

# Luther

## From Fear to Faith

### *Germany*

## The Characters

Narrator	
Martin Luther	Master of Arts in Law, Augustinian Monk, Priest
Dr. Luther	Doctor of Divinity
Hans	Martin's Father, a copper miner and later a smelter
Father Staupitz	Martin's superior and mentor
Friar John Tetzel	Hired by Pope Leo X to sell <b>indulgences</b> * to rebuild Rome
Cardinal Cajetan (Ky-uh-tan)	Cardinal of San Sisto, General of the Dominican Order, theologian, papal legate and Rome's highest representative in Germany.
Aleander	Assistant to Cajetan, Papal legate for the case
Cardinal 1	
Prince Frederick	Elector of Saxony, University of Wittenberg
Spalatin	Lawyer, Assistant to Prince Frederick, Luther's Colleague from the University of Erfurt
Charles V	Emperor of Germany
Melanchthon	Luther's student, later a friend and successor
Monk # 1	Augustinian devoted to educational, missionary and parish work
Monk # 2	Augustinian devoted to educational, missionary and parish work
Peasants	
Anna and Greta	Peasant women and crippled child
Duke George	Duke of Saxony
Emperor Charles X	Emperor of all Germany
Prince 1	Germany princes served over German districts under the emperor, Charles V
Prince 2	
Katharina von Bora	Ex-Nun and Martin Luther's wife

### Props:

Strobe light	CD-Thunder	Cathedral music	Communion Table	Candelabra & candles
Wooden Bucket	Scrub cloth	Indulgences	Trumpet	Wooden Box
Bundle of Sticks	95 Theses	Gold rose	Letter for Rome	Letter from Rome
Goblet for wine	Dish for bread	Bell	Scripture & chain	Pamphlets and books
Summons	<b>Groats</b>	Papal Bull in red ink	German Bible	Benches
Vendor cart	Throne	Desk, Ink & Pen	Feather pen	Candle holder & candle

Worms is pronounced with a V.

**\*Bolded words are defined in the glossary at the end of the play.**

Narrator:

The gloomy, superstitious ideas of religion prevailing at the time filled Martin Luther with fear. Sorrowfully and trembling he looked forward to a dark future. He was in constant terror of God, seeing him as a stern, unrelenting judge, a cruel tyrant that could not be pleased.

## Act I

### 1505

#### Scene 1 On a road in Germany

*Luther*

***C.D. & Strobe light***

*Sound: Loud clashing of thunder, streaks of lightening*

*Setting: Dark road at night, Luther stumbles down the aisle and falls prostrate*

Luther: *(In a crying and begging tone)* I'll give myself to you. *(repeat several times)*

I'll become a monk. I'll become a monk. Spare me. Help me, Lord. I'll give myself to you.

#### Scene 2 Convent of the Augustine Order of Eremites

*Staupitz, Luther, Monk 1, Monk 2*

***Scrub Cloth/ bucket***

*Setting: Luther moving up the stairs on his knees, scrubbing, and mumbling in a tortured tone*

Father Staupitz: What are the tools of Good Works, lads?

Monk 1: *(sincerely)* First, to love Lord God with all one's heart,  
and all one's soul, and all one's strength.

Then one's neighbour as oneself

Then, not to kill

Not to commit adultery

Not to steal

Not to covet

Not to bear false witness

Monk #2: *(A little bit of scoffing)* To honour all men

To deny yourself, in order to follow Christ

To **chastise** the body

Not to seek soft living

To love fasting

Staupitz *(gives Monk 2 a look)*

Monk #1: *(sincerely)* To clothe the naked

To visit the sick

To bury the dead

To help the afflicted

To console the sorrowing

Monk #2 *(Overly sincere)* To prefer nothing to the love of Christ

Not yield to anger.

Not to nurse a grudge  
Not to hold guile in your heart

Monk #1 (*Sincerely but with fear*) To fear the Day of Judgment  
To dread Hell  
To keep death daily before your eyes  
To keep constant vigilance over the actions of your life

Monk #2 (*Looks about, Bows his head, puts his hands to his heart*)  
To know for certain that God sees you everywhere as evil thoughts come into your heart, to dash them  
at once on the love of Christ  
and to manifest them to your spiritual father.

Monk # 1 (*Sincerely*) To keep your mouth from evil and depraved talk  
Not to love much speaking  
Not to speak vain words or such as produce laughter

Monk #2 (*Sighing*) To listen gladly to holy readings  
To apply yourself frequently to prayer  
Daily in your prayer, with tears and sighs to confess your past sins to God

Monk # 1 (*Sincerely*) Not to fulfill the desires of the flesh  
To hate your own will.

Luther: (*In a denigrating and hopeless manner*)  
I am a worm and no man.  
I confess to God, to blessed Mary and our Holy Father St. Augustine, to all saints.  
I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed by my own fault.  
I confess I left my cell without the Scapular,<sup>i</sup> which is a deadly sin  
For this failure to Christ I **objectively** seek forgiveness and whatever punishment the Prior and  
community is pleased to impose on me.  
I am a worm.  
I confess I have three times made mistakes in the oratory and in psalm singing.  
I remember and confess humbly.  
I confess it, I confess it.  
How can I justify myself?  
I remember and I beg forgiveness.

