

Reformation Theology

and the

Myth of Faust

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Augustinian monk and

Professor of Biblical Studies at University of Wittenberg, Germany

Medieval Bible:

Latin Vulgate: St. Jerome 4th C AD (Doctor Faustus , Act I)
translates Greek New Testament and
Hebrew Old Testament into Latin

Renaissance humanism: revival of Latin and Greek learning

1516 Erasmus (Dutch humanist) publishes
edition of Greek New Testament based on Greek manuscripts
Luther uses this text to re-interpret NT & translate it to German

Luther's revolt against Rome

1517 95 Theses against Indulgences

Indulgences: time off in Purgatory
for one's self or for dead relatives

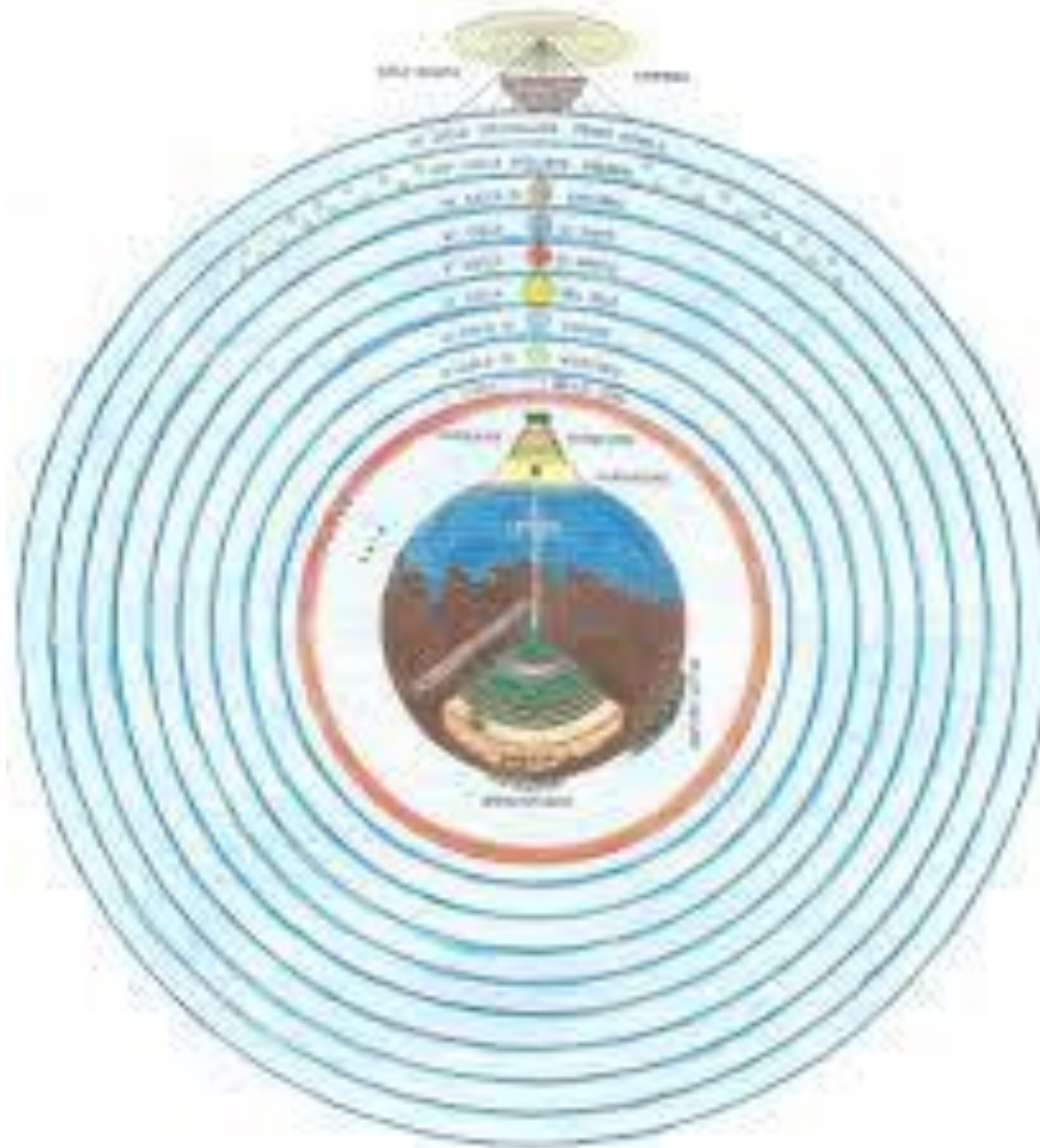
Purgatory: intermediate place between Heaven & Hell
emerged in 12 C. theology

