The Reformation – Document #1 (Johann Tetzel's Letter)

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| * What rationale does Tetzel give for obtaining indulgences?

 What are the “dangers” of not purchasing an indulgence?  |  |
| ... Blessed eyes indeed, which see what they see, because already they possess letters of safe conduct by which they are able to lead their souls through that valley of tears, through that sea of the mad world, where storms and tempests and dangers lie in wait, to the blessed land of Paradise. Know that the life of man upon earth is a constant struggle. We have to fight against the flesh, the world and the devil, who are always seeking to destroy the soul. In sin we are conceived. Alas! what bonds of sin encompass us, and how difficult and almost impossible it is to attain to the gate of salvation without divine aid; since He causes us to be saved, not by virtue of the good works which we accomplish, but through His divine mercy, it is necessary then to put on the armor of God. You may obtain letters of safe conduct from the vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, by means of which you are able to liberate your soul from the hands of the enemy, and convey it by means of contrition and confession, safe and secure from all pains of Purgatory, into the happy kingdom. For know that in these letters are stamped and engraven all the merits of Christ's passion there laid bare. Consider, that for each and every mortal sin it is necessary to undergo seven years of penitence after confession and contrition, either in this life or in Purgatory. How many mortal sins are committed in a day, how many in a week, how many in a month, how many in a year, how many in the whole course of life! They are well-nigh numberless, and those that commit them must needs suffer endless punishment in the burning pains of Purgatory. But with these confessional letters you will be able at any time in life to obtain full indulgence for all penalties imposed upon you, in all cases except the four reserved to the Apostolic See. Therefore throughout your whole life, whenever you wish to make confession, you may receive the same remission, except in cases reserved to the Pope, and afterwards, at the hour of death, a full indulgence as to all penalties and sins, and your share of all spiritual blessings that exist in the church militant and all its members. Do you not know that when it is necessary for anyone to go to Rome, or undertake any other dangerous journey, he takes his money to a broker and gives a certain percent-five or six or ten-in order that at Rome or elsewhere he may receive again his funds intact, by means of the letter of this same broker? Are you not willing, then, for the fourth part of a florin, to obtain these letters, by virtue of which you may bring, not your money but your divine and immortal soul safe and sound into the land of Paradise? **SOURCE:** Johann Tetzel, 1517.  |
|  | * **The Reformation – Document #2 (Ninety Five Theses - excerpts)**
* What were some of the major theological issues questioned by Luther?
* What specific accusation does he make against the papacy?
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| In the desire and with the purpose of elucidating the truth, a disputation will be held on the underwritten propositions at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Monk of the Order of St. Augustine, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and ordinary Reader of the same in that place. He therefore asks those who cannot be present and discuss the subject with us orally, to do so by letter in their absence. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. . . . 5. The Pope has neither the will nor the power to remit any penalties except those which he has imposed by his own authority, or by that of the canons. 6. The Pope has no power to remit any guilt, except by declaring and warranting it to have been remitted by God; or at most by remitting cases reserved for himself; in which  cases, if his power were [disregarded], guilt would certainly remain. . . . 20. Therefore the Pope, when he speaks of the plenary remission of all penalties, does not really mean of all, but only of those imposed by himself. 21. Thus those preachers of indulgences are in error who say that by the indulgences of  the Pope a man is freed and saved from all punishment. 22. For in fact he remits to souls in Purgatory no penalty which they would have had to pay in this life according to the canons. 23. If any entire remission of all penalties can be granted to anyone it is certain that it is granted to none but the most perfect, that is to very few. 24. Hence, the greater part of the people must needs be deceived by his indiscriminate  and high-sounding promise of release from penalties. 25. Such power over Purgatory as the Pope has in general, such has every bishop in his  own diocese, and every parish priest in his own parish. . . . 27. They are wrong who say that the soul flies out of Purgatory as soon as the money  thrown into the chest rattles. 28. It is certain that, when money rattles in the chest, avarice and gain may be increased, but the effect of the intercession of the Church depends on the will of God alone. . . . 32. Those who believe that, through letters of pardon, they are made sure of their own  salvation will be eternally damned along with their teachers. 33. We must especially beware of those who say that these pardons from the Pope are  that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to God. . . . 35. They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary for  those who buy souls (out of Purgatory) or buy confessional licenses. 37. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has a share in all the benefits of Christ and of the Church, given by God, even without letters of pardon. . . . 42. Christians should be taught that it is not the wish of the Pope that buying of pardons should be in any way compared to works of mercy. 43. Christians should be taught that he who gives to a poor man, or lends to a needy man,  does better than if he bought pardons. . . . 45. Christians should be taught that he who sees anyone in need, and, passing him by,  gives money for pardons, is not purchasing for himself the indulgences of the Pope but  the anger of God.... 50. Christians should be taught that, if the Pope were acquainted with the exactions of  the Preachers of pardons, he would prefer that the Basilica of St. Peter should be  burnt to ashes rather than that it should be built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep. . . .  |
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| 62. The true treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God. . . .66. The treasures of indulgences are nets, wherewith they now fish for the riches of men. 86. Again; why does not the Pope, whose riches are at this day more ample than those of the wealthiest of the wealthy, build the Basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with that of poor believers. . . . 94. Christians should be exhorted to strive to follow Christ their head through pains,  deaths, and hells.95. And thus not trust to enter heaven through many tribulations, rather than in the  security of peace.  |
| **SOURCE:** ExcerptsfromMartinLuther’s*Ninety-fiveTheses*,1517.  |