Father Staupitz: (*In disgust*) Luther, you are a fool. Stop torturing yourself. You have been here for  
months and it hurts me to watch you like this. You are the laughingstock of the other monks.

Luther: (*In a tortured tone*) I'm the same. I haven't changed since coming into this sacred order.  
All I feel is God's hatred.

Father Staupitz: God is not angry with you. It's you that are angry with him. Please, repeat the apostle's creed.

Luther: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only  
Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the  
third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will

come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.”

Father Staupitz: Repeat after me: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth.

Luther: *(In a monotone voice)* I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth.

Father Staupitz: I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins.

Luther: *(In a monotone voice)* I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins.

Father Staupitz: I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

Luther: I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

Father Staupitz: Do you?

Luther: *(A little more enthusiastically)* I’ll try.

Father Staupitz: Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself into the Redeemer’s arms. Trust in Him, in the righteousness of His life, in the atonement of His death... Listen to the Son of God. He became man to give you assurance of divine favor. Love Him who first loved you.

Come. Your Father is here, and it is time for you to perform your first communion service. You must get ready.

### Scene 3 Cathedral

*(Luther, Hans, monks 1, 2, Staupitz, cardinal)*

*(Organ music as in a cathedral, Luther in a white robe with a gold cross on his back, his back to the audience)*

Hans: *(Luther’s father speaking to Luther before the service, angrily)*

I worked in the copper mines for 20 years to give you, my son, an education in law. This is how you thank me.

Luther: *(Defensively)* I live in terror of the judgment.

Hans: *(Passionately)* I lost two sons to the plague and now this.

Martin, you are a scholar. I sent you to the University of Erfurt. A Master of Arts!

You could have been a man of stature. You had a place at the top. You know Latin, Greek, Hebrew and German. Now you will beg in the streets. It’s a shame, I tell you. You are throwing it all away.

*(Vehemently)* I don’t trust this monastic system.

Who made you do it? Who made you do it? Who made you join without my consent?!

Martin: *(Hopefully)* Father, I found a Latin Bible at the University. I didn’t know one existed. I found that I am a sinner. I desire to find peace with God!

Hans: Foolishness

Sound: *The convent bell rings and Martin makes his way to the front, standing at the communion table with his back to the audience.*

Martin: *(On the way he murmurs)* Oh, Mary, dear Mary, all I see of Christ is a raging flame.

Pray to your Son, ask Him to still His anger, for I can’t raise my eyes to look at Him.

Am I the only one to see all this, and suffer?

What **penance** can I do that will bring me pardon and peace?

**Goblet of Wine, Bread on fancy dish, Candle stick**

*(Communion begins with the tinkling of bells. Martin raises the bread. Martin raises the cup of wine praying- his hands shaking. The monks snicker and whisper. Martin's father leaves in disgust, shaking his head.)*

**Scene 4 Convent**

*(Luther, Staupitz, monks 1, 2)*

*(Scripture chained to the wall, Martin is kneeling and reading.)*

Father Staupitz *(Matter of factly)* Luther, I am sending a letter to Rome. You will take it there for me. It will be a good experience for you. Perhaps there you will find the peace you seek.

Martin: *(Pleading and fearful)* No! Father, don't make me leave this place. Don't make me go!

Staupitz: *(Firmly)* When you return, I am sending you to the University of Wittenberg to study to be a Doctor of Theology and be their priest. You are bright and the study will enlighten you. Then you will be able to teach the Scriptures. You will open and change minds.

**Scene 5 Rome**

*(Martin, Tetzel, assistant, cardinals, peasants)*

*(A contrasting scene of poverty and degradation of people and the pomp and ceremony of clergy, **indulgences** are boldly sold on the street.)*

**Indulgences, box, groats**

Frier Tetzel: *(**Indulgence** vender, crowd of poor and ragged peasants, assistant holds a large red cross.)*  
*(Sincerely)*

Are you wondering who I am, or what I am: Is there anyone here among you, any small child, any cripple, or any sick idiot who hasn't heard of me and doesn't know why I am here? No? No? Well, I am John Tetzel, Dominican, inquisitor, sub-commissioner to the Archbishop of Mainz, and what I bring you is **indulgences**. Indulgences-- indulgences made possible by the red blood of Jesus Christ, and the red cross, you see, standing up here behind me is the standard of those who carry them.

*(Arrogantly)* Yes, I am sent by the Pope himself with indulgences for you. What are indulgences? They are only the most precious and noble of God's gifts to men, that's all they are! Before God, I tell you I wouldn't swap my privilege at this moment with that of St. Peter in Heaven because I've already saved more with my indulgences than he could ever have done with his sermons.

