzel participates by presenting the *106 Frankfurt Theses* to refute the Augustinian Luther's theses.⁶ In keeping with accepted disputation practice of the time, the actual author was not Tetzel but a fellow Dominican, Konrad Wimpina, who had founded and continued to serve as rector for the University at Frankfurt. Yet the *106 Frankfurt Theses* were commonly attributed to Tetzel.

JANUARY–MARCH, 1518 ¶ In response to Tetzel's presentation at Frankfurt an der Oder, Luther works to further clarify his understanding of indulgences and penance and so produces his *Resolutiones* (in Latin), which was not published until early summer 1518.⁷ He is also increasingly aware of a popular campaign being waged against him by Dominican preachers, who attack him from various pulpits as a heretic and one who deviates from established Church practice.⁸ Not long after the Frankfurt disputation, a bookseller brings numerous printed copies of Tetzel's *106 Frankfurter Theses* to sell in Wittenberg. University students, by then enthusiastic supporters of Luther, snatch the copies from the bookseller and burn them in the town square.⁹

1517 to December 1518 and so is germane to Tetzel's interaction with Luther.

6 See note 9 below.

7 *Resolutiones disputationum de Indulgentiarum virtute* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, 1518). WA 1:523.

8 Cf. Jared Wicks, *Luther's Reform: Studies on Conversion and the Church*, (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1992), p. 151. Wicks is one of the most prolific and important Roman Catholic scholars of Luther and of the Roman Catholic responses to him. Part II of this volume includes several chapters on the earliest stages of the Reformation from both Luther's and Rome's side. Chapter 7, "Roman Reactions to Luther: the First Year, 1518," pp. 149–188, discusses the Luther-Tetzel exchange.

9 Wicks, *Luther's Reform*, p.151; Peter Fabisch and Erwin Iserloh, (eds.) *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*,

LENT 1518 ¶ Responding to these academic and popular campaigns against him by unleashing the power of the language of ordinary German people, Luther publishes his *Eyn Sermon vom Ablass und Gnade* (*A Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*).¹⁰ The small book presents the ideas of his *Ninety-Five Theses* for popular consumption and in nonacademic language and is thus a response to the popular campaign against him. It refutes specific points of Tetzel's criticism, his academic response beginning with an attack on the scholastic tripartite division of penance as scripturally unfounded and concluding with a direct reproach of Tetzel's insinuations that Luther was a heretic.

MARCH OR APRIL 1518 ¶ Tetzel responds almost immediately to the Sermon. Realizing that he must fight fire with fire (i.e., German with German), he publishes his *Vorlegung . . . wider einen vermessenenen Sermon von zwanzig irrigen Artikeln päpstlichen Ablass und Gnade belangend*.¹¹ The debate continues, and does so in German.

END OF APRIL/BEGINNING OF MAY 1518 ¶ Although Luther brands Tetzel's *Vorlegung* "an unparalleled example of ignorance,"¹² it nonetheless spurs him on to a second printed response: *Eine Freiheit des Sermons päpstlichen Ablass und Gnade belangend*.¹³ As Tetzel announces in the twentieth and concluding section of his rebuttal, he plans a more comprehensive response to Luther's ideas than is possible in the *Vorlegung*. This he delivers in Latin as *50 Theses*, this time without Wimpina's assistance.¹⁴

END OF THE DEBATE ¶ Though Luther takes some notice of Tetzel's *50 Theses* in his *Eine Freiheit des Sermons*,¹⁵ he essentially goes his own way, as he will from thenceforth. Tetzel is never again heard from in print, and one year later, on July 4, 1519, he is dead.

(1517–1521) 1. Teil: Das Gutachten des Prierias und weitere Schriften gegen Luthers Ablassthesen (1517–1518) (Corpus Catholicorum: Werke katholischer Schriftsteller im Zeitalter der Glaubenspaltung, 41; Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988), p. 314. (Cited hereafter as *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*.)

At least one copy of the *106 Frankfurt Theses* must have survived the flames for Luther to have read it, since he responds to specific points in his *Sermon vom Ablass und Gnade*. Paulus discovered and published (1899) the sole extant copy, now in the Bavarian Staatsbibliothek. The *106 Frankfurt Theses* are reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (Text 10), pp. 321–337.

10 See note 1 above.

11 See note 2 above.

12 *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 340.

13 *Eyn Freyheydt desz Sermons Bebstlichen ablassz vnd gnad belangend . . . wider die Vorlegung, so tzur schmach seyn, vnd desselben Sermon ertichtett* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grünenberg, 1518). WA 1:380–381.

14 Tetzel's *50 Theses* reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (Text 12), pp. 369–375.

15 *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 364.

Toward a Modest Reevaluation of Johann Tetzel

With this translation of his *Rebuttal*, Tetzel is granted a new hearing, indeed probably a first hearing for most persons. What one has heard of his own words is the infamous jingle (unfortunately, actually part of the indulgence preachers' promotional techniques): "As soon as the penny in the money chest clinks, the soul out of purgatory springs." In the *Rebuttal*, however, instead of the caricatured money-grubber, one hears a genuine concern for the salvation of souls, praise of God's inestimable mercy, and a concern for the whole of Christendom. In his impassioned outcry of rebuttal 20, Tetzel foresees what tragic consequences can follow upon Luther's ideas—the dissolution of Christianity, its shattering into fragments, the very opposite of Christ's desire that all people might be one in him.

For centuries Tetzel has also been consistently caricatured as stupid, ignorant of Latin, and unable to write his own theses. The *Rebuttal* provides a different witness. His presentation here is well-structured; exhibits a credible understanding of Scripture, Catholic doctrines, and the major theologians of the Christian tradition; and shows him fully as proficient as his debate opponent in Latin and in the citation of Scripture to support his arguments.

A Concluding Consideration

This translation of Tetzel's *Rebuttal* is a contribution to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Kessler Reformation Collection of the Pitts Theology Library. Just as Tetzel's pamphlet arose in the course of theological debate joined by academics and clerics and presents the opposing views of two leading figures, so too the Kessler Collection draws together on a larger scale and in creative tension America's largest collection of original Luther imprints and the Catholic works that engaged them. From its inception the Kessler Collection has allowed scholars, pastors, and believers alike to profit from the study of original sources, free of the polemical atmosphere of the Reformation era, and its presence at Emory and Candler School of Theology will continue to further the work of original research, theological understanding, and human reconciliation.

Translation Format

Paragraphs have been introduced where content warrants it, in accordance with modern English usage.

The long, multiple relative clause-laden sentences characteristic of sixteenth-century German have been broken into shorter units where feasible, again to accord more with standard English usage.

Words or phrases in [brackets] denote the translator's addition for reasons of clarity.

Regarding the singular/plural form of "indulgence," the original German text employs, variously, no article, the definite article, or the indefinite article, usually without expressing a specific nuance. In many instances, the English plural expresses the German singular as well

or better, without change of meaning. Thus I often use the plural form, “indulgences,” where Tetzel and Luther use the singular.

