

WORLD HISTORY

SELLING INDULGENCES

Name _____

Questions on back

In the dark ages, when the Papacy held control of men's consciences and few dared to think, one method the Church used to supply herself with money was the sale of indulgences. An **indulgence** was a permission to sin and yet be free from its consequences. Like all great evils, the sale of indulgences came in gradually. At first it consisted of the **forgiveness of sins and remission of the penalty to all who would fight the church's battles** -- holy wars as they were called--waged against all within her reach whom she deemed "heretics" and infidels. Heretics included all classes of Christians who differed from and did not support Papacy. Infidels were those who disbelieved in Christianity, such as the Muslims. Against these people, she waged wars, and those who engaged in them and died in battle were sure of heaven, no matter what their previous course of life had been. This cancellation of sins was offered on account, not of repentance and faith in the *ransom*, but for what they termed the "good work" of slaughtering the church's enemies in the crusades, etc.... Thus the use of indulgences began.

Afterward succeeding Popes and councils began using indulgences in more abusive ways. They argued that if they had a right to remit sins for **service** to the church, they had also the right to remit them for **money** for the church, and if it could be used for the living, they reasoned it could also be used for the **dead**. As time passed, they took it further and concluded that if they had a right to remit, or excuse, **past sins** for money, they had the same right to remit or grant an indulgence for **sins of the future**.

We could not object to this course of reasoning if its premise or starting point were right. If the Papacy had one of these rights, we must conclude that she had the others also. But what right has any man to consider any sin cancelled except upon the conditions God has laid down -- certainly not money, but faith in the **redemption which is in Christ Jesus**.

Some of these indulgences expressly mentioned the very sins which might be committed. Some mentioned the number of years that the torments of **Purgatory** would be shortened to the indulged one. From Pope John XII, it is recorded that he granted "ninety thousand years of pardons for deadly sins" for the devout repetition of three prayers written in a chapel in Rome.

The **crisis reached its breaking point** when Pope Julius I and Pope Leo X gave indulgences to people who contributed money to the building of the world-renowned **St. Peter's Cathedral** in Rome in 1506. The collecting of these funds from the sale of indulgences was given to the monks of the "Order of St. Dominic." One of the monks was the notorious **Johann Tetzel**. According to Martin Luther's account, indulgences were sold in the streets, market-places, and taverns, and every buyer would have the gates of heaven opened for him. If buying an indulgence for someone that was already dead (mom, dad, brother, sister, etc...) they were instantly liberated from Purgatory.

Tetzel traveled from town to town, bearing the official document or "bill" of Leo X on a velvet cushion proclaiming to the multitudes: "Indulgences are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts; this red cross has as much efficacy as the cross of Jesus Christ. Draw near and I will give you letters duly sealed, by which even the sins you shall hereafter desire to commit, shall be all forgiven you. There is no sin so great that indulgence cannot remit. Pay, only pay largely, and you shall be forgiven. But more than all this, indulgences save not the living alone, they also save the dead. Ye priests, ye nobles, ye tradesmen, ye wives, ye maidens, ye young men, hearken to your departed parents and friends who call to you from the bottomless abyss:--'We are enduring horrible torment; a small alms would deliver us, you *can* give it, *will* you not?' The moment the money clinks in the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies to heaven. With ten groshen you can deliver your father from Purgatory. **Our Lord God no longer deals with us as God -- he has given all power to the pope.**"

It was the sale of these "future" indulgences for money which awakened and aroused a few honest souls such as **Martin Luther** and gave rise to the **Reformation** movement, called the **Protestant Reformation**, because of their protests and objections to this and other evils being committed by the Papacy.

List the 3 ways in which the Papacy used Indulgences:

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What was the purpose of Purgatory?

For what 3 types of sin could indulgences be purchased:

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What was the “breaking point” for people like Martin Luther in regards to the sale of Indulgences?

What can you logically deduce were the “dangers of not purchasing an indulgence?”

What was the Protestant Reformation?