For every mortal sin you commit, the Church says that, after confession and contrition, you must do **penance** in this life or purgatory for seven years. Seven years! How many sins do you commit in one day, or in a month, or in a year? Try and add all the years of torment piling up. Seven years for each sin.  
*(Holds up letters of indulgence)*

*(Boldly)* Right here, take a good look. There isn't one sin that is so big that one of these letters can't forgive it. I challenge any one here to present me with a sin. Just pay and you will find yourself forgiven. I am empowered to give you these letters of pardon for the sins you have already committed. And, yes, even ones you intend to commit.

Why is the pope willing to distribute such rich grace to you? I'll tell you. It is so you can have the privilege of restoring the ruined churches of St. Peter and St. Paul here in Rome! This great church that holds the bodies of St. Paul and St. Peter, hundreds of martyrs, 46 popes and relics like St. Veronica's handkerchief, the burning bush of Moses, and the very rope with which Judas Iscariot hanged himself!

These letters are not just for the living, but for the dead. Buy some peace for your grandfather. For twelve **groats** you can rescue your father from agony and yourself from certain disaster. As soon as your money rattles in the box and the cash bell rings, the soul flies out of purgatory and sings!

The Lord our God reigns no longer. He has resigned all power to the pope, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

*(Coins clatter in the box as peasants pay. Martin purchases an **indulgence** for his grandfather. Martin sees the poor buying the letters of indulgences. He is shocked. As Martin, on his knees, goes up the stairs with his letter of indulgence he hears a voice. He looks to see who is speaking and realizes it is God speaking to him.)*

A voice speaks: The just shall live by faith. *(Luther crumples the indulgence)*

## Act II

### 1517-1518

#### Scene 1, Wittenberg Marketplace

*(Staupitz, Martin, Anna, Greta, Male and other peasant)*

##### ***Bundle of sticks***

Narrator: Martin goes to Wittenberg as an ordained priest and is called to a professorship at the University of Wittenberg. He is perplexed by the magnificence and extravagance he saw in the monasteries of other orders, Franciscan and Dominican, on the way to Rome and in Rome itself. He is appalled by the moral degradation of the clergy and the exploitation of the poor.

*(Marketplace in Wittenberg, peasants are everywhere)*

Staupitz: *(Loudly)* I want you to meet your new priest, Father Martin. He has been sent to bless you.

*(Luther tries to shake people's hands, but they turn their back on him.)*

Anna *(Dirty in rags, holding a child, Greta)*

Luther: *(touching the child on the head)* Bless you, child.

Staupitz: *(To Anna)* Here is some coins for your fire sticks.

*(To Luther, whispering)* You must buy wood from her to feed her child.

*(Luther turns to face other peasants.)*

Male peasant: I have no money to give you. *(Lifts up his hands to hold Luther off)*

Luther: I have not come to take your money. I have come to serve and bring peace to your heart.

*(Places his hands over his heart)*

#### Scene 2: In the Wittenberg Church

*(Luther, Spalatin, peasants)*

Luther: *(In the pulpit giving a sermon)*

Terrible and unforgiving is how I saw God, sentencing his Son and burning us in hell fire.

Those that see God as angry do not see him rightly. We have a God of Love.  
To see God is to look on a friendly heart. I know a God that suffered on my behalf.  
I am a doctor of Divinity, but a Scholar's robe will not make me wise. Scripture freed me.

On the other hand, no one can imagine what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome.  
It needs to be seen to be believed. If there is a hell, Rome is built over it.

Friars are selling **indulgences** to forgive sins. I even bought one to free my Grandfather from purgatory while I was in Rome. (*Making fun of himself*) They are worthless.  
I tell you Rome is getting rich off the poor.  
I even paid to see John's robe and (*laughing*) the rope that Judas hung himself with. Ha!  
They claim eighteen out of the twelve apostle's bones are in Rome. (*The audience laughs*)

My friends, your first duty is prayer. Ask the Lord to grant you, of His great mercy, the true understanding of His word. There is no other interpreter of the Word of God than the Author of this word, as he Himself has said, "They shall all be taught of God...trust solely in God, and the influence of His Spirit."<sup>iii</sup>

**Scene 3 Marketplace in Wittenberg** (*Luther, Tetzel, Tetzel's assistant, Anna, Greta, peasants*)  
(*A trumpet announces the arrival of Tetzel with a following crowd. His helper holds a red cross. Tetzel holds a lighted candle.*)

**Cross, indulgences, box, lighted candle**

Tetzel:

Good citizens of Wittenberg, I bring you greetings from Rome. We long to free you from certain torment. Have you ever burned your finger in a fire? You know that one little burn hurts you through the night. Imagine your whole body in the flames tormented day and night for seven years for just one sin. How many sins do you commit in one day?  
Will you burn for eternity?  
(*He holds a candle and passes his hand through the flame. The crowd gasps.*)  
Do you not hear their voices crying out to you...your sons, your daughters, your fathers, your mothers?

Come! For a coin, the church offers forgiveness of sin. Give us a coin for a future sin.  
Pay a coin for your dear lost relative. Rest assured--  
When a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs  
Enjoy eternal life in paradise. Come--purchase your reward.

Anna holding Greta:

(*Pays for an **indulgence** and then finds Luther and excitedly shows him her indulgence for Greta.*)

Anna: I did this for Greta

Luther: Anna (*He takes the indulgence and looks at it with a disappointed look.*)

Anna: What? It is no good?