This translation prefers inclusive language where Tetzel’s and Luther’s use of the nouns and pronouns denoting human beings implies “all persons” in general.

Notes have been kept to a minimum, and so no attempt has been made to cite the voluminous literature on the Luther-Tetzel conflict.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the persons who have been so supportive of this translation project. M. Patrick Graham, director of the Pitts Theology Library, first offered me the opportunity to work on this rare copy of Tetzel’s work and has continued to encourage it. The study of Tetzel’s pamphlet was one of my two projects during my 2003–2004 tenure as guest scholar at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Discovery there in St. John’s Alcuin Library of Nikolaus Paulus’ 1899 biography of Tetzel has been foundational for my appraisal of Tetzel. Thanks are due also to Manfred Hoffmann, professor emeritus of Candler School of Theology at Emory, and to Kurt K. Hendl, Bernard, Fischer, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor of Reformation History at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, for his valuable advice and suggestions. Finally, as is the case with all my endeavors, academic and personal, I thank my husband, Victor A. Kramer.

Vorlegung gemacht von Bruder Jo-
han Detzel Prediger Ordens Ketzermeister / wider
einen vormessen Sermon von tzwentzig irrigen Arti-
keln Hebstliche Ablass vnd gnade belangende allen crist
glaubigen menschen tzuwissen von nothen.

Vff das die Christglaubigen menschen / durch eine pre-
digeth / von tzwentzig yrrigen artickeln / vormessenn ge-
macht / wydder die teyl des Sacraments der busse / vnd
warheit des ablass / vnd yn der fasten / iungst vorschinen /
gedruckt / aus gegangen / welcher prediget Tittel / der
massen lauteth / Ein Sermon von dem Ablass vnd gna-
de &c. vnd sich nach diesem Tittel also anhebeth / Zum er-
sten solt yr wissen das etliche Nawe lerer als Magister
Sententiarü &c. vnd ym tzwentzigstem artickel sich also
endeth / Doch goth gebe yn vnd vns rechten syn / Nicht
geergert h vnd vorturt werden / Hab ich Bruder Johan-
nes Detzel / prediger ordens / Ketzermeister / &c. den selbige
Sermon der tzwentzig yrrigen artickel mit seynem Ti-
tel / anfang / vnd beschlus / vmbdruckten lassen / vnd volle-
ge einen yglichen artickel / des gnanthen Sermons / mit
bestendigen grundt der heiligenn schrifft / wy yderman
nochfolgende ermessen wyrdt / Unangesehen / das ym
Neuntzenden artickel des gnanthen Sermons / geschri-
ben steth / vnd losz doctores scolasticos scolasticos seyn /
sy seyn allesamt nicht genung mit yren opinien / das sie
eine prediget befestigen solten / welcher worth / kein Crist-
lich mensch / sich ergern sal / Wen solth der Sermon der
tzwentzig yrrigen artickel ein schein haben / bey den men-
schen / so muste tzuuor sein tichter aberewmen doctores
scolasticos / die alle eintrechtig yn yren schriffthen / wyder
ynen sein / Der heilige Augustinus saget wen man wider
die Ketzer disputiren wil / So thut man das vornemlich
durch auctoritates / das ist / der heiligen schrifft / vnd bes-

TRANSLATION

Rebuttal made by Brother Johann Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor of heretics against a presumptuous sermon of twenty erroneous articles concerning papal indulgences and grace, necessary for all believers in Christ to know.¹⁶

This is a rebuttal made by Brother Johann Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor for heretics, necessary for all faithful believers in Christ to know, against a sermon of twenty erroneous articles concerning papal indulgences and grace.

So that Christians not be unduly upset and misled by a sermon of twenty erroneous articles, presumptuously attacking aspects of the sacrament of penance and the truth of indulgences, which was printed and distributed during Lent, the title of which reads, *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace, etc.*, and after the title continues, "You should know first of all that certain modern teachers such as the Master of the Sentences" and ends in the twentieth article, "But may God give them and us right understanding;"¹⁷ I, Brother Johannes Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor of heretics, have had that same sermon of twenty erroneous articles printed, together with its title, opening, and conclusion. And I refute each article of the named sermon with constant reference to Holy Scripture, as everyone will judge from the following pages.

I do this in spite of the fact that in the nineteenth article of the named sermon is written, "And let the scholastic doctors¹⁸ be scholastics. The whole lot of them with their opinions

16 Tetzel's pamphlet was published in March or April of 1518. In addition to the copy owned by the Pitts Theology Library, two others are extant and held at the Staatsbibliothek, Munich and at the Universitätsbibliothek, Würzburg.

Tetzel's pamphlet was reprinted in J. E. Kapp, *Sammlung einiger zum Päpstlichen Ablass überhaupt, Sonderlich aber zu der im Anfang der Reformation zwischen D. Martin Luther und Johann Tetzel hiervon geführten Streitigkeit gehörigen Schriften* (Leipzig: Martini, 1721), pp. 317–356; in V. E. Loescher (ed.), *Vollständige Reformations-Acta und Documenta* (Leipzig: Gross, 1720), I, pp. 484–503; in Walter Köhler (ed.), *Dokumente zum Ablassstreit von 1517* (Tübingen/Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1902; 2nd ed., 1934) (rebuttal 20 incomplete); and Walter Köhler, *Luthers 95 Thesen samt seinen Resolutionen sowie den Gegenschriften von Wimpina-Tetzel, Eck und Prierias and den Antworten Luthers darauf* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903).

The most recent and best critical edition is that of Fabisch and Iserloh, (eds.), *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (for full bibliographic citation, see note 9 above), which was intended to correct and expand upon Köhler's 1903 work, *Luthers 95 Thesen* and makes readily accessible—some for the first time—Roman Catholic writings of the earliest stage of the Reformation. Its emphasis lies on the historically crucial texts concerning the preaching of the St. Peter's Indulgence in the dioceses of Mainz and Magdeburg, as well as the earliest Roman reactions to *Luther's 95 Theses*, from 1517 to 1519. The editors provide extensive historical background and bibliographical details for each document.

17 Martin Luther, "Ein Sermon von Ablass und Gnade, 1517," in *D. Martin Luther's Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–), 1:239–246.

