

I Cannot Say *Revoco*

The Dissenting Voice of Martin Luther

By D. Richard Tucker

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SYNOPSIS - Rather than featuring a full biography of the man, this play concentrates on Martin Luther's protests that led to his ninety-five theses and the changes that snowballed into the Protestant Reformation. The play's theme recounts the historic events focusing on the timeless tale of a lone dissenting voice in a corrupt political organization. By showing these historical figures as real personalities, the play also carries the social theme of the son seeking for his father's approval and the spiritual theme of the understanding of God as the heavenly father.

CAST (7 M, 1 F)

MARTIN Luther, religious scholar, German, 34 years old

HANS Luther, his father, German

also plays Johann von **ECK**, religious scholar, German

Johann von **TETZEL**, priest, German

also plays **MAN #1**

also plays George, **MARGRAVE** of Brandenburg

Johann von **STAUPITZ**, Augustinian monk, Luther's mentor, German

also plays **MAN #3**

also plays **PRIEST**, metaphorical representative of Clergy in the Peasant War

also plays **LANDGRAVE**, German royal.

Cardinal **CAJETAN**, High ranking Catholic official, Italian

also plays Andreas von **KARLSTADT**, Church reformer, German

also plays **CHARLES**, Holy Roman Emperor, Spanish

Karl von **MILTITZ**, Low ranking official of the Church, German

also plays **MAN #2**

also plays Thomas **MUENTZER**, leader of the Peasant rebellion, German

also plays **FERDINAND**, Regent to Emperor, Spanish

also plays **NOBLEMAN**, German noble

PHILIPP Melanchthon, young teacher and protégé to Luther, German

KATHARINA von Bora, former nun and Luther's wife, German, 26 years old

This shows the preferred method of casting, however directors may use their own discretion and add additional performers to minimize double-casting.

Time: 1517 through 1530

Setting: Various locations in Germany and Rome

The set is a black box with minimal representation of locations by using a few pieces of furniture.

Act I, Scene 1 – Chapel at Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 2 – Luther's study at Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 3 – City street
Act I, Scene 4 – Luther's study at Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 5 – Cardinal's office in Augsburg
Act I, Scene 6 – Outside the Cardinal's office in Augsburg
Act I, Scene 7 – Cardinal's office in Augsburg
Act I, Scene 8 – A tavern in Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 9 – The debate hall in Leipzig
Act I, Scene 10 – Cardinal's office in Augsburg
Act I, Scene 11 – Courtyard in Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 12 – Luther's study at Wittenberg
Act I, Scene 13 – Lecture Hall in Worms
Act I, Scene 14 – Road to Wittenberg

Act II, Scene 1 – A guest room in Wartburg Castle
Act II, Scene 2 – The Chapel in Wittenberg
Act II, Scene 3 – The Grand Hall in Speyer
Act II, Scene 4 – A courtyard in Wittenberg
Act II, Scene 5 – The Grand Hall in Augsburg
Act II, Scene 6 – A room in a local inn in Augsburg
Act II, Scene 7 – The home of Martin and Katarina Luther

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ACT I

Scene 1

October 1517. The Chapel at Wittenberg.
SOUND: Monks singing in Latin. Lights
up on a large wooden door, the door of the
Chapel at Wittenberg. MARTIN Luther,
dressed in the robes of an Augustinian friar,
enters, stops in front of the door and nails
his paperwork to the door. The chanting
stops as the sound of his hammer echoes
throughout the space. MARTIN exits.
Blackout.

Scene 2

November 1517. MARTIN's study in
Wittenberg, represented by chairs or a
bench. Lights up on HANS Luther, waiting
impatiently. MARTIN enters quickly.

HANS

Ah, my son, the heretic!

MARTIN

Father. I was told you were here.

HANS

I came when I heard of your grave transgressions.

MARTIN

... I merely posted several topics for discussion –

HANS

I have heard of your ninety-five theses, Martin. They're heresy in the eyes of the Church.

MARTIN

They are merely points for deliberation, concerning the nature of forgiveness, the
personage of the Holy Spirit-

HANS

What you nailed to the door at Wittenberg Chapel is your own death sentence.

MARTIN

Father – there are priests and clergy, who are leading their flocks astray with the sale of indulgences.

HANS

Are not these indulgences granted by the Pope?