Luther: Save your money, dear Anna. Use it to buy food for Greta.  
Trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and dear Greta's.  
(*Luther hands her a coin to replace the one she gave to Tetzel. Taking the paper indulgence he crumples it in his hand.*)

#### **Scene #4 The Door of the Wittenberg Church**

(Peasant 1, Peasant 2)

(Luther is seen posting the 95 Theses against *indulgences*. A crowd forms to read it. Luther leaves.)

Peasant # 1 (Takes down the theses)

Peasant # 2 What are you doing? Dr. Luther wanted everyone to see that.

Peasant # 1 (As he runs away shouting and waving the theses) Everyone will.

All of Germany will read it once it is printed by day's end.

Narrator: "[Luther's] propositions attracted universal attention. They were read and re-read, and repeated in every direction. Great excitement was created in the university and in the whole city. By these 95 Theses it was shown that the power to grant the pardon of sin, and to remit its penalty, had never been committed to the pope or to any other man. The whole scheme was a *sham*, --a way to extort money by playing upon the superstitions of the people,--a device of Satan to destroy the souls of all who should trust *it*... It was also clearly shown that the gospel of Christ is the most valuable treasure of the church, and that the grace of God...is freely bestowed upon all who seek it by repentance.

Many devoted Romanists, who had seen and lamented the terrible iniquity prevailing in the church, but had not known how to arrest its progress, read the propositions with great joy, recognizing in them the voice of God. They felt that the Lord had graciously set His hand to arrest the rapidly swelling tide of corruption that was issuing from...Rome."<sup>iii</sup>

#### **Scene 5 The Church at Wittenberg**

(Luther, Katharina)

Narrator: As the people learned about God's saving grace, monasteries were undergoing many changes. Nuns, monks, and friars were re-evaluating the church and leaving their orders. Dr. Luther made arrangements for a group of Nuns to escape their convent.

(Luther is in the church. Katharina approaches with one of the five other nuns. They are dirty and poorly dressed.)

Katharina: (*Boldly*) I am looking for Dr. Luther.

Dr. Luther: I am Dr. Luther. How can I help you?

Katharina: Thank you for arranging for our escape. There are five other nuns with me. We are weary and worn from two days' travel in herring barrels. We are dirty and smelly. Where are we to go now?

Dr. Luther: I have made arrangements for you to stay here in Wittenberg. We are working to find husbands for each nun. I hope this is satisfactory.

Katharina: Yes, Thank you. We are most grateful to you for freeing us from bondage in every sense. It is our utmost desire to claim Jesus and live by faith in his forgiveness.

#### **Scene 6 Palace of Prince Frederick**

(Prince Frederick, Spalatin, Aleander)

(Prince Frederick is seated at a desk.)

**Props: Books, feather pen**



Prince Frederick: Come in, Come in. Tell me, how is our illustrious Dr. Luther?

Spalatin: (*Bowing*) I am afraid, dear Prince, that our Dr. Luther has done it now. He has posted 95 theses against **indulgences**. They are printed and scattered all over Germany. Dr. Luther is being summoned to Rome and threatened with **excommunication**.

Prince Frederick: My brilliant little monk with the independent mind?

Spalatin: The cardinal wants Luther delivered to Rome. How shall I answer?

Prince Frederick: Luther has done a good job at debate. That is what all good university professors do. We have some choices as to how we respond.

One, we can send Luther to Rome where they will kill him.

Two, say nothing and go on merrily as before, pretending we never heard, simply allowing time and inertia to be our ally.

Three, we can say no in such a kind and awfully thoughtful way it befuddles them.

Four, we can say no and experience the wrath of Rome.

Five, we can decide to fight Rome, but we must decide to win.

(*Thoughtfully*) No, I am not sending my monk to Rome.

Who are they to take my university professor with the fine mind away from me?

No, I am not sending Luther to Rome.

Spalatin: (*Leaves and returns with Aleander*)

Aleander : The Holy Father sends you a gift. (*Aleander presents him with a gold rose.*)

Prince Fredrick: (*Accepts the gift*) What can I do for you today?

Aleander: Pope Leo X wants you to send Dr. Luther to Rome. Dr. Luther teaches heresy. He must be stopped.

Prince Fredrick: What has he done? He has only done what all good University Professors do--debate and cause people to think.

Aleander: (*Leaves in frustration and anger*)

Prince Fredrick: (*To Spalatin*) Just give him a gift of money and send him on his way. (*He, disdainfully, holds up his hands with the appalling rose.*) And get rid of this rose! (*Waves his hand away*) Put it with the rest of the relics. Oh, and get rid of the relics, all of them. Put them somewhere, anywhere--I don't want to know where!

(*Almost in a crying tone, making a face*) I am appalled at how easy they thought it was to bribe me.

Narrator: Luther received the summons to appear in Rome to answer to the charge of heresy. Prince Fredrick protested his going to Rome and requested that he receive his examination in Germany. It was finally arranged for Luther to go to Augsburg, Germany. Threats were openly made that he would be seized and murdered on the way though he was promised a safe conduct by the emperor.