18 This quotation appears in Luther's sermon (thesis 19) and in Tetzel's Rebuttal. Tetzel's Latin term *doctores* and the German *Doctorn* refer to the most influential teachers of Christendom both ancient and modern. Many of both Luther's and Tetzel's arguments are concerned with the authority of the "modern" doctors (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard)—questioning or affirming it, as well as the reliability of the professors of theology at contemporary universities. Hence the term refers equally to teachers who hold the doctoral

are not able to put together a single sermon.” These words should upset no good Christian person. Because if the sermon of twenty erroneous articles hopes to convince anyone, then its author would first have to sweep away the “scholastic doctors,” who all harmoniously oppose these articles in their writings. St. Augustine writes, “When one wants to dispute with the heretics, then one must do so above all on the basis of the Authorities,” that is, Holy Scripture and the writings of reliable theologians uniformly. Just so, “When one wants to instruct Christian believers, it occurs properly by using solid, supporting rationes,”¹⁹ that is, through rational evidence and teaching. The heretics know this, and so whenever they want to promote a heretical falsehood among the people, they first reject and scorn all the scholars who have written openly against this particular error, just as Wycliffe and Johannes Hus did.²⁰

This same Johannes Hus not only considered satisfaction for sin unnecessary, but also sacramental confession itself, and persuaded the people accordingly. For this reason the holy ecumenical Council of Constance condemned him to the stake. Such ways are also being pursued in this erroneous sermon of twenty articles. For the Master of Hoenszyn,²¹ along with many thousand doctors (of whom many are numbered in the ranks of the revered saints),²² are scorned in the erroneous sermon, in spite of the fact that the Holy Catholic Church agrees with them concerning the three parts of penance. It has neither found fault with them, but accepted them all as truthful; nor has it admitted or proven that they have written a single dissentient word contrary to Scripture and the four Doctors of the Church.²³

degree and to theologians in general. This translation uses both terms interchangeably.

19 St. Augustine of Hippo, 354–430, church father whose theological and philosophical works have exercised tremendous influence on the development of Christian doctrine, for both Eastern and Western Churches. Luther was a monk of the Augustinian Order, which followed the *Rule of St. Augustine*. For this citation, see J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . Series Latina* (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1844–1891), 32:1377–1384 (hereafter cited as *PL*).

20 John Wycliffe, c. 1329–1384, Oxford theologian, translator of the Bible into English, critic of the temporal authority of the church. He rejected transubstantiation, purgatory, and indulgences. Though condemned as heretic, he died of natural causes, but his works were formally condemned by the Council of Constance (1414), and his remains were exhumed and burned.

Johannes Hus (or Jan Huss), 1374–1415, Czech priest, theologian, preacher, and rector of the University of Prague. Influenced by Wycliffe’s ideas on church reform, he led the reform movement in Bohemia. He rejected transubstantiation and demanded communion in both kinds. Summoned to the Council of Constance (1414) under imperial guarantee of safe conduct, he was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.

21 Master of Hoenszyn or Peter Lombard, 1100–1160, French theologian, known as the Master of the *Sentences*, as noted in Luther’s opening lines. The *Sentences* (1157–1158) is a four-volume presentation of the essentials of Christian doctrine. From the early thirteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, students of theology were required to comment on all or part of this text. As focus of theological study, this work was second only to the Bible. Tetzl is here enjoying some German-Latin word play: Hoenszyn = Master of Gaul = “Haehnchen” (German, “little cock”) = “gallus” (Latin, “cock”).

22 “. . . of whom many are saints, etc.” Tetzl uses this phrase several times to strengthen his case for the absolute reliability of certain “modern” doctors, most notably St. Thomas Aquinas, the first University of Paris doctor to be canonized and a fellow Dominican. Thomas’ system of theology has acquired quasi-official status in the Church through repeated formal endorsement by various popes.

23 The four Doctors of the Church, Saints Ambrose (340–397), Jerome (340–420), Augustine (354–430),

Rather, they have been recognized as true interpreters of Holy Scripture and of the ancient holy Church Fathers.

For such reasons it should be assumed publicly and supported by all believing Christians that these following articles of this presumptuous *Sermon* are suspect, erroneous, entirely misleading, and contrary to the holy Christian Church, as I intend to prove with the help of God by refuting each of the Articles individually and in depth.

I bring this rebuttal to the attention of his Papal Holiness, the Pope, the whole Christian Church, and all Universities.²⁴

I.

A Sermon concerning Indulgences and Grace, etc. Its first erroneous article reads as follows:

“First, you should know that various new teachers such as the Master of the Sentences, St. Thomas, and their followers ascribe three parts to penance, namely contrition, confession, and satisfaction. And although this distinction according to their opinion is with difficulty or not at all to be found substantiated in Holy Scripture or in the ancient holy Christian teachers, nevertheless we will let it stand now as it is and speak in their manner.”²⁵

REBUTTAL ¶ This erroneous article is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner and on solid foundation: First, it is erroneous and unfounded, when it claims that the three parts of penance are not founded on Holy Scripture and on the ancient Christian teachers, wherein truth resides. For Scripture and the ancient and modern holy doctors, of whom there are many thousand, maintain that Almighty God wishes to have repayment and satisfaction for sin. For Christ our Lord commands sinners in the Gospel, “Bear fruit worthy of repentance.” [Matthew 3:8] This is interpreted and understood by all the holy doctors of the whole world to mean satisfying penance.

For this reason, too, God sent his only Son into the world to make sufficient satisfaction for the sins of humankind, even though Adam and Eve repented most profoundly of their sin and yet for which they were cast forth from paradise into penance. However, that the Lord Jesus released Mary Magdalene, the adulteress, [Luke 7:37–51; John 8:1–11] and the paralytic man [Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:18–26] from all their sins without imposing any kind of penance has nothing to do with the fact that God desires from the

and Gregory I (540–604), were proclaimed “Doctors of the Church” by Pope Boniface VIII on September 20, 1295. The title recognized them as the preeminent teachers of the Christian faith.

²⁴ Tetzel employs a variation of this sentence to conclude each rebuttal. It expresses succinctly and unmistakably his stance on the importance of papal authority and emphasizes his own legitimacy as representative speaker for accepted Church teaching, doctrines which at that very time are being articulated by “trustworthy” academic theologians (cf. note 40 below).

²⁵ In each of the twenty articles, Tetzel quotes Luther’s sermon first and then proceeds to refute it.

sinner only contrition and the carrying of the cross. For Christ recognized that the contrition of the persons just mentioned, which he himself gave them, was sufficient. Moreover, he himself forgave them, and he released them perfectly by means of the power of the key, that is by the power of his absolute perfection. Priests, however, can neither recognize a person's contrition nor give them contrition. They possess merely the key of their office. Therefore, no matter how greatly a person repents of his sins or carries the cross, if he scorns confession or satisfaction as elements of the sacrament of penance, the pain due his sins will never be forgiven him.

Offered in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

II. – III.

The second and third erroneous articles of the sermon read as follows:

“Second, they say that an indulgence does not remove the first or second part, i.e., contrition or confession, but rather the third part, namely satisfaction.”

“Third, satisfaction is divided further into three parts: that is praying, fasting, and giving alms. Prayer includes all kinds of works that are concerned with the soul, such as reading, writing, hearing God's word, preaching, teaching, and similar practices. Fasting comprises all kinds of works of the mortification of the flesh, such as night watches, physical labor, uncomfortable bed, clothing, etc. Giving alms comprises all kinds of good works of love and mercy toward one's neighbor.”

REBUTTAL ■ They are rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: First, both of them are erroneous and entirely misleading since in them the truth is silenced. For in the holy Council of Constance it was once again confirmed that whoever wishes to earn an indulgence must, in addition to contrition, have gone to confession according to the ordinances of Holy Church or appear for confession according to the ordinances of the Church. This instruction is found in all papal bulls and letters of indulgence. But in the first article such confession is implicitly, that is secretly, separated and severed from genuine contrition, though erroneously.

