The Existence Of Abuses In The Roman Catholic Church Essay, Research Paper

During the Age of Reformation people were greatly against the abuses that existed in the Roman Catholic Church. A couple of abuses that were greatly stressed were the selling of indulgences, simony, and nepotism. It was some of these same abuses that prompted German reformist Martin Luther to write his 95 Theses. And for the Council of Trent to later address them in a series of meetings.

The most criticized abuse of the Roman Catholic Church was the selling of indulgences by the pope. Indulgences permitted people to buy release from time in purgatory for both themselves and their deceased loved ones. They were papers sold in order to bring remission of punishment due to sins. Another common abuse that existed in the Church was simony. Simony is the act of selling of Church positions. The Church had permitted important ecclesiastical posts to be sold to the highest bidders and had left residency requirements in the religious community unenforced. A last abuse of the Church is nepotism. Nepotism is the act of giving jobs to family members instead of giving it to more qualified workers. This was a common problem where a well-trained and dedicated worker was needed and not just anyone.

In 1517, when reformist Martin Luther wrote an indictment of the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church called the 95 Theses, he appealed to many people across Europe. In his indictment he greatly criticized and addressed the selling of indulgences above all. At first, a person would have to do ?work of satisfaction? like fasting, prayer, almsgiving, retreats and pilgrimages in return for an indulgence. But when the empire was in need of money to fight off the Ottoman Empire and rebuild St. Peter?s in Rome, the pope allowed indulgences to be sold for money where he would receive half the proceeds and the other half would go to funding. This is when Luther was even more angered by the selling of indulgences since he already believed that salvation could not be obtained by man?s own effort, but more the fact that man would be saved only if God willed it. It was that event that prompted the German monk to post his ideas and beliefs as the 95 Theses and address the abuse of selling indulgences in it.

The Council of Trent also addressed abuses that existed in the Church. The Council of Trent was a general council where church officials would meet to sharply define and reaffirm the doctrines of the Church. During the meetings of the council the abuses in the Church were discussed, most importantly simony and nepotism, and were condemned. In acts of simony, the hired substitutes (who paid money for their posts) lived elsewhere, mostly in Rome where they often performed their chores mechanically and had neither first-hand knowledge of nor much sympathy with local needs and problems. This is why people opposed the act of simony greatly and finally condemned it. As for nepotism, church officials would hire unqualified family members for jobs, where a real, well-trained professional was needed. This abuse of the Church was also finally condemned in the Council of Trent.

Either it being addressed by reformists like Martin Luther, or by the Council of Trent, abuses which existed in the Roman Catholic Church were not going to go unnoticed. They had to be corrected and fixed somehow to rid the Church of complete corruption.