## Scene 7 Wittenberg Marketplace

(*Dr. Luther, Melancthon*)

Narrator: When Luther so much needed the sympathy and counsel of a true friend, God's providence sent

Melanchthon to Wittenberg. Young in years, modest and timid in his manners, Melanchthon's sound judgment, extensive knowledge, and winning eloquence combined with the purity and uprightness of his character won universal admiration and esteem. Though of brilliant talent, he had a remarkably gentle disposition. He soon became an earnest disciple of the gospel and Luther's most trusted friend. His gentleness, caution, and exactness served as a complement to Luther's courage and energy. Their union in the work added strength to the Reformation and was a source of great encouragement to Luther.

Melanthon: (*In a begging tone*) Please, dear friend, leave Wittenberg and seek safety with our friends who will gladly protect you.

Dr.Luther: (*Passionately*) "I am like Jeremiah, a man of strife and contention; but the more their threats increase, the more my joy is multiplied... They already destroyed my honor and my reputation. One single thing remains; it is my wretched body: let them take it; they will thus shorten my life by a few hours. But as for my soul, they cannot take that. He who desires to proclaim the word of Christ to the world, must expect death at every moment."<sup>iv</sup>

Melanthon: If you must go, I beg you, let me go with you.

Dr.Luther: (*Firmly and kindly places a hand on Melanchthon's shoulder*) I cannot let you go. You will be needed here to carry on should I not return.

## Act III

### 1518

#### Scene 1 The Fugger Palace, Augsburg

(*Dr. Luther, Staupitz, Aleander, Cardinal Cajetan*)

Narrator: The Cardinal had been empowered to condemn Luther in every part of Germany; to banish, curse, and excommunicate all those who associated with him.<sup>v</sup>

(*Luther makes his way to Augsburg. The room darkens and there is thunder and lightening.*)

(*Stage note: A strobe light can be used here to simulate lightning.*)

(*Luther, wearing a cloak, pounds on the door. Staupitz lets him in.*)

Staupitz: Oh, Martin, I was afraid they had killed you on your way.

Dr. Luther: Father. Thank you for being here for me. They ensured my safe arrival.

Staupitz: That means little. You must be careful what you say.  
You understand they expect you to recant and will accept nothing less.

Dr. Luther: That day you sent me out to change the world, did you really think there wouldn't be a cost?  
I must stand by God's word. (*Staupitz groans*)

(*Aleander enters.*)

Aleander: (*Self-importantly, Curtly*) I have come to prepare you for your audience with Cardinal Cajetan. When you enter you must prostrate yourself, lying face down with your arms outspread. You must not look up. When you are asked to stand you will kneel. You will have but one word to say, 'Recant.' Staupitz, you will wait here. I repeat. There will be no debate. You must retract, that is all!

*(Aleander takes Luther to the cardinal. Luther prostrates himself.)*

Cardinal Cajetan: You may rise. *(Luther kneels)* *(Cajetan- speaking kindly)* You are so young. I thought the learned Doctor would be much older. I am sure, my son, that you have come to set at right your words. Surely you cannot think you are right and the whole world wrong.

Dr. Luther: If I am wrong I respectfully ask you to show me by the Holy Scriptures.  
Show me the error according to Scripture and I will renounce my doctrine.

Aleander: *(Aghast)* You are not here to debate!

Cardinal Cajetan: *(Passionately and loudly)* You are a **heretic!** You must yield in every point without question!

Dr. Luther: I cannot renounce the truth,  
*(Reads a paper he has prepared and then hands it to the cardinal,*

*Paper:* I humbly desire to help rid the church of abuses.

**Indulgences** cannot be given to forgive sin or release the dead from purgatory.

Indulgences cannot be given to forgive future sins.

Only God can forgive sin through the blood of Jesus.

Individuals in the clergy must be pure and rid the church of fraud and immoral acts.

**Penance** and abasement cannot bring peace, only the love of God.

God is a God of mercy. The just shall live by faith.

Cardinal Cajetan: *(The Cardinal throws the paper down shouting.)*

“This is a mass of idle words and irrelevant quotations. Retract or I will send you to Rome and, there to appear before judges commissioned to take cognizance of your cause. I will excommunicate you and all your partisans, and all who that at any time countenance you, and will cast them out of the church. Retract or return no more.”<sup>vi</sup>

*(Sorrowfully, Dr. Luther leaves and in so doing declares he will not retract.)*

## Act IV

1521

### Scene #1 Wittenberg Marketplace

*(Dr. Luther, Spalatin, Melanchthon, peasants)*

Narrator: Once again Prince Frederick comes to Dr. Luther's aid by not allowing him to go to Rome.

It is finally settled that he will appear before the Emperor in Worms, Germany with a delegation from Rome.

*(Spalatin delivers the summons to Luther in the village square.)*

Spalatin: You are putting Prince Frederick in a very hard position. It is unheard of not to do as Rome bids.  
*(Leaves)*

Dr. Luther: They don't want me to come to Worms. They only want me dead. Don't pray for me, but for the Word of God to continue on in spite of evil men. Whatever happens is God's will. If the work is of God, who will stop it? If it isn't, who can forward it?