Indulgences first granted to Crusaders in 12th C, then
to people who financed a Crusader,
gradually become an income source for Rome

The Ptolemaic or
Geo-centric Universe

(pre-Copernicus)

Dante's version
Early 14th C

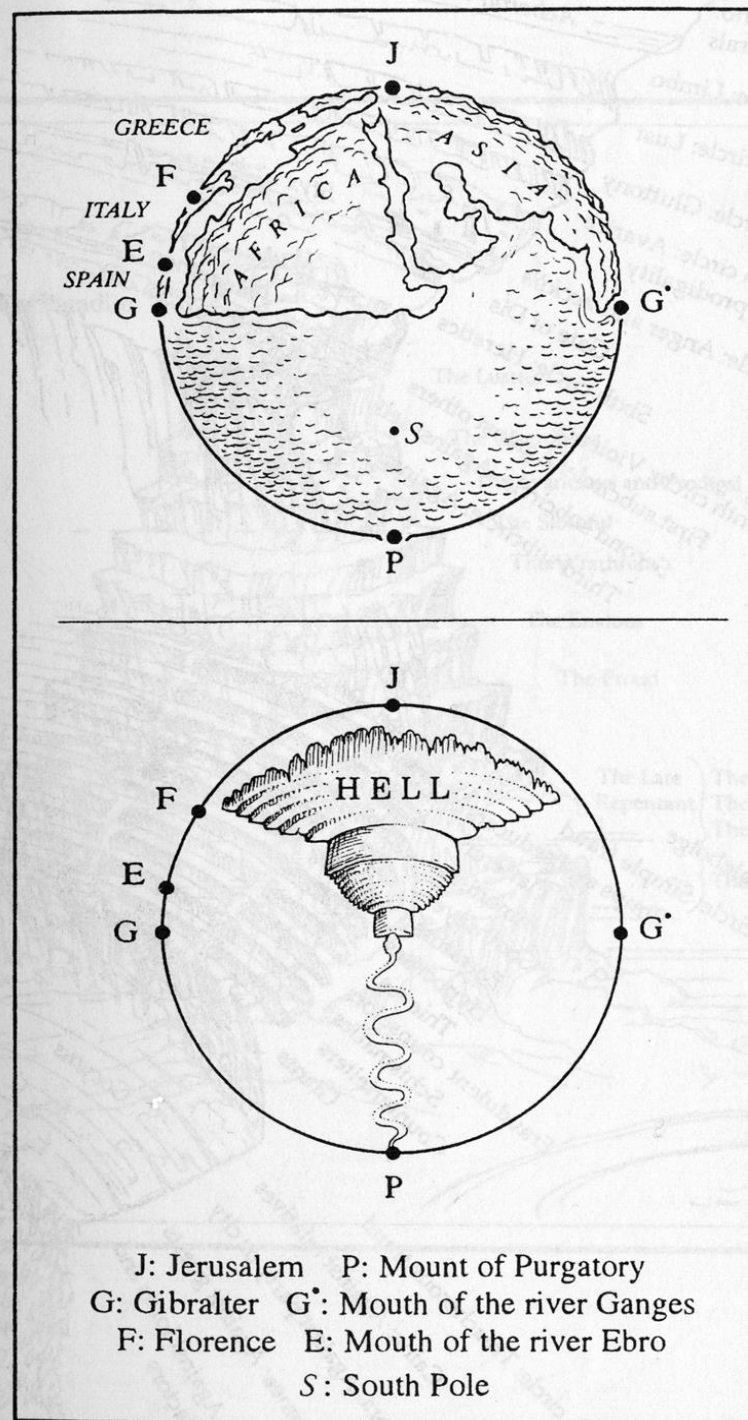


Sintesi generale dell'Universo secondo Dante

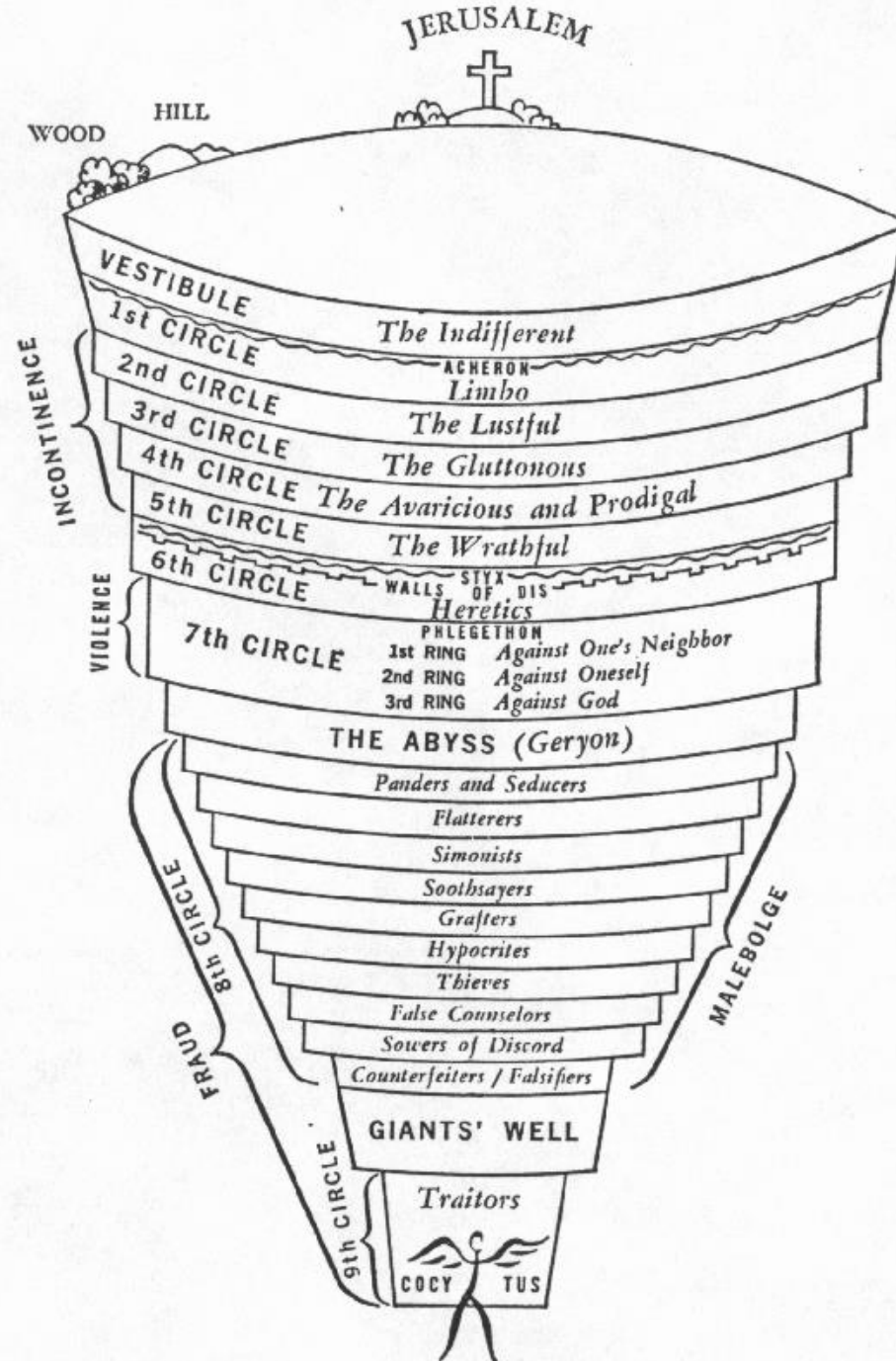
THE MEDIEVAL COSMOS In Dante's Divine Comedy