Written in acknowledgement of His Papal Holiness and of all Christian universities and theologians.

IV.

The fourth article of the erroneous sermon reads as follows:

“Fourth, it is unquestioned by all of them that indulgence takes away those same works of satisfaction obligated by or imposed for sins. Thus, since it is supposed to take away all of these works, there would remain nothing else good for us to do.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in this Christian manner: The plenary indulgence remits the works of satisfaction to this extent: whoever is granted complete remission of pain is freed through papal power so that he is no longer obligated to do those works of satisfaction noted in article three, which had been imposed upon him for repented and confessed sins. Yet after the complete forgiveness of sins and pain, a person is no less tempted by the devil, his own flesh, and the world than he was before forgiveness. And evil habits and the possibility of falling quickly into sin again remain after forgiveness of sins and suffering. Therefore, in order to resist the devil, the flesh and the world and to subdue evil, sinful habit, inclination, and the possibility of falling quickly into sin again, a man, after complete forgiveness of sins and suffering, dare not refrain from penitential works that are salvific for him and a medicine for his spiritual weakness and also helpful toward gaining eternal life.

Also, no papal or episcopal brief of indulgence maintains that people who earn an indulgence should refrain henceforth from good works and from making satisfaction. In fact, we owe it to the honor of the eternal Godhead to do good works, even had we not sinned, solely because of his creation. And when we have accomplished all the good works that are possible for us, then we should [still] say, “We are useless servants of God.” [Luke 10:17] For this reason, this article is completely erroneous and misleading, and fabricated solely to the disadvantage of indulgences.

Set forth with acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

V.

The fifth erroneous article of the sermon reads as follows:

“Fifth, for many people there has been an important and as yet unresolved question whether indulgence also removes something more than such prescribed good works, that is, whether indulgence also removes the suffering that divine justice demands for sin.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: First of all, it is completely erroneous and deceptive. For the plenary indulgence remits also the suffering that divine justice requires for sins, when they have been repented of and confessed and the penance imposed by

the priest is insufficient. For the Papal Holiness follows St. Peter to the throne and papal office and also possesses, like St. Peter himself, the authority and the power to remit all sin. And it possesses this power from the words of the Lord, “All that you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, etc.” [Matthew 16:19] Now because the pope can forgive all sins, he can also remit, through indulgence, all the suffering due sin. For all the pain that people deserve to suffer for their sin is imposed and conferred on them as just punishment, first and foremost by God, against whom all mortal sin is directed.

Concerning the second point and following, suffering is imposed upon the sinner by priestly authority in God’s stead. Thus, this authority should exercise the greatest diligence in imposing the penance ordered by the canons of the law, called *canones penitentiales*, in order to be in conformity with divine justice. For this reason no one should consider it merely an *unresolved question* that indulgences remit the pain demanded by divine justice for repented and confessed sins but for which the priest imposed insufficient penance. For the holy Roman Church observes this practice, as do all Christian theologians of whom there are thousands; and this practice, [as mentioned in the fifth article], has never been repudiated by the Roman Church. Therefore, this article is erroneous and intended to deceive people.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

VI.

The sixth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Sixth, I leave their opinion without condemnation for the moment. I say that no one can prove by a single word of Scripture that divine justice desires or demands any sort of suffering or satisfaction from the sinner other than his heartfelt and genuine sorrow or conversion, with the intention to bear the cross of Christ from now on and practice the works mentioned above (which are also not imposed by anyone). For thus he speaks through Ezekiel, “If the sinner repents and does right, then I will never remember his sin.” [Ezekiel 18:21; 33:14–16] Furthermore, he himself absolved everyone—Mary Magdalene, the paralytic, the woman caught in adultery, etc. And I should very much like to hear who would prove otherwise, in spite of the fact that some theologians have thought so.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted accordingly on the basis of Holy Scripture: First, it is entirely erroneous, unfounded and misleading, fabricated to the detriment of indulgences. For Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, indicate that God demands satisfaction for sin. One finds this in Deuteronomy in the twenty-fifth chapter. [Deuteronomy 25:1–2; 32:49] The ancient holy Christian teachers say the same thing, in particular St. Gregory in his Thirty-Second Lay Homily or Omelia, “The heavenly physician, Our Lord Jesus Christ,

prescribes for every specific vice valuable medicine.”²⁶ Also St. Augustine says, “God has given no one license to sin, and he mercifully forgives the sins that are committed, as long as the fitting and necessary satisfaction for the sin is not omitted.”²⁷ God forgave David his adultery, yet as satisfaction he had to suffer a war, the disgracing of his wives, and after his remorse and confession the death of his child. David also felt great sorrow for his sin regarding the census of his people. But he still had to offer satisfaction to God for that sin in addition to his remorse, for the angel slew seventy thousand men at God’s command because of it, as the Book of Kings relates in detail. [2 Samuel 24]

Years ago, with the same wording and message of this sixth article, the heretics Wycliffe and Johannes Hus also sought to maintain that confession and satisfaction are unnecessary. That is why in several countries persons who go to confession are given no penance by the priest. Rather, he says to them, “Go forth and determine never more to sin.”²⁸ This article is erroneous and not to be believed.

Submitted in acknowledgement of His Papal Holiness, of the holy See in Rome and of all Christian universities and theologians.

VII.

The seventh erroneous article reads as follows:

“Seventh, one does indeed observe that God punishes some persons according to his righteousness, or forces them toward contrition through suffering, as Psalm 88 says, “If his children shall sin, I will punish their transgression with the rod, but I will not turn my mercy from them.” [Psalm 89:30–34] But to remit this suffering lies in no one’s power except God’s alone. Indeed, he will not remit it; rather he promises that he will impose it.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First of all, it is trite prattle and mirror tricks. For God who says, “If my children shall sin, then I shall punish their sin with the rod, yet I shall not turn my mercy from them,” has granted the fullness of his power to St. Peter and to every legitimately elected pope who reigns over Holy Church in such a manner that the pope has the power to do all things necessary in the Church that are for the Holy Church and for the salvation of humankind.

For this reason the pope has the power, by means of plenary indulgences, to remit the suffering imposed by God upon sinners for their sin, as long as it has been repented of

²⁶ This is Homily 25 in modern editions: Gregory I, “Homilia XXV” in *PL* 76:1188–1196, quote from 1195. For an English translation, Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*; Dom David Hurst, transl. (Cistercian Studies Series, 123; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 187–199, quote from p. 197.

²⁷ Augustine, “De utilitate agenda poenitentiae (Sermo 351, 10)” in *PL* 39, 1545–1547.

²⁸ Refers to the practice of the Hussites, followers of the doctrine of Johannes Hus, still viable in areas of Europe at the time of the Reformation.

and confessed by them. That a person is absolved from the suffering that God has imposed and decreed as judgment for his sin (should the priest's imposed penance be insufficient for his repentance and confession) serves that person quite positively for his soul's salvation. It is also a tremendous act of God's mercy that his deputy, the pope, releases man from the suffering of his sin by means of an indulgence. For this reason, David's words are cited as a subterfuge in this erroneous article without their true Christian meaning. Thus this article should be read with critical eyes and not be expounded blindly and obscurely.