MARTIN

(quiet, but resolved)

Last week, a man came to me, a farmer. He had returned from the market in Torgau, having sold his harvest. He brought to me a parchment - in Latin - asking me to read it for him.

HANS

Yes?

MARTIN

It was an indulgence, promising to shorten the time that his dead father must spend in Purgatory. You see, the farmer's concern for the conditions of his father's afterlife were so great, that he sacrificed putting food on his table for his family.

HANS

And who are you to say what is more important – his son's bread or his father's soul?

MARTIN

Did God not give him the responsibility to care for his children? The commissioner of indulgences is preaching that God commands these purchases when, in fact, it can only be an act of free will. Christians need to be taught that the Pope does not intend the buying of pardons to be acts of mercy.

HANS

Martin-

MARTIN

And that he who gives to the poor does a better work than buying pardons.

HANS

But you speak against the clergy.

MARTIN

Then the clergy has erred.

HANS

You are a minister of the Church, and yet you speak against your own kind. Is this what you chose to be? Is this what you became, out of your love for God?

MARTIN

Love? I did not come to the Church out of love. The very name of Christ frightened me. When people mentioned His name, I would shudder. When I looked upon Him and the cross, I was so stuck with guilt that He seemed to me like a flash of lightning.

HANS

Lightning? I've heard that before – is everything you do based on fear, Martin?

MARTIN

Do not make light of –

HANS

I know. I've heard your story many times...about your lightning storm. How, with shaking knees, you prayed to St. Anne that if you be spared, you would become a monk.

MARTIN

I know you were angry, Father. You may not have wanted me to take this path, but it is a sweet and godly life, full of peace-

HANS

Peace? After your ninety-five theses, you shall be labeled a heretic. Have you forgotten Jan Hus? Do you want to be tortured... burned at the stake?

MARTIN

Why does it bother you?

HANS

A learned man. A lawyer. A master's degree. And all gone for naught because of an errant strike of lightning.

MARTIN

Do not mock me, Father.

HANS

(angry)

No income! No children! And in our old age, your mother I shall have to fend for ourselves. Tell me, learned scholar – you who have read the Scriptures – does it not say “Honor thy father and mother?”

(pause, then more collected)

Do not be certain that your call to the Church is, in fact, a holy one.

HANS turns to go.

MARTIN

What?

HANS

That lightning strike... that sent you scurrying off to the priesthood like a frightened rat... Did it really come from God? Or was it sent by the devil himself?

HANS exits. Light fade out. SOUND:
Three strikes of a hammer.

Scene 3

December 1517. Lights up on TETZEL dressed in colorful robes, standing in front of an ornate red cross, draped in the banner of the Pope. He speaks with the passion and charisma of a snake-oil salesman.

TETZEL

Come to me, for I bring you a message of comfort, a promise of hope. I am Johann von Tetzel, a Dominican monk, appointed by his Holy Father Pope Leo X as Commissioner of Indulgences for all of Germany. You know that man is a creature of Sin, and unholy in the eyes of God. And when you die, your sin forces you into Purgatory until such time as you can be made clean. That is where your ancestors are now. Who here does not have a father, a mother, a grandparent, who now suffers in Purgatory, awaiting entrance into Heaven? Can you not hear their cries? Can you not hear them wail – “Have mercy on us, for we are punished, we are in pain, we are in misery of judgment.” Imagine the agony your ancestors are enduring now.

Open your ears as the father cries out to his son, as the mother pleads with her daughter. “We have given birth to you, fed you, raised you, left you with our worldly goods, but now that we are gone, you ignore us. Why are you so cruel that you would let us suffer in the harsh flames of iniquity?” His Holy Father, Pope Leo X, can forgive the sins that placed your loved ones into Purgatory. The blessed Pope has given to me the authority to present you with the indulgences necessary to bring your loved ones from misery and into the arms of God Himself. For only a few coins, you can purchase this forgiveness, and as soon as the coin lands in the coffer, their souls will be lifted up and into Heaven.

I would not trade places in heaven with St. Peter himself, for by the Pope’s decree, I have brought more souls to heaven than did St. Peter with all his sermons. There is no sin so great, that the purchase of an indulgence cannot render the sinner pure in the eyes of God. I say to you, even if your dead relative had physically dishonored the Holy Virgin Mother of God, the Pope’s indulgence can forgive this offense as long as the price is paid.