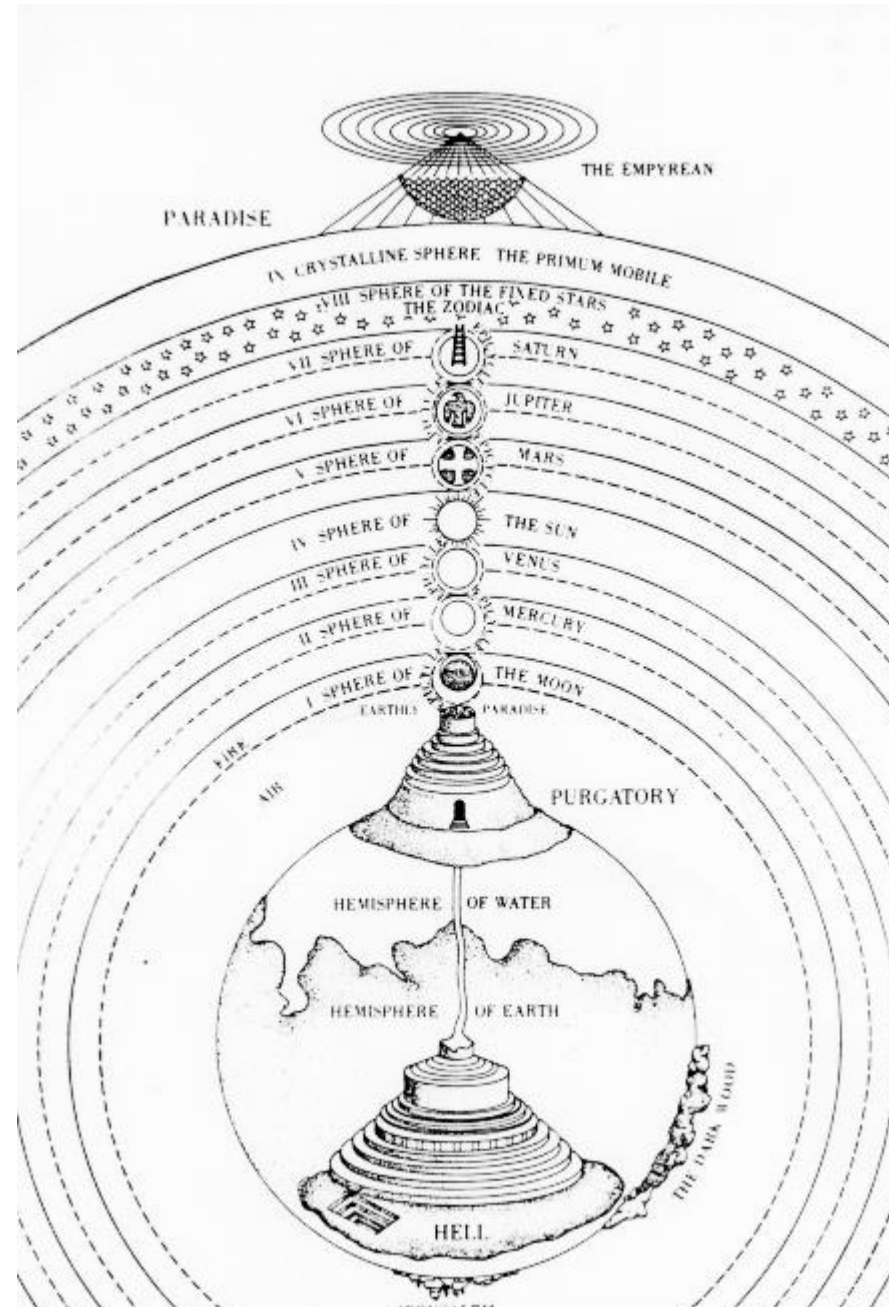
Map of world
with Jerusalem at top
and
Mount of Purgatory
at polar south