When God says that he will punish the sins of his children with the rod, that is, to force them through pain to repent, it means that an indulgence is not useful against this kind of pain, but rather only for the pain of repented and confessed sin. For one finds it written in Holy Scripture that at times God inflicts pain upon men to increase their merit, as with Job; at times to preserve their virtue, as with St. Paul; at times as chastisement for sins, as with Miriam, the sister of Moses; at times for the honor of God, as with the man born blind; and at times as the beginning of the suffering of eternal punishment, as with Herod. To impose such God-willed chastisements and sufferings on a man remains solely in God's power. Nonetheless, the pope can with a plenary indulgence remit the pain imposed by God for those sins that have been repented of and confessed but assigned insufficient penance by the priest. Consequently, this article is erroneous and deceptive.

This submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

VIII.

The eighth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Eighth, therefore, no one can assign this so-called suffering a name. Also no one knows what it is, if it is neither this punishment nor the above-mentioned good works.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is erroneous because the suffering that God's righteousness imposes on a person for his sin, if insufficiently repented of or insufficiently acknowledged through the priest in confession, is called a reckoning of God and the worthy fruit of contrition. Satisfaction for this cannot be made by just any kind of contrition but only by profoundly compensatory satisfaction. St. Augustine and all theologians of Christianity say this. What the particular name of such suffering exacted by God will have in purgatory is known [only] to those people suffering it now, along with the ones who will suffer it because of their wretched deception of poor believers in Christ, if indeed they don't go to hell instead!

Submitted with acknowledgement of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

IX.

The ninth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Ninth, I say, ‘Even if the Christian church right now would decide and declare that indulgence removes more than the works of satisfaction, it would still be a thousand times better, if no Christian would buy or desire an indulgence but would rather do the works and bear the suffering. For indulgence is nothing else, and cannot become anything else, than a release from good works and wholesome suffering. Men should rightly welcome these rather than avoid them, in spite of the fact that some modern preachers have invented two kinds of suffering: remedial and satisfactory, that is, some suffering is for satisfaction, some for amending one’s ways. But we have more freedom to disdain this and all such prattle (Thanks be to God!) than they do to invent it. For all suffering, indeed everything that God inflicts, is beneficial and useful for Christians.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: It is deceptive because the holy Roman Church observes and decides by means of its tradition and practice that a plenary indulgence removes not only the works of satisfaction imposed by the priest or by law but also by God’s righteousness, if the sins are insufficiently repented and the priest in confession has imposed insufficient satisfaction. For St. Augustine declares that the customs, which the people of God or Christians exercise, and the statements of the Church Fathers are to be considered valid, even though Holy Scripture says nothing specific of such practices and matters. For this reason the pope by right can remit all the aforementioned suffering through a plenary indulgence, as long as the Roman See is observing such practice.²⁹

This erroneous article also indicates that no person should desire an indulgence, but also that the indulgence remits more from that person than the penance imposed by priest or canon law. These words contradict Christian truth. For with them the article maintains that a person may have an indulgence without contrition. Thus, it also separates the indulgence from contrition and the production of the good works for which indulgence is given. That can nevermore be substantiated in Christian doctrine. For those who earn an indulgence are living in a state of genuine contrition and in the love of God, which state does not allow them to remain lazy and slothful. Rather, it enflames them to serve God and do great works to honor him. For it is as clear as day that Christian, God-fearing, pious people, and not loose and lazy persons, earn indulgences with fervent desire.

For this reason this article is full of poison and by its argument wants to make indulgences, which are most necessary and salutary for poor sinners, disgusting to people. Indeed, God’s great unconstrained mercy appears to us most clearly in the granting of indulgences. For through his mercy God chooses to let Jesus’ own satisfaction satisfy for all the suffering

²⁹ Cf. Augustine, “Ep. 118 ad Ianuarium,” *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 34 II, 165, 11–14 = PL 33, 202.

due to persons who have not repented sufficiently of their sin and for which sins insufficient penance was assigned by the priest. In this way papal authority applies Christ's own satisfaction to their guilt.

It is also Christian to believe that when anyone gives alms, prays, visits churches, undertakes pilgrimage, fasts, or does other good works that earn indulgences and does them with the same love of God in which one would do such works, if not graced with indulgences, that [then] these named indulgenced works are far better and more meritorious for people than others [not so graced]. For this reason this article is miserably formulated to lead people astray.

Submitted with acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

X.

The tenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Tenth, it is vacuous talk to say that there is so much suffering and so many works that a person cannot accomplish them due to the brevity of life, for which reason indulgences are necessary. I counter that as unfounded and pure fantasy. For God and Holy Church impose on no one more than is possible for him to bear, just as St. Paul says, that God does not allow anyone to be tempted by more than he can bear. [1 Corinthians 10:8] And it contributes not little to Christianity's shame that one blames it for imposing more than we can bear.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in a Christian manner thusly: An indulgence is not granted solely because the brevity of a person's life does not let him complete the required works of satisfaction. It is as clear as day that the greatest sinner can satisfy God's justice for all the penance incurred by his sin through genuine, complete contrition, provided of course that he not disdain sacramental confession and penance. When these two things are disdained, all contrition is null and powerless. For this reason it is untruthfully imputed to us subcommissioners and preachers of grace that we defame God and Christianity by supposedly saying that God and the Church impose impossible things upon a person. Such words are incomprehensible! For indulgences are granted at times for alms-giving; at times because of personal accomplishments, such as when one goes on crusade against the infidels and heretics, builds bridges, and repairs roads. At times the precariousness of life prompts earning indulgences, such as when persons travel overseas to the Holy Land, as our sacred laws clearly mandate. Therefore, indulgences are not granted solely on account of the brevity of human life that could prevent a person from completing his assigned penance.

Submitted with acknowledgement of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

XI.

*The eleventh article reads as follows:*³⁰

“Eleventh, even if acts of penance as established by canon law were now in effect, mandating seven years of penance for each mortal sin, Christianity would still have to abandon such regulations and not impose anything more than a person could bear. All the more, since such canon law is not now in effect, one must take care not to impose more than any person can possibly bear.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is to be exposed as an unfounded statement as follows: Even though the statutes of canon law establishing acts of penance for human frailty are not now in effect, people are not thereby given greater license to sin, nor are the sins liable to less penance than canon law stipulates, nor are they less obligated to accept penances appropriate to divine justice. For whoever does not carry out the penance imposed by canon law must suffer something different, which God’s justice accepts as equally valid fruits of penance. Also, when the priest is absolving the sinner, he must consider not only the contrition, as he is imposing the penance on him for repented of and confessed sin. Rather, he must also take very seriously the corpus of penances set out in the penitential canons so that he does not—as much as possible—act contrary to the divine justice spelled out by the canons, as stated in canon law. And when he has taken into account the penitent’s contrition and the satisfaction imposed by canon law, he should then assign the penitent satisfaction in confession.