Who will be the first to deliver his loved ones from Purgatory? Do you not hear their cries? Your remorse, your sorrow, cannot deliver them. Only the indulgence of the Pope can save them from suffering.

Blackout.

Scene 4

September 1518. A study in Wittenberg, represented by a bench. Lights up on MARTIN and Johann von STAUPITZ, who is dressed in the habit of an Augustinian friar.

MARTIN

I didn't expect this, Johann.

STAUPITZ

And what did you really expect? Once your Theses of Contention found the printing press, no one could stop them. I heard they were being printed in Nuremberg and Basel.

MARTIN

And Leipzig.

STAUPITZ

Many are not happy with your opinion, Martin.

MARTIN

But to be called before the Cardinal.....

STAUPITZ

You didn't think about that?

MARTIN

I was just concerned that poor are being misled.

STAUPITZ

So ...you're questioning clerical abuses, not the dogma of the Church?

MARTIN

It's - so much of this is not even in the Scriptures....And yet, I'm looked at as some kind of rebel. Am I so different from the rest of them?

STAUPITZ

Most of the clergy look to the wealthy and powerful for approval. You, on the other hand, are rarely seen with courtesans and merchants.

MARTIN

I go where I'm needed.

STAUPITZ

When I look for you, I find you in a tavern, drinking with farmers and guildsmen. You are a most unlikely priest.

MARTIN

I'm only trying to live the Scriptures.

STAUPITZ

Like I said, you're a most unlikely priest.

MARTIN

Johann... remember my trip to Rome?

STAUPITZ nods.

MARTIN (cont'd)

My grandfather, had passed away just before that, and I was deeply concerned for his soul. When we arrived in Rome, I found the Palace of the Holy Stairs and climbed the twenty-eight steps on my knees, stopping on each one to say the Lord's Prayer,. I hoped my penance would rescue my grandfather's soul, but when it was done, I couldn't help but wonder if my efforts had any effect at all. For all I knew, it was of no purpose.

(pause)

I don't understand how we can stray so far from the truth.

STAUPITZ

Did you ever ask yourself, "where does the money go?"

MARTIN shakes his head.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)

That's the answer you seek.

MARTIN

It's only about money?

STAUPITZ

Cardinal Albrecht holds three sees, the Bishop of Halberstadt, the Archbishop of Magdeburg and the Archbishop of Mainz, and yet it is prohibited to accumulate Episcopal sees. Additionally, one must be thirty years old to hold the office of Archbishop and Albrecht was confirmed at the age of twenty-three.

MARTIN

I'm not concerned with politics.

STAUPITZ

But politics drives your concerns. The Pope offered Albrecht dispensation for these issues, if Albrecht would make a rather large donation, to assist in paying for the building of St. Peter's Basilica. Albrecht borrowed the money for the donation, and received permission from the Pope to raise funds to pay this debt, by selling indulgences.

MARTIN

So this isn't about forgiveness - it's about the Pope's taste in architecture.

STAUPITZ

You can't escape the politics, Martin.

MARTIN

I look at the Church and....I feel she's being polluted by ungodly practices. Why doesn't anyone else say anything? We all see it.

STAUPITZ

Not everyone studies the Scriptures like you do.

MARTIN

Don't talk to me that way. You were the one who told me to read them for myself.

STAUPITZ

Martin. You came to me confused, not understanding the true nature of God. You were fearful, depressed, you -

MARTIN

Everything I had learned about God had taught me that I was unworthy to stand before Him. You taught me to seek the truth in the Scriptures.

STAUPITZ

And?

MARTIN

I found there was nothing I could do to justify myself....that only by God's grace and love, could I be worthy.

STAUPITZ

That's changed your life, Martin.

MARTIN

That's why it grieves me to see clergy preaching of indulgences to the church, as though buying a scroll will make the sinner worthy. They're stunting the growth of their own congregations,they're cheating God.

STAUPITZ

The Pope has given-

MARTIN

But God is in our hearts, not in a pile of relics.

STAUPITZ

Martin-

MARTIN

A coin to see this, a coin to touch that – a lock of hair from the Virgin Mary, a piece of manna saved by Moses in the wilderness - the pockets of the ignorant are being picked by the Church. For a few coins, you can kneel at the grave of one of the saints and decrease your stay in Purgatory – which is very convenient, because of the original twelve disciples, eighteen of them are buried here in Germany.