(*Praying*) Not my will or theirs or ours, but your will, O Father, be done.

Melanchthon: I ask you once again. Let me go with you. My teacher, my friend, how can I bear to let you go alone?

Dr. Luther: You must stay. "If I do not return, and my enemies put me to death, continue to teach, and stand fast in the truth. Labor in my stead. If you survive, my death will be of little consequence."  
Although **interdicted** in every city, I shall go on.<sup>vii</sup>

(*Peasants weep as Dr. Luther leaves.*)

Narrator: "On the way to Worms Luther was regarded with great interest. People listened as if spellbound and The bread of life was broken to starving souls. Christ was lifted up above all popes, legates, emperors, and kings. He did not seek to make himself an object of thought or sympathy. Many shouted, 'They will burn you and reduce your body to ashes, as they did with John Huss.' Friends trembled for his safety. Enemies tried to dissuade him from entering the city because they feared the success of his cause. Luther said, 'I would appear before them; I would enter the jaws of this behemoth, and break his teeth confessing the Lord Jesus.'

"Enemies, as well as friends, came to look upon the dauntless monk; but he received them with unshaken, calmness, replying to all with dignity and wisdom. His bearing was firm and courageous. His pale, thin face, marked with traces of toil and illness, wore a kindly and even joyous expression. The solemnity and deep earnestness of his words gave him a power that even his enemies could not wholly withstand. Both friends and foes were filled with wonder. Some were convinced that a divine influence attended him; others declared, as had the Pharisees concerning Christ: 'He hath a devil.'"<sup>viii</sup>

## Scene 2 Diet of Worms

(*Dr. Luther, Spalatin, princes, emperor, cardinals, monks*)

(**Props:** *Throne for the emperor, wooden table or desk for Luther with his books and pamphlets*)

Narrator: At length Luther stood before the counsel. The emperor occupied the throne. He was surrounded by the most illustrious personages in the empire. Never had any man appeared in the presence of a more imposing assembly than that before which Martin Luther was to answer for his faith. This appearance was of itself a signal victory over the papacy. The pope had condemned the man, and he was now standing before a tribunal which, by this very act, set itself above the pope. The pope took away his rights to take communion or be buried as a Catholic and cut him off from all human society; and yet he was summoned in respectful language, and received before the most distinguished assembly in the world.<sup>ix</sup>

Duke George of Saxony: (*to the emperor*) Fraud, Scandal, depravations, impurities, murder, extortions. I present this list to the Emperor and we request immediate measures for correction of these abuses. "These are some of the abuses that cry out against Rome. All shame has been put aside, and their only object is money, money, money,... so that the preachers who should teach the truth, utter nothing but falsehoods, and are not only tolerated, but rewarded, because the greater their lies, the greater their gain. It is from this foul spring that such tainted waters flow. **Debauchery** stretches out the hand to avarice.... Alas, it is the scandal caused by the clergy that hurls so many poor souls into eternal condemnation. A general reform must be effected."<sup>x</sup>

Cardinal Cajetan: I have a letter from Rome from the Pope (*Holds up letter and reads*)

A single monk, misled by his own foolishness has risen against the faith of Christendom. I will sacrifice my kingdoms, my treasures, my friends, my body, my blood, my soul, and my life to *stop* such disrespectful behavior. I am about to dismiss the Augustine Luther, forbidding him to cause the least disorder among the people. Then I will proceed to destroy him and his followers by charging them as **heretics**. They will be excommunicated and by every means destroyed. I call on the members of states to behave like faithful Christians.<sup>xi</sup>

*(Luther comes into the assembly.)*

Prince 1: *(Coming close to him and leaning over says):* “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

Prince 2: *(Coming close to him and leaning over)* “When ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, it shall be given you, by the Spirit of your Father what ye shall say.”

*(Luther takes a position in front of the emperor.)*

Emperor: State the charge?

Aleander: *(With passion)* “**Sedition**, rebellion, **impiety**, and **blasphemy**.”<sup>xii</sup>

We urge you to execute the edicts from Rome. In Luther’s errors there is enough to warrant the burning of a hundred thousand **heretics**.

What are all these Lutheran? --A crew of... *insolent*... teachers, corrupt priests, ...*unrestrained*... monks, ignorant lawyers, and degraded nobles, with the common people whom they have misled and perverted. How far superior to them is the Catholic party in number, ability, and power! A unanimous decree from this illustrious assembly will enlighten the simple, warn the rebellious, decide the waverers, and give strength to the weak.”<sup>xiii</sup>

*(Pointing to a collection of Luther’s books)*

Do you acknowledge these books are your writing and will you retract the opinions which these writing advance?

Cardinal Cajetan: *(Scornfully.)* Answer?

Dr.Luther: To the first, “The books are mine.”

