

Letter to the Archbishop of Mainz, 1517

Papal indulgences for the building of St. Peter's are circulating under your most distinguished name...the unhappy souls believe that if they have purchased letters of indulgence they are sure of their salvation; again, that so soon as they cast their contributions into the money-box, souls fly out of purgatory; furthermore, that these graces are so great that there is no sin too great to be absolved...through these indulgences, from all penalty and guilt.

Guiding Questions

1. Luther begins by stating to the Archbishop of Mainz that indulgences are being sold in his name. According to the text, why would this be problematic?

2. What does Luther mean when he says that people believe that as soon as they buy an indulgence, "souls fly out of purgatory"?

3. What is Luther's main criticism of the Catholic Church in this excerpt?