STAUPITZ

Be careful, Martin. The Pope isn't about to let some noisy monk nail his dissent to the Chapel door. Rome is watching you closely.

MARTIN

What about the Cardinal?

STAUPITZ

We'll find out soon enough.

SOUND: Hammer strikes three times.
Blackout.

Scene 5

October 1518. Augsburg. A hall used by the Cardinal, furnished with the Cardinal's ornate chair. TETZEL enters, followed by von STAUPITZ and MARTIN. They stop, TETZEL nods at the two men and exits.

STAUPITZ

Are you nervous?

MARTIN nods.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)

The Cardinal respects the intellectual. Make sure that each answer is complete and succinct. And don't be flippant with him, Martin.

MARTIN

No.

STAUPITZ

He's not a diplomat – he won't try to patch things up. He won't stand for verbosity or deception.

MARTIN

No.

STAUPITZ

When he enters, fall before him – don't move until he instructs you. He carries the authority of the Pope. Do not treat this meeting lightly.

MARTIN nods.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)

And if he should say something you don't agree with, don't grimace or raise your voice. The less emotion you show, the better.

TETZEL enters.

TETZEL

His Imminence, Cardinal Cajetan, Cardinal of Don Sisto, General of the Dominican Order.

Cardinal CAJETAN enters, dressed in the rich red robes of his office. MARTIN bows prostrate before him. CAJETAN sits.

CAJETAN

Please rise, Reverend Doctor.

MARTIN rises to his knees.

CAJETAN (cont'd)

Reverend Doctor Martin Luther, I am not here as your judge, I am here to present to you the words of His Holiness, Pope Leo X.....You may rise.

MARTIN stands.

CAJETAN (cont'd)

It is the desire of His Holiness, that you should return to the heart of the Church, retract your errors, and agree to refrain from them in the future. If you can say to me "Revoco," "I recant," then I have the authority to reverse the current orders against you and we can sleep in peace.

MARTIN

(humbly)

Your Imminence, I would not have taken this arduous journey to Augsburg to do what I could have easily done in Wittenberg. I will gladly recant as my conscience allows. I am fully prepared to retract everything, if only, Your Imminence, I can be shown how I have erred.

CAJETAN

I am not here to debate you, Martin Luther, nor have I come to train you, to educate you or to scold your disobedience. If you can say to me “revoco,” we may adjourn and you may return to your home. If you cannot, I have the authority to bind you in chains and take you to Rome.

MARTIN

But Your Imminence, you must agree that it is unjust to ask a man to change his views and beg forgiveness if you cannot clearly point out to him his offense. Without knowing how he has strayed, how can a man ensure that he does not repeat the errors once again?

CAJETAN

(pause, annoyed at the resistance)

Have you not spoken out against the conduct of the clergy?

MARTIN

I have not been slack to censure many - not of their bad morals, but of their impiety.

CAJETAN

And the belligerent means by which you address them? Do you not expect them to take offense?

MARTIN

Christ Himself, in His zeal, calls His adversaries a generation of vipers, hypocrites, and children of the devil. Paul, too, defames certain persons as evil workers, dogs, and deceivers. In the opinion of those delicate-eared persons, nothing could be more bitter or intemperate than Paul's language.

CAJETAN

And do you not think that your fellow clergy men deserve more respect than this?

MARTIN

The ears of our generation have been made so delicate by the senseless multitude of flatterers that, as soon as we perceive that anything of ours is not approved of, we cry out that we are being bitterly assailed.

CAJETAN

You try my patience, Martin Luther. The bull “Unigenitus” of Pope Clement VI of the year 1343, states that the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are a treasure of indulgences.

MARTIN

Your Imminence, if this is so, I would gladly recant.

CAJETAN

Reverend Doctor, it says that Christ acquired a treasure through His sacrifice.

MARTIN

But you said the merits of Christ are a treasure. Pope Clement VI says He acquired a treasure by his merits. To “be” and to “acquire” have indeed different meanings. You need not think that we Germans are ignorant of grammar.

CAJETAN

(long pause, while seething)

You have spoken out against the certainty of justification, that comes when one receives the sacrament.

MARTIN

This is true, Your Imminence, because the justification of a man’s soul is an inward transformation-

CAJETAN

(interjecting)

Luther.

MARTIN

(determined to finish)

And such a transformation cannot be certain, for who should know if such a thing can occur inside a man-

CAJETAN

(louder)

Luther!