“Secondly, seeing that it is a question which concerns faith and the salvation of souls, and in which the word of God, the greatest and most precious treasure either in heaven or earth, is involved, I should reply with reflection. I might affirm less than the circumstance demands, or more than truth requires, and so sin against this saying of Christ: Christ said, ‘Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven:’ For this reason I beg your imperial majesty, and with all humility, to allow me time, to answer without offending the word of God.”<sup>xiv</sup>

*(Council leaves)*

Emperor: *(Impatiently)* You will have until tomorrow.

**Scene 3 Room in Worms**

*(Dr. Luther)*

*(Luther is alone in room)*

Dr. Luther: (*Kneeling, with his Back to the audience, using a mike to read the following. Pleadingly.*)

“O almighty and everlasting God, how terrible is this world: Behold, it openeth its mouth to swallow me up, I have so little trust in Thee... If it is only in the strength of this world..., all is over... My last hour is come, my condemnation has been pronounced... O God, do Thou help me against all the wisdom of the world. Do this... for this is not my work, but thine. I have nothing to contend for with these great ones of the eternal cause. O Lord, help me! Faithful and unchangeable God, in no man do I place my trust... All that is of man is uncertain; all that cometh of man fails... Thou hast chosen me for this work... Stand at my side, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defense, my shield, and my strong tower.”<sup>xv</sup>

(*Lifts his hands to heaven*)

I vow to remain faithful to the gospel, and freely confess my faith even with my blood.

#### Scene 4 Diet

(*Dr. Luther, Staupitz, Spalatin, Aleander, princes, cardinals, duke*)

(*The following day the council reconvenes.*)

Luther: (*Walks in and is met by the duke and whispering to the duke as everyone enters.*)

“I place the matter in the Lord’s hands. He still lives and reigns who preserved the three young men in the burning fiery furnace. If He will not save me, my life is of little consequence. Let us only prevent the gospel from being exposed to the scorn of the wicked, and let us shed our blood for it, for fear they should triumph. It is not for me to decide whether my life or my death will contribute most to the salvation of all... you may expect everything from me... except flight and recantation. Fly I cannot, and still less retract.”<sup>xvi</sup>

Luther: (*Seated at a desk facing the Emperor and Cardinal, with great respect: This could be read*)

Most serene emperor, illustrious princes, gracious lords,  
I appear before you this day, at your order, and by God’s mercies I plead with your majesty and your august highnesses to listen graciously to the defense of a cause which I am assured is just and true. Please excuse me if I do not follow all the rules of this court, for I was brought up in the seclusion of a convent, not a palace.<sup>xvii</sup>

My published works are not all of the same order.

The first group is about faith and good works.

To retract this class of book would condemn truths which all parties agree on.

The second class exposes the corruptions of the church.

To revoke these works would strengthen the tyranny of Rome and open a wider door to impieties.

The third class exposes corrupt individuals:

I am not faultless, and confess that these writing were harsh, but to revoke them will make the enemies of truth bolder and give opportunity to crush God’s people with still greater cruelty.

I am a mere man, and not God... I plead with you, most serene emperor, and most illustrious princes, to prove from the writings of the prophets and apostles that I am wrong. As soon as I am convinced of this, I will retract every error, and be the first to lay hold of my books and throw them into the fire.

Beware, lest, by presuming to quench dissensions, you persecute the Holy Word of God.<sup>xviii</sup>

Since your most serene majesty requires from me a clear, precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils... I cannot and I will not retract, Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen. (*Luther bows his head.*)

Emperor: (*Thoughtfully*) This monk speaks with a fearless heart and unshaken courage!

Cardinal Cajetan: (*Spits it out with contempt.*) If you do not retract, the emperor and the states of the empire will discuss what course to adopt against an incorrigible **heretic** like you.

Dr.Luther: (*Respectfully*) I have no other reply to make.

(*The princes come forward and bow on their knees before the emperor and one by one they side with Dr. Luther.*) (*They speak and then lower their heads.*)

Prince # 1: Dr. Luther is only speaking the truth. I speak for all the princes of Germany. We would sooner bow and allow our own heads to be struck off than to betray Scripture. (*Bows and lowers his head as though waiting for the sword.*)

Prince # 2: (*Steps forward*) Surely, you will not send all of Germany to Rome. (*He bows and lowers his head beside Prince # 1.*)

Emperor: (*Waving his scepter at the assembly*) This assembly is dismissed

Narrator: Plans were laid to murder Luther on his way back to Wittenberg; however, Prince Frederick intervened, authorizing Luther to be kidnapped. He was hidden away in safety at Wartburg Castle, a location kept secret from even Frederick himself.

Dr. Luther received and read his Letter of **Excommunication** with sadness. He had not set out to be excommunicated. He simply sought to reform the abuses in the church. The Emperor, though not sympathetic to Dr. Luther and afraid of Rome, was more fearful of the German people should he send Luther to Rome.

So, Dr. Luther spent the next year isolated in the towers of Wartburg, translating the New Testament into German for the common people. He worked day and night, sleeping and eating little, translating God's Word into the common language. For a whole year he proclaimed the gospel with his pen: proclaiming truth and rebuking sin and error. These truths enlightened the German people. The former Augustinian monks spread Luther's tracts to schools and gatherings all over Germany.