In this manner and not according to their whims, priests are to assign the sinner a penance in confession for repented of sins. The penance imposed by the priest in confession profits the absolved sinner in that he does not sin, if he does not observe the penance for his sin spelled out in canon law. However, if the priest assigns too little penance, then God will demand of a person the remaining part, either here or in the next world. Whoever teaches people otherwise, that person deceives them.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

30 Tetzels omits in the introductory formula for rebuttals 11 and 12 his usual “erroneous” jab at the sermon’s articles.

XII.

The twelfth article reads as follows:

“Twelfth, one indeed says that the sinner should either be sent to purgatory with the remaining suffering or directed to an indulgence. But these are indeed more things said without foundation and proof.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is set forth in Christian manner thusly: It is first of all completely erroneous and is set forth without any validity and proof of Holy Scripture, and also without any recourse to juridical insight, as though its subject matter were inappropriate for the holy Gospel, although in truth they are as different as night and day.

Besides, it is Christian and true to know that the sinner should be sent either to purgatory with the remaining suffering or to an indulgence. For the holy Christian Church and the community of all ancient and modern theologians teach that God is so merciful that he forgives guilt and sin, [but] that he nevertheless remains just in not letting these go unpunished. Therefore, if one’s inner contrition is insufficient to count as punishment for sin, and external satisfaction is not undertaken and completed, then God, who knows the extent and number of sins, will demand that the remaining penance and satisfaction not performed by the person in this life be completed in purgatory.

Further, as Anselm says in his book, *Cur deus homo [Why God Became Man]*, “A person can do enough for his sin solely through good works, which could not be demanded of a person unless he had sinned.”³¹ And in any case people are obligated to do the good works of God’s commandments because of creation, which God also demands of people, even if they had not sinned. Thus, this twelfth article is erroneous and misleading, since satisfaction must take place in this life or in the next.

Submitted with acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XIII.

The thirteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Thirteenth, it is a great error that anyone would think that he would himself make satisfaction for his sins, since God forgives those same sins at all times for free, out of his inestimable grace, demanding nothing but that one live well from thence forward. Christianity, to be

31 St. Anselm of Canterbury, c. 1033–1109. His *Cur deus homo* describes Christ’s death on the cross as an act of satisfaction, returning to God the honor stolen by human sin. This passage is found in Anselm, *Opera II*, 48.74–84.101f., as cited in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 353, n.52.

sure, does demand something, thus it can and should also cease doing this and not impose difficult and unbearable things.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is unfounded and misleading, for God, along with the Church, as shown repeatedly above, desires satisfaction for sins. This has been the conclusion of the ancient and modern doctors of Holy Church, of whom there are thousands and of whom many count among the saints in heaven. They all say that no matter how great contrition is, if a person scorns confession and acts of penance, then contrition alone will not help. To be sure, for a mortal sin no one can be reconciled with God without the help of Christ’s sufferings, as St. Augustine also believes. Indeed, if the author of this article had considered St. Augustine, this error would not have been promoted. For St. Augustine says, “For God does not look with indulgence on our sinning, however much you mitigate the suffering due the already committed sin, if the corresponding satisfaction is neglected.”³² However, this erroneous article does not count as new, for Wycliffe and Johannes Hus also maintained this error: specifically, the idea that confession, in which acts of satisfaction are imposed upon a person, is not necessary. And for this reason Johannes Hus was burned at the stake by the ecumenical Council of Constance and Wycliffe died as a heretic.

Offered in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and all Christian universities and theologians.

XIV.

The fourteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Fourteenth, an indulgence is allowed for the sake of imperfect and lazy Christians who do not want to practice good works earnestly or who are sickly.³³ For an indulgence does not spur them on to improvement but tolerates and allows their imperfection. Therefore, no one should speak against indulgences, but also no one should persuade anyone to seek one.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: Even though a person earns every indulgence, he should still not refrain from penitential works. Thus says Pope Innocent, for after the forgiveness of sins and of all penance through indulgence, there remains in a person the tendency to sin again.³⁴ A person must medicate himself against this tendency by means of good works. If after the forgiveness of sin and penance he also wants to gain great

32 “Nemini enim dedit laxamentum peccadi deus, quamvis miserando deleas iam facta peccata, si non satisfactio congrua negligatur.” Cf. Augustine, *De poenitentia*, ch. 18 (Augustinus, Ench. c. 70), as cited in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, 354, n.54.

33 Luther’s word, *unleyedlich* (“who are sickly”) could refer either to someone’s physical incapacity (sickness) to practice good works or to a mental or spiritual indisposition (those who find them intolerable).

34 Pope Innocent III, 1198–1216. Cf. *PL* 217, 691–702.

merit with God and increase his merit, then he dare not omit painful good works. Rather he must bear the cross of Christ to the very end. An indulgence does not remove this but rather inflames a person toward the cross and makes him ready and eager to perform painful works and to avoid laziness.

Therefore, this article is erroneous and mere prattle, because it announces that no one ought to speak against indulgences, which nonetheless occurs in almost every article of the sermon. One should also not persuade people to do what is clearly against the practice of the holy Roman Church and render it disgusting, as [is done here against] the Church's announcing and publicizing the holy Jubilee Year long before it is to be celebrated in Rome.³⁵

The article also contradicts the practice of all those individual Christian churches throughout the whole world, which always allow papal indulgences as well as those of their own bishops to be proclaimed. For example, a crusade is undertaken by Christians against heretics and infidels, and people are urged and admonished with great diligence to participate, also in part because of the plenary indulgence that crusaders gain. Hence, the concluding words of this article are declared contrary to all truth.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XV.

The fifteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Fifteenth, it would be far more positive and beneficial for a person to give to the building of St. Peter, or to whatever project is named, solely for the sake of God than to get an indulgence for so doing. For it is dangerous to make such a gift for the sake of an indulgence and not for the sake of God.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted thusly in Christian manner: First, it is totally bare and naked and fabricated without any proof based on Holy Scripture, when it implies in its conclusion that a person could give alms merely for the sake of an indulgence and not for the sake of God. As though anyone would give alms for the sake of an indulgence without thereby also praising God! For just as surely as a person gives alms for an indulgence, so too he gives it for the sake of God. Indeed, all indulgences are given first of all for the glory of God. Thus, whoever gives alms for the sake of an indulgence is also giving it principally for the sake of God, aside from the fact that no one earns an indulgence unless he has true contrition and love of God. And whoever does good works for the love of God is dedicating them to God and his praise. Therefore, Christians should not believe this article in the least.

³⁵ Luther refers to the Jubilee Indulgence in thesis 26 of his *Ninety-Five Theses*, and Tetzel addresses that topic in thesis 33 of his *106 Frankfurt Theses*. For details, see W. Lurz, “Heiliges Jahr II” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (1993), 4:1325.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XVI.

The sixteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Sixteenth, far better is the good work shown a needy person than given to a building. It is also far better than the indulgence granted for it. For as it is said: ‘Better is a good work done than much remitted.’ The indulgence, however, is the remittance of many good works, or else nothing is remitted.