MARTIN

(still undeterred)

For a man is changed, not through works, but through the grace of God almighty.

CAJETAN

Martin Luther!

MARTIN is still.

CAJETAN (cont’d)

If you do not recant this position, I will have you condemned and sent to Rome.

MARTIN

Your Imminence....I request of you to allow me to put my position into writing, to present to you a clear documentation of my answers, for I fear we have wrangled with this subject long enough.

CAJETAN

My son, I did not wrangle with you. I am ready to reconcile you to the Roman Church.

MARTIN

I am not conscious of going against the Scripture, the fathers, or right reason. I may be in error. I only ask that my errors be disclosed - that they be shown to me.

CAJETAN

Your actions threaten to destroy the unity of the Church, for you are led by nothing but self-doubt. May I remind you that the Scriptures must be interpreted and the interpreter is His Holiness, the Pope. Above the council is His Holiness. Above the scripture, is His Holiness. Above everything in the Church is His Holiness, the Pope.

MARTIN

I deny that the Pope is above Scripture.

TETZEL

The pope is infallible, and his words are law.

MARTIN

Saint Peter himself was found to be in error in the book of Galatians, and if Saint Peter is open to error, the Pope himself cannot be infallible.

CAJETAN

You preach heresy, Doctor Luther!

MARTIN

I can only preach the Word of God and pray that others will so be inspired to turn to Him.

CAJETAN

Are you looking for inspiration? The Turks are forming armies on our Eastern borders. To the west is a multitude of souls who have yet to hear the name of our Lord. The Church is in a delicate state, and in a time when we need unity more than anything, you preach nothing but dissention.

MARTIN

Your Imminence-

CAJETAN

Do you recant?

MARTIN, not knowing what to do, says nothing.

CAJETAN (cont'd)

(yelling)
Do you?

MARTIN

(at a loss)
Your Imminence.....in good conscience....I cannot say "Revoco."

CAJETAN (cont'd)

Then you shall be condemned, Martin Luther. Go and do not come back to me, unless you are ready to recant!

LUTHER bows and exits. STAUPITZ approaches CAJETAN.

TETZEL

How dare he speak against you? It is for this purpose that I have been sent, for I have brought thousands of souls to the Lord through the sale of indulgences.

STAUPITZ

Your Imminence-

CAJETAN silences him with a raised hand.

CAJETAN

Von Tetzl. Please leave us – I wish to address Father von Staupitz.

TETZEL bows and exits.

STAUPITZ

Von Tetzl is a most dedicated man.

CAJETAN

Of course he is – he's paid a commission for each indulgence he sells.

STAUPITZ

What about his vow of poverty?

CAJETAN

He also took a vow of chastity, but that doesn't explain his two bastard sons living in Leipzig. You are Luther's friend, von Staupitz. You must exhort him to recant these dangerous views.

STAUPITZ

I have often tried, Your Imminence, but he is much greater in his command of the scriptures. As the representative of the Pope, can you not convince him?

CAJETAN

His eyes are as deep as a lake and there are amazing speculations in his head. What is it that drives this man? Is he jealous of the money that flows from the sale of indulgences?

STAUPITZ

No, Your Imminence, he has no concern for material things.

CAJETAN

Then what does he seek? Perhaps he wishes to take my seat?

STAUPITZ

No, Your Imminence. He has no need for money or power, he only lives to preach the Gospel.

CAJETAN

This is truly a dangerous man.

SOUND: Hammer strikes three times.
Blackout.

Scene 6

October 1518. Augsburg, a courtyard,
immediately following the meeting.
MARTIN paces, waiting. STAUPITZ
enters and MARTIN turns to him eagerly.

MARTIN

Well?

STAUPITZ

He did not say.

MARTIN

Did you hear him? He produced not one syllable of scripture to justify his accusations.

STAUPITZ

Martin-

MARTIN

If I can be shown my error, and do not recant, then Frederick should indeed prosecute me, expel me, the University should take action against me, and may all of heaven and earth have no mercy upon me.... and even the Lord Jesus Himself should destroy me – if I can be shown my error and do not say “Revoco.” But to do this, the Cardinal must at least show me how I am mistaken.

STAUPITZ

He has the power to take you to Rome. If they come for you, you have sworn to obey them.

MARTIN

Then I shall.

STAUPITZ

And risk burning at the stake?