## Scene #5 Palace of Prince Frederick 1522

(*Dr. Luther, Prince Frederick, Spalatin*)

**Prop: German Bible**

Prince Frederick: (*Luther bowing*) What brings you back to Wittenberg? You are greatly missed here at your university.

Dr. Luther: I come bearing your gift.

Prince Frederick: A gift? What is it?

Dr. Luther: I have translated the New Testament into German.

Prince Frederick: Into German? You know what this means? There will be no turning back!

Dr. Luther: It will be in the hands of the German people.

Prince Frederick: (*Excitedly as a little child*) I see. Well, may I have my present now?! (*Holding out his shaking hands in excitement*)

Dr. Luther: (*Places the Bible reverently in his hands.*)

#### **Scene 4 Marketplace 1925**

(*Dr. Luther, Katharina*)

(*Katharina approaches Dr. Luther.*)

Narrator: Luther viewed women differently than most men of his time period. He believed they were to be respected and treated with dignity as intelligent beings.

Katharina: (*Boldly*) Dr. Luther, I want you to know that all the nuns are married to appropriate husbands and are basking in happiness. Thank you, and...I only remain.

Dr. Luther: How has this happened? We must see to your marriage!

Katharina: Yes, I've been meaning to speak with you on this important matter. You will be pleased to know that I have chosen a husband.

Luther: (*Laughing*) Dear Katharina, and who may I ask is this fortunate husband?

Katharina: There is only one man that I wish to marry... (*pause*) and... I am standing with him.

Luther: (*Sobering and startled*) I have no intention of marrying. My life is not my own and I am in constant peril. I cannot accept such a responsibility and subject any woman to my uncertain future.

Katharina: (*boldly, pleadingly*) I will be a helpmeet to you. You will have a long life.  
You need me to care for you. (*Sweetly*) Someday there will be children running in our home.

Luther: (*With emphasis*) But, truly my life can end at any moment!

Katharina: (*Smiling*) Those who seek to take your life will have to step over my dead body.

Luther: (*Demeanor softens. He takes her hands and kisses her hands*).

Narrator: "Had the Reformer yielded a single point, Satan and his hosts would have gained the victory. But his unwavering firmness was the means of emancipating the church, and beginning a new and better era. The influence of this one man, who dared to think and act for himself in religious matters, was to affect the church and the world, not only in his own time, but in all future generations. His firmness and fidelity would strengthen all, to the close of time, who should pass through a similar experience. The power and majesty of God stood forth above the counsel of men, above the mighty power of Satan."<sup>xix</sup>



In one generation, through the education of the youth, all Germany was changed to Protestantism. Thus we see the power of education to change the course of history.

“The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining on the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding.”<sup>xx</sup>

“Those who present the truth for this time should not expect to be received with greater favor than were earlier reformers. The great controversy between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, is to increase in intensity to the close of this world’s history.”<sup>xxi</sup>

## Set ideas:

***Church: Communion table, benches  
(Augsburg- throne chair)  
(Worms- a desk with chair with a throne chair for the emperor)***

***Room: Wooden desk or table, chair, candle, papers, feather pen***

***Marketplace: Church door, food vender’s cart/s***

## Glossary

Abjective- Describing one sunk in a low state, cast down in spirit showing utter hopelessness

Blasphemy- The act of showing contempt or lack of reverence for God

Chastise- To inflict punishment on as in whipping, censure severely

Debauchery- Extreme indulgence in sensuality

Excommunication- An ecclesiastical (church) censure depriving a person of the rights of church membership, exclusion from fellowship in a group or community

Groats- An Old English coin worth four pennies

Heretic- A dissenter from an established church dogma or truth

Indulgence- A remission of part or all of purgatorial punishment, pardoned guilt

Interdicted- Placed under a prohibitory decree, destroyed, damaged, cut off, hampered, or withdrawn from church sacraments

Impiety- The lack of reverence or proper respect

Penance- Something chosen as a hardship to compensate for an offense

Sedition- To incite resistance or insurrection against lawful authority

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<sup>i</sup> Scapular is a pair of small square cloths joined at the shoulder with tapes and worn under the clothing on the breast and back as a sacramental and, often, also as a badge of a third order or confraternity.

<sup>ii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.3, Ch.7

<sup>iii</sup> Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, p.130

<sup>iv</sup> D'Aubigne, B.4, Ch. 4

<sup>v</sup> D'Aubigne, B.4, Ch. 2

<sup>vi</sup> D'Aubigne, B.4, Ch. 8

<sup>vii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 7

<sup>viii</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 154, 154

<sup>ix</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 8

<sup>x</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 4

<sup>xi</sup> D'Aubigne B.7, Ch.9

<sup>xii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7. Ch. 1

<sup>xiii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 3

<sup>xiv</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch.8

<sup>xv</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch.8

<sup>xvi</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 1

<sup>xvii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7, Ch. 1

<sup>xviii</sup> D'Aubigne, B.7. Ch. 8

<sup>xix</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 166

<sup>xx</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 148, 149

<sup>xxi</sup> Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, p. 144