Dante's
Journey from
Hell through
Earth to
Mountain of
Purgatory

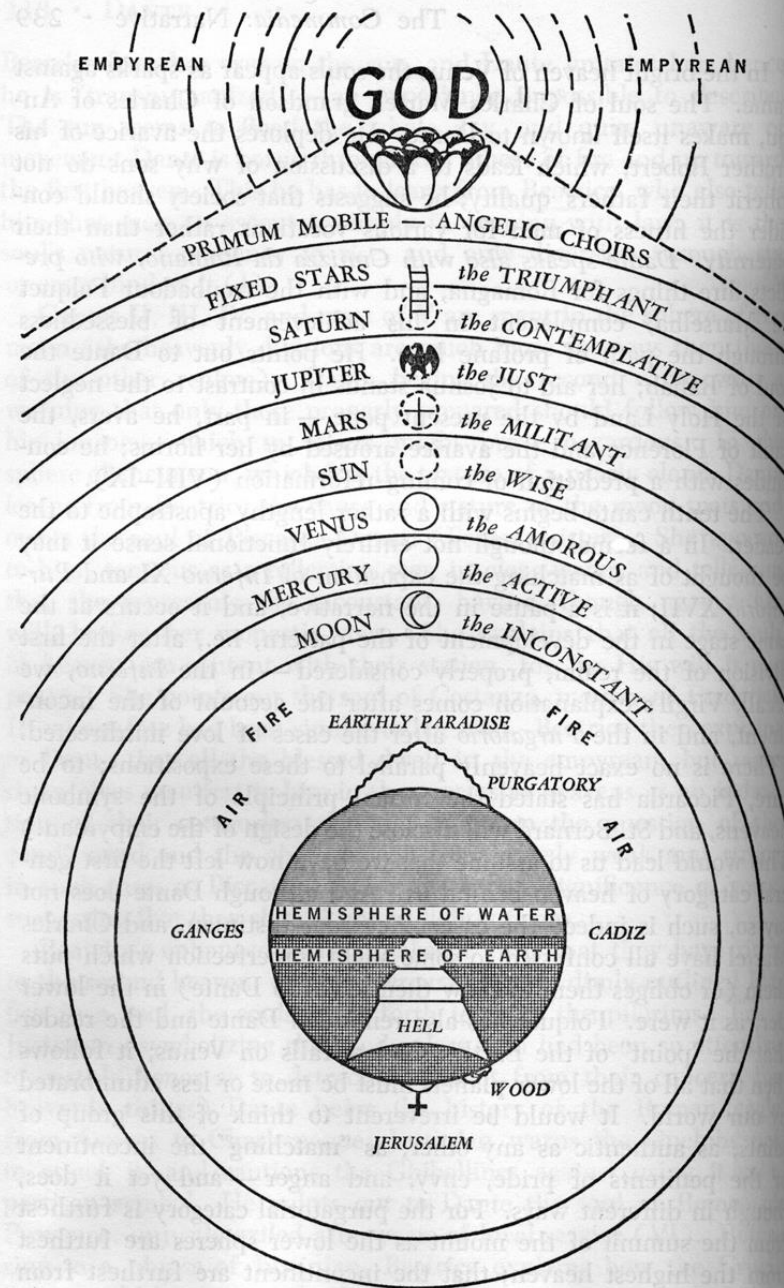


Hell as cone
reaching to
center of the
Earth





Dante's universe
Spheres of the
planets bounded
by the sphere of
the fixed stars
and the *primum
mobile*