MARTIN

I cannot go against my conscience.

(pleading)

I will pledge to be silent on the matter, if my opponents also agree to be silent. I will send a letter of submission to the Pope, stating that I was ...hotheaded and caustic, that in no way do I wish to infringe upon the Church, but have spoken against its desecration. I will publish a leaflet admonishing all to follow the Roman church-

STAUPITZ

Martin, you must recant. The Cardinal will not compromise.

MARTIN

The Cardinal is no more qualified to handle this case, than is a donkey qualified to play on a harp.

STAUPITZ

Remarks like that won't help your cause. Rome will want you in chains. Be grateful, for now, Frederick will intervene for you.

MARTIN

The Prince?

STAUPITZ

He is more German than he is Catholic. He'll consider the Pope's order an infringement on his sovereignty.... but he may not be able to protect you indefinitely.

MARTIN

What should I do?

STAUPITZ
Recant.

MARTIN
I cannot.

STAUPITZ
Then kneel.

Von STAUPITZ pushes MARTIN to his knees and places his hand on MARTIN's head.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)
Martin Luther, I hereby release you from your vows of obedience. You are no longer required to adhere to the rules of our order.

Von STAUPITZ lifts MARTIN to his feet.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)
If they come for you, you may flee in good conscience.

Von STAUPITZ hugs him.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)
Go back to Wittenberg. Try not to cause a commotion.

MARTIN
(pause)
I would never have thought that such a storm would rise from Rome over one simple scrap of paper...

MARTIN exits. Blackout.

Scene 7

October 1518. Rome. CAJETAN is seated in his office, represented by his ornate chair. TETZEL enters followed by MILTITZ, who is dressed in the robes of a lower papal official.

TETZEL
Your Imminence..... Karl von Miltitz, emissary of Frederick the Wise.

CAJETAN
Welcome, von Miltitz.

MILTITZ
(bowing)
Your Imminence.

CAJETAN
You know von Tetzal, do you?

MILTITZ
Oh, yes, Your Imminence, he has an excellent reputation in my homeland.

CAJETAN
And you know why you are here?

MILTITZ
Uh.....no, Your Imminence, I....don't know.....really..

CAJETAN
Your Prince, Frederick the Wise, is to receive a high honor.

MILTITZ
Oh, well, that's wonderful, Your Imminence, that would-

CAJETAN
The Golden Rose of Virtue.

MILTITZ
That is a very high honor – about as high a honor as one can have, it's-

TETZEL
The highest honor bestowed upon a layman.

MILTITZ
Oh, yes, exactly, a very high honor, very high indeed.
(pause)
And... why would you be calling for me ,,,,Your Imminence?

CAJETAN
The Pope has asked that you deliver this honor to your Prince.

MILTITZ
Oh, that would be most wonderful, yes, Your Imminence, I would be most honored to
....take this honor toHis Honor....the Prince.....Frederick the Wise.

CAJETAN

Come back tomorrow and I shall have the details for you so you may begin the journey.

MILTITZ

(bowing)

Yes, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

And von Miltitz.

MILTITZ

Yes, Your Imminence?

CAJETAN

Please let Frederick know that we are interested in something in return.

MILTITZ

Yes, Your Imminence?

CAJETAN

Are you familiar with the Augustinian doctor, Martin Luther?

MILTITZ

Of course, Your Imminence, he's a very spiritual man of great renown-

CAJETAN

The Pope is most displeased with him.

MILTITZ

Though, I have always thought that he is a bit of a trouble maker...of questionable character...a most-

CAJETAN

When you approach Frederick the Wise concerning The Golden Rose of Virtue, please make it clear that the Pope would like to have Doctor Luther brought to Rome.

MILTITZ

I will, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

And you will see to it that your Prince understands the relationship of this great honor, to the status of Doctor Luther.

MILTITZ

Oh.....Yes.....Of course, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

Very well.

CAJETAN rises and TETZEL and
MILTITZ bow. CAJETAN exits.

TETZEL

Come back tomorrow, and the Cardinal will have more information for you.

MILTITZ

What does he want with Luther?

TETZEL

Have you not heard of his many heresies?

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, of course, the heresies.....about what?

TETZEL

Forty-one of his writings have been condemned by the Pope. He has spoken out about
the sale of indulgences-

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, that silly mess.

TETZEL

The sale of indulgences is a most honorable work of the Church. I have dedicated my life
to this ministry.

