

2.6 Archbishop Albert of Mainz (d. 1545): The Commission of Indulgences

Hillerbrand 1964: 37–41

We do herewith proclaim that our most holy Lord Leo X, by divine providence present Pontiff, has given and bestowed to all Christian believers of either sex who lend their helpful hand for the reconstruction of the cathedral church of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, in Rome, complete indulgence as well as other graces and freedoms, which the Christian believer may obtain according to the apostolic letter dealing with this Matter. . . .

Here follow the four principal graces granted in the apostolic bull. . . .

The first grace is the complete remission of all sins. . . . Moreover, through such forgiveness of sins the punishment which one is obliged to undergo in purgatory on account of the offence of the Divine Majesty is all remitted and the pain of purgatory is altogether done away with. . . .

Because the conditions of men are many and diverse, it is not possible to establish a general fee. We have therefore fixed the following rates [for an indulgence]:

Kings, queens, and their sons, archbishops and bishops, and other great rulers should pay . . . twenty-five Rhenish guilders.

Abbots, prelates of cathedral churches, counts, barons, and others of the higher nobility and their wives shall pay for each letter of indulgence ten such gold guilders. Other lesser prelates and nobles, as also the rectors of famous places, and all others who take in, either from steady income or goods or other means, 500 gold guilders should pay six guilders.

Other citizens and merchants, who ordinarily take in 200 such gold florins, should pay three florins.

Other citizens, merchants, and artisans, who have their families and income of their own, shall pay one such guilder; those of lesser means, pay only one half. . . .

But those who do not have any money should supply their contribution with prayer. For the kingdom of heaven should be open to the poor no less than to the rich. . . .

The second principal grace is a letter of indulgence, entailing the greatest, exceedingly quickening and hitherto unheard of powers, which will continue beyond the eight years designated in the present bull. . . .

The third principal grace is the participation in all the possessions of the Church universal: . . . contributors . . . together with their deceased relatives, who have departed this world in a state of grace, shall from now on, and for eternity, be partakers in all petitions, intercessions, alms, fastings, prayers, in each and every pilgrimage, even those to the Holy Land; . . . and all other spiritual goods which have been, or shall be, brought forth by the universal, most holy Church militant or by any of its members. . . .

We also declare that in order to obtain these two most important graces, it is not necessary to make confession, or to visit the churches and altars, but merely to procure the confessional letter. . . .

The fourth distinctive grace is for those souls which are in purgatory, and is the complete remission of all sins . . . in this wise: that the same contribution shall be placed in the chest by a living person as one would make for himself. . . .

Moreover, preachers shall exert themselves to give this grace the widest publicity, since through the same, help will surely come to departed souls, and the construction of St. Peter will be abundantly promoted at the same time. . . .