Indeed, so that I instruct you correctly, pay attention. You should above all things (considering neither St. Peter’s nor indulgence) give to your poor neighbor, if you want to give anything. But if it should happen that there is no one else in your city who needs help (which unless God will it, will never happen), then you should give as you will, to the churches, altars, jewels, chalices in your city. And when that too is now no longer necessary, then and only then may you give as you will to the building of St. Peter’s or to anything else. Nonetheless, that also you ought not do for the sake of indulgences. For St. Paul says, ‘Whoever does not do good to his closest neighbor is no Christian and worse than a heathen.’ [1 Timothy 5:8] And keep this in mind: whoever tells you otherwise is deceiving you or is really seeking your soul in your purse. And if he finds a penny therein, he would prefer that to every soul.

If you then declare, ‘Then I will never more buy an indulgence,’ I reply, ‘I have already said earlier that my will, desire, request, and advice is that no one seek an indulgence. Let lazy and sleepy Christians buy indulgences. You go your own way.’”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is unfounded and entirely obscure, since it considers one matter and leaves the other matter unmentioned. For giving alms to a poor person is more beneficial for the earning of salvation, yet buying a plenary—or indeed any indulgence—is more beneficial for the speedier satisfaction of punishment due to sin. Further, everyone should know that buying an indulgence is also a work of mercy. For whoever buys an indulgence takes pity on his soul and makes himself well-pleasing to God thereby. Therefore, this article concludes erroneously in saying that buying an indulgence is not an act of mercy, and it concludes in a quite un-Christian manner in maintaining that an indulgence is the omission of many good works. For it substantiates that with no passage of Scripture, nor will one ever be found, which could confirm such a thing. Besides, anyone who earns an indulgence must be living in God’s love, and where that love is in a person, that person does many good and great works. [Cf. Galatians 5:6]

This erroneous article also contradicts the contents of all indulgence bulls and briefs, all of which proclaim unanimously that indulgences are given to spur people on to contrition and confession and good works. Therefore, this erroneous article should be entirely discounted.

Pronounced in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

This article also implies that people are given true teaching in the erroneous sermon. That corresponds not at all with the truth. Rather, it “is wished, implored, and advised” in this article “that no one should buy an indulgence,” advice which is detrimental to salvation. The article says further that only “lazy and sleepy Christians” should purchase an indulgence, which cruelly misleads Christianity. Consider that a person does himself much more good in purchasing the indulgence he needs, than in giving alms to a poor person who is not in a state of utmost need. For the alms or the good work with which someone is earning the indulgence functions just as meritoriously toward eternal life, since it is done for the love of God, as do the alms given to a poor person.

Furthermore, because a person who earns an indulgence by giving alms is released quickly and speedily from the suffering due him for his sins, it is better for him to earn an indulgence than to give alms to poor persons not in a condition of extreme need. Also, the Lord Jesus says in Luke, the eleventh chapter, “Whatever is superfluous, give alms therefrom” [Luke 11:41], which means to those who are not in a condition of utmost need. God does, however, command us to give alms to those who are in a condition of utmost need, even of those goods needed to maintain our nature and status. Therefore, St. Paul is improperly quoted in this article. For St. Paul says, “Whoever does not act well toward the members of his household is no Christian and worse than a heathen.” [1 Timothy 5:8] He does not, however, forbid a person to do good for himself sooner than for his household members who are not in a state of utmost need. Each person should also observe the order of charity in giving alms; that is, he helps himself sooner than his relatives, as discussed above. Therefore, Christian believers should grant no credence to the plain, naked, unsupported words of this article, for the article is not established on the basis of any reliable substantiation of Holy Scripture.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

XVII.

The seventeenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Seventeenth, an indulgence is not required, also not recommended but rather is one of those things that are tolerated and allowed. Therefore, it is not a work of obedience, is also not meritorious, but is rather an excuse from obedience. Therefore, just as one should not prevent anyone from buying an indulgence, so too one should draw Christians away from doing so and instead should stimulate and strengthen them for the works and sufferings that could be remitted by indulgence.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted in true Christian manner thusly: True, there is no command to earn an indulgence. It is, however, most truly advised by Their Holinesses the Popes, by the revered holy ecumenical councils, by all devout prelates of Holy Church who grant indulgences for the sake of practicing good works, to the honor of God and for the good of Christendom and for the profit of an individual (since he does good works for the sake of the indulgence) and for the good of the person so that he is freed from the suffering due his sins, as mentioned above. Therefore, an indulgence is not one of those things that are merely “tolerated and allowed.”

This article claims further that earning an indulgence is not a meritorious work but rather a way out of obedience, which for all eternity can be as little justified by any shred of Holy Scripture as all the other articles. For the works that are graced with an indulgence are always better than the same ones accomplished with the same love but without an indulgence. Thus, this article contradicts the freedom of the holy Roman See, for God has entrusted to his regent, the pope and the Papal See, the prime leadership of the things that serve humankind for salvation.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XVIII.

The eighteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Eighteenth, whether souls are drawn out of purgatory by indulgences, I do not know. Still, I do not believe so, although various modern scholars say so. But it is impossible for them to prove it, and furthermore, the Church has not yet come to a conclusion. Therefore, for greater certainty it is better that you pray for them and labor for them. For this is more proven and is certain.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is refuted thusly in Christian manner: First, it is full of malicious guile, when it claims that the Church has not concluded that souls can be delivered from purgatory through indulgences. For the tradition of the Roman Church does maintain that souls are delivered from purgatory by an indulgence. There are also very many altars, churches, and chapels in Rome, where souls are released by celebrating Masses or by doing other good works. This is so because the popes have granted plenary indulgences to these very places to release souls, whenever Mass is celebrated there or other good words are carried out, as is the practice in Rome. The pope and the Roman Church would not permit this release of souls in such manner in Rome, if it were not thoroughly established. For the pope and the holy See, as well as the papal office, do not err in matters that concern the faith.

Now indulgences also concern faith, for whoever does not believe that the pope can grant indulgences and plenary indulgences to the living and the dead—as long as they remain in God’s love—that person maintains that the pope has not received complete authority from the Lord Christ over Christian believers, which contradicts sacred canon law.

This article also announces that various modern theologians say that souls can be delivered from purgatory through indulgences, but that it is impossible for them to prove it. In this regard one should know that the revered modern theologians have indeed established it very well and have never been condemned for that by the holy Roman Church. Accordingly, they must well have proven it. Especially is this the case with St. Thomas, whose teaching is concerned with faith and the salvation of souls. The Popes Urban and Innocent have accepted and affirmed his teaching as Christian and true.³⁶ Furthermore, no following pope has ever condemned his teaching. Because the teaching of St. Thomas is accepted as Christian, the truth of this article is truly questionable. Also St. Jerome says, “Because the faith of His Papal Holiness is accepted as right and good, since he occupies the throne and faith of Peter, so then that person who reproves his [the pope’s] faith proves himself to be ignorant, or evil, or a heretic.”³⁷ And this is how that person is to be judged who reproves St. Thomas’ teaching of the Christian faith as unsubstantiated.