Dante's Cosmos



Indulgence Sale

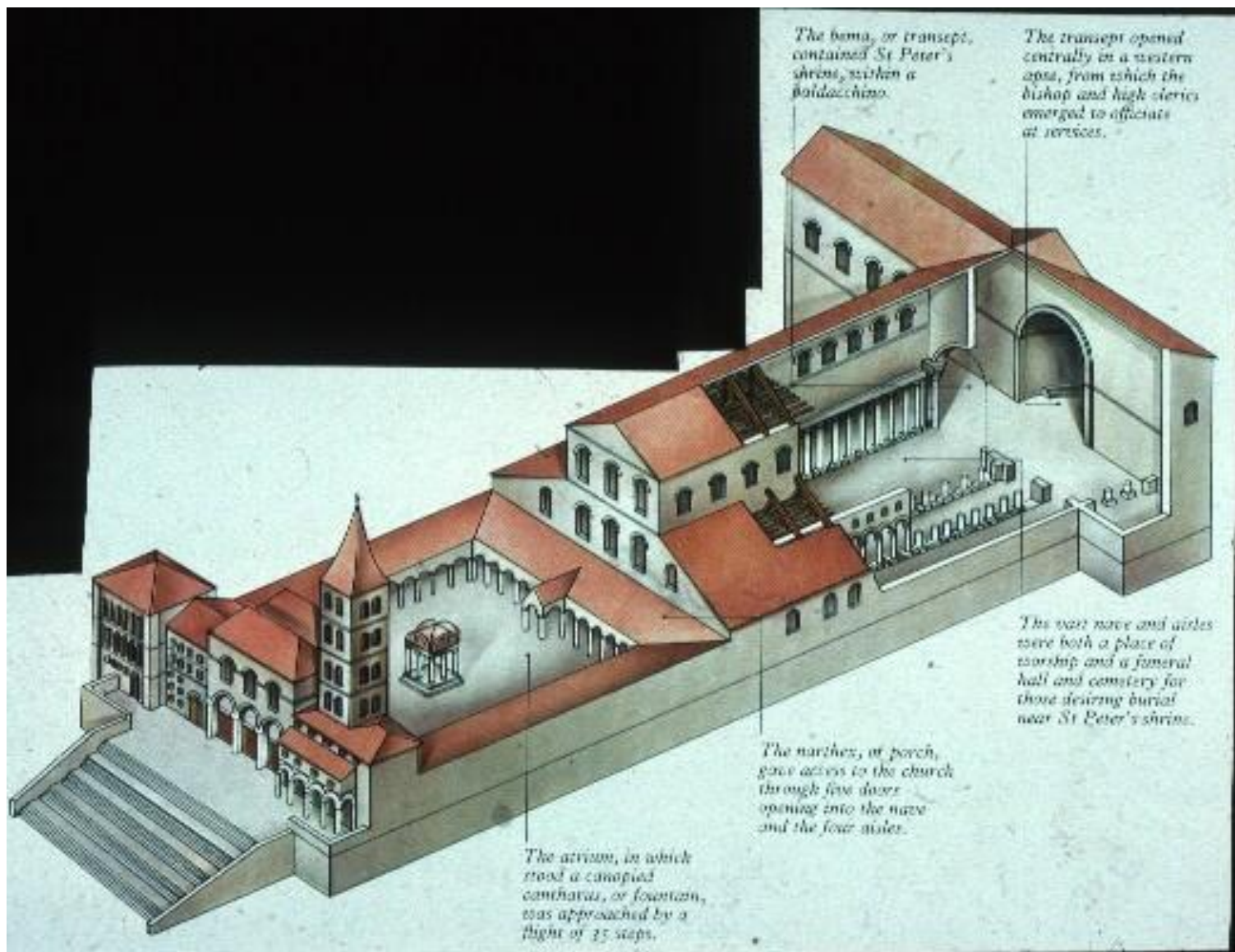
Launched in 1517 by

Pope Leo X

First Medici Pope

To rebuild
Basilica
of St. Peter's





St. Peter's
Basilica

Burial Church
of St. Peter,
first Bishop of
Rome

Built by
Emperor
Constantine
In early 4th C



New St. Peter's built between 16-17th Centuries



Luther against Catholic Church

On Indulgences: denies existence of Purgatory

Pope has no jurisdiction over the afterlife

Luther's Central Theological Themes

Human nature as fallen: original sin as corrupting

Salvation by faith alone: not by effort or good works

Scripture as only source of religious authority

Rejection of Catholic hierarchy (Pope, Bishops, priests)

of Catholic "works righteousness" (earning salvation)

All of these themes are central to the Faust legend

Reformation attack on Catholic doctrines

Attack on Mass and transubstantiation;

role of priest in turning bread and wine into
body of Christ seen as magical;

words of the consecration seen as incantation:

Latin: "Hoc Est Enim Corpus Meum" ("This is my Body")

source of "HOCUS POCUS" as magical formula

Rejection of devotion to saints, shrines, rosaries, statues

ICONOCLASM: breaking of statues, religious objects

Rejection of Catholic protections and remedies against misfortune

"ECCLESIASTICAL MEDICINES" offered by church

as protection against misfortune, demons and witches:

e.g. holy water, images, relics, exorcism--
all now classified as "superstitious" and
rejected by Protestants

Why does the witch panic occur in 16th-17th C. after Reformation?

One factor:

Issue of availability of remedies vs. fear of the witch

FAUST LEGEND

Image of scholar as sorcerer from Renaissance magic

interest in "occult" topics at universities

George Faustus of Heidelberg 1540

real scholar with reputation for magic

1587: FAUSTBUCH (Faust Book) first published in Germany

1588-92: Marlowe's play Doctor Faustus in England

Role of the devil is expanded by Reformation

Polemical attacks on Pope as Anti-Christ
all enemies as agents of the devil

New literary genre: TEUFELSBUCHER ("Devil books")
personification of vices as demonic
e.g. Sauffteufel = devil of drunks
1550's to 1590's: multiple editions

English Faust Book Illustrations

English Faust
Book

16th C.
Illustrations





From
1616
Edition of
Marlowe's
Doctor
Faustus



Political Setting: Marlowe's Doctor FAUSTUS 1588

1534 England's break with Rome under Henry VIII

1558 Elizabeth I succeeds Mary Tudor

1588 Spanish Armada sails against England sent by

King Phillip II of Spain – Catholic son of

Charles V Hapsburg Emperor

Faustus visits courts of Charles V and Roman Pope

