

Document 1

Background Reading

In 1510, Martin Luther became concerned with the massive amount of wealth being collected by the Catholic Church. The Church had begun to sell indulgences to pay for the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral. Indulgences were official pardons for the forgiveness of sins. Luther disapproved of this practice and wrote out all of his concerns in a document known as The Ninety-Five Theses. In this document, Luther challenged the authority of the Church, accused the Church of being a corrupt institution, and stressed the spiritual nature of the Christian faith. Luther sent his Theses to his bishop, nailed them to the door of his church, and thousands of copies were printed and read all across Europe. Luther's actions led to the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

Guiding Questions

1. Why was Martin Luther upset with the Catholic Church?
2. What were Luther's three main criticisms of the Church?
3. Explain the connection between Luther's criticisms and the selling of indulgences.