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, indeed, very important. A most honorable ministry.

TETZEL

And because of his teaching, the revenue from indulgences has decreased to merely a
third of the usual. He has written many books that speak badly of the Church, and he has
written them in German, rather than Latin, and as a result, the German people are able to
quote his words.

MILTITZ

Well, that's hardly fair, is it?

TETZEL

He has even damaged the reputation of the beloved Cardinal. There was a drawing
posted-

MILTITZ

Oh, yes I saw it. It showed Cardinal Cajetan, only his face was like that of a donkey, and in his hoofs he was playing some instrument-

TETZEL

A harp.

MILTITZ

Yes, a harp. It was very funny and –

TETZEL

The Cardinal did not find it humorous.

MILTITZ

Most disrespectful.... and distasteful.

(awkward pause)

Well, I shall do everything in my power to bring him back to you. You can count on me. The Cardinal can count on me. I won't stand for such nonsense from my countryman.

TETZEL

The Cardinal will be pleased to hear that.

MILTITZ

Yes, please make sure he knows.

TETZEL exits.

MILTITZ (cont'd)

(calling after him)

I won't disappoint the Cardinal. Not at all.

Blackout.

Scene 8

January 1519. A tavern in Wittenberg, represented by three stools around a table. Sitting at the table, in a pleasant mood, are MARTIN, STAUPITZ, and MILTITZ drinking from large mugs.

MARTIN

So the question, is quite simple – if the Pope can forgive those sins, then why doesn't he forgive everyone's sin - out of love, not because they help pay for the Basilica?

MILTITZ

(laughing loudly)

Ah ha! That's a good one.

(to STAUPITZ, referring to LUTHER)

He's clever, is he not?

STAUPITZ nods.

MARTIN

And one more thing, suppose a soul wants to stay in Purgatory, suppose-

MILTITZ

Why would a soul want to stay in Purgatory?

MARTIN

Who knows? Maybe he still feels guilty about his temporal sins. Maybe he isn't ready to enter heaven. Maybe he has a room with an ocean side view – I don't know, just suppose he doesn't want to leave.

MILTITZ

All right, he doesn't want to leave.

MARTIN

If I buy an indulgence in his name – he has to go – against his own will. That's not fair, is it?

MILTITZ

(laughing loudly)

No, not at all.

MARTIN

Only by faith in God, can we come to Him, not through good deeds or impulsive purchases. We won't find God in the bones of the saints or the signature of the Pope. Only by faith in Him will you ever know Him.

MILTITZ

Yes, that's true.

STAUPITZ

The Pope is greatly dismayed at Martin's comments.

MILTITZ

Oh, I can understand that.

STAUPITZ

In fact, it was rumored that you had come to take Martin back to Rome.

MILTITZ

Ah.

STAUPITZ

You realize that if Martin leaves Germany, he'll be condemned in Rome and put to death.

MILTITZ

No.

STAUPITZ

They won't say it, but it's what they have in mind.

MARTIN

Of course, it's good to know that's not why you're here.

MILTITZ

Yes, I would never do such a thing. I told the Cardinal-

STAUPITZ

Cardinal?

MILTITZ

Cajetan.

MARTIN

You spoke with Cajetan?

MILTITZ

Yes...I told him...that there was no way I could turn my back on my countryman, that I would never oppose the wishes of Frederick the Wise, that Martin Luther is not his to beckon to Rome, no.

MARTIN

He asked you to bring me to Rome?

MILTITZ

Yes, but I told him under no circumstances would I do that. It was strictly out of the question.

MARTIN

So what will you tell him upon returning?

MILTITZ

The same thing I said before I left. Martin Luther is a German and belongs in Germany.

STAUPITZ

You know he's been declared a heretic.

MILTITZ

Yes, but it's got to be some kind of misunderstanding. Just keep quiet, Martin, stay in the shadows, and this will all fade away.

STAUPITZ

(knowingly)

You hear that? Stay in the shadows.

MARTIN

(getting the message)

I'm not going to be in the debates in Leipzig.

MILTITZ

What debates?

STAUPITZ

Johann von Eck is going to debate Andreas von Karlstadt, and there is a great deal of pressure for Martin to get involved.

MARTIN

I won't be in the debate – unless it's necessary.

STAUPITZ

And what defines "necessary?"

MARTIN

If Eck attacks my views publicly, