

were in purgatory). In theory the payment was not to be done in a fleshly motif but if the money was there the nature of the motive was not strongly questioned. The indulgence principle was consequently abused and became the source of abuse. Needless to say it was totally without warrant in the Scripture and even in the tradition of the fathers of the church. It was an invention to meet a need: a need for money and control of the masses. Luther, and many godly persons were appalled at the idea.

The Brandenburg Indulgence

In the minds of many the indulgence was a legitimate way of making money and it was particularly useful when a large sum was needed. It was probably more fair than bingo! One of the German prelates was Albrecht of Brandenburg. He had succeeded in becoming archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg and had the administrative concern for Hamburg. These were three of the strongest territories in central-east Germany with the largest benefices. But to gain these offices, Albrecht had to offer a large sum to Leo X. the pope who had the power to confer them. Leo was at the time in a building project in Rome (St. Peter's) and needed whatever funds he could raise. /probably would have sold the benefices to the highest bidder regardless. To raise funds to satisfy Leo's demand, Albrecht suggested an indulgence sale of the plenary sort especially for the release of souls in purgatory. From this sale 1/2 would come to Albrecht. It seemed like a "winner" and the Pope approved.

Tetzel (1465-1519)

As a chief indulgence seller, Tetzel, a Dominican monk, had few peers. His moment of fame came as he beat upon the sales box and gave the enunciation that as money went into the box, souls flew to heaven. He held a minor post in the commissariate structure of Magdeburg and never actually sold the indulgences in Electoral Saxony. . . Luther had persuaded Frederick to ban such sales. But near the border he made great sales to various Wittenbergers who were not yet enlightened and the very idea fired the ire of Luther. As a result Luther took two actions. The 95 theses which question the legitimacy of the indulgence matter were displayed on the door of Wittenberg