This is offered in acknowledgment of the holy See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

XIX.

The nineteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Nineteenth, in these points I have no doubts and they are sufficiently grounded in Scripture. Therefore, you should also have no doubt and let the Scholastic Doctors remain Scholastics. Taken all together they are not enough with their opinions to substantiate a sermon.”

REBUTTAL ❗ It is refuted in Christian manner accordingly: First, this article and all the articles cited are totally ungrounded in Scripture. For the articles contradict the practice of the holy Roman Church and the teaching of all modern, venerable Christian teachers. If St. Augustine together with the three other ancient, venerable Doctors of the Church had foreseen that the authority of the papal office and of the Roman Church concerning indulgences would be so despised by erring persons, they would certainly have forestalled it with their writings. Modern revered theologians have, however, experienced and heard how malicious

36 Urban IV, Pope 1261–1264, French, never resided in Rome. Innocent VI, Pope 1352–1362, French, acted severely toward the Spiritual Franciscans. Aquinas served as theological counselor to this papal court in Viterbo.

37 St. Jerome, “Epistula ad Damasum (No. 15),” *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vindobonae: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 54:62–67.

men have been speaking, preaching, and writing against the pope and the validity of indulgences, and they have challenged this, based on solid Christian foundation. Nor has the holy Roman Church rebuked or censored them for doing so.

This article also states, "One should let the *"Doctores Scholasticos"* remain "Scholastics," for taken all together, they with their opinions are unable to substantiate a sermon." [And further,] ignorant people hold this opinion of the venerable scholastic doctors, for these venerable *"Doctores"* uncover and oppose all new errors. Therefore, wrong-thinking people deride them. However, the holy Roman Church together with the whole community of sacred Christendom are in unanimous agreement that the revered venerable *"Doctores Scholasticos"* buttress the holy Christian faith against the heretics with their truly salvific teaching based on solid Christian doctrine. And what is more, they are certainly able to preach a sermon! Thus this article makes sport of them quite unfairly and shamefully and contrary to all reason and truth.

Further, all the erroneous articles are characterized by abruptness and obscurity, perhaps because they are intended to be interpreted however one will and in any direction. The great scandal that they elicit, however, ought to have been considered beforehand. For because of them many people will hold the *magisterium* and jurisdiction of His Papal Holiness and the holy Roman See in contempt. The works of sacramental reparation will also cease. People will no longer believe preachers and theologians. Everyone will want to interpret Holy Scripture according to his own whim. Through this, all of holy Christendom must come into great spiritual danger, since each person will believe what best pleases him. In time, as the deceptive article announces, the modern revered theologians, in whom for many centuries Christianity has placed great confidence, shall no longer be considered credible. For these reasons this article is entirely erroneous.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XX.

The twentieth erroneous article reads as follows:

"Twentieth, whether some people reproach me as a heretic (for such a truth is quite injurious for their money boxes), I pay little heed to such babblings inasmuch as no one does so except some muddled brains who have never sniffed a Bible, have never read the Christian teachers, have never understood their own teachers but rather are decaying in their riddled and fragmented opinions. For if they had understood them, they would know that they should defame no one without hearing and challenging him. Nonetheless, may God give them and us right understanding. Amen."

REBUTTAL ❏ It refuted in a Christian and well-grounded manner: First, it is totally erroneous, and it requires no riddled brain to know who is a heretic. Therefore I, Brother Johann Tetzel, Order of Preachers, am forced to leave out several other teachings and positions here, which I intend, with God's help, to discuss and prove correct in a Christian manner at the respected University of Frankfurt an der Oder on a date to be arranged.³⁸ That disputation will make anyone with half a brain able to learn and recognize who is a *Heresiarcha*, *Hereticus*, *Sismaticus*, *Erroneus*, *Temerarius*, *Malesonans*, etc., (which is translated: *an archheretic, a heretic, a reprobate, a lunatic, a blasphemer or slanderer, etc.*) and who is truly a Christian believer or not, granted of course that they have considered this treatise of mine as well as my previous treatise and [also] the sermon on twenty erroneous articles, as well as the treatise that begins, "*Amore et studio elucidando veritatis*," and concludes in the last thesis, "*Ac sic magis per multas tribulationes intrare celum quam per securitatem pacis confidunt*."³⁹

From all this it will also become clear who "has a confused brain, who has never sniffed a Bible, never read the Christian masters, has never understood his own teachers." Therefore, I offer all of this rebuttal and my position that I have written regarding these matters for the consideration and judgment of His Holiness the Pope, the holy Roman Church, all trustworthy Christian universities, and doctors⁴⁰ with sure trust in the truth, with the commitment to suffer whatever they judge just, [if any of it be heretical], be it through imprisonment, the stocks, drowning, or burning at the stake.

I write this as true Christian fraternal admonition, so that from now on no one should believe the sermon on the twenty erroneous articles nor the theses that begin, "*Dominus et Magister noster Ihesus Christus dicendo penitentiam agite etc.*," and end, "*Ac sic magis per multas tribulationes intrare celum etc.*,"⁴¹ [that is to say], unless their author were to submit to the consideration and judgment of the His Papal Holiness, the holy Roman Church, and all trustworthy Christian universities and shall have proven such submission through his actions. For I am confident that without such submission, the sermon on the twenty articles and the recently mentioned theses would be neither sermon nor redemptive doctrine but rather a seduction and a perversion of the people. For Christ himself says, "Whoever hears not the Church, that one shall be to you as a gentile and a publican." [Matthew 18:17]

38 Tetzel is referring to his forthcoming, disputation-document, "50 Positiones," a second series of fifty theses in Latin that he (rather than Wimpina) would write. Printed in late April/early May, no original copy exists. Reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, Text 12, pp. 369–375.

39 Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. Tetzel quotes the opening words of the "Introduction" ("Out of love and zeal for the truth . . ."), and the complete thesis 95 ("And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace").

40 Note Tetzel's subtle but crucial variation of his concluding formula, from "all Christian" to "all trustworthy Christian" (*unvordechtig* = trustworthy, above suspicion) and his insertion of it three times into the body itself of this rebuttal 20. Note also his inclusion of the formula (unchanged) within the body of rebuttal 16 above (cf. note 24 above).

41 In this final reference to Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, Tetzel omits the opening phrase quoted in paragraph one above, and cites instead the beginning of the first thesis ("When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent'").

And if that person who wrote and distributed the erroneous sermon on the twenty articles should maintain anything publicly against this rebuttal of mine without the evidence of Holy Scripture, of canon law, and of theologians, or without consideration of sufficient cause and reason, then no Christian should be upset by him, for it is mere prattle. And if this person does not submit his fabrication publicly and in writing to the judgment of His Papal Holiness, of the holy See, and of all trustworthy Christian universities, then I will not write against him again, considering it all unworthy of response and rebuttal. To which I do herewith publicly give my witness.

Submitted for the praise of God, for the salvation of humankind, and to the honor of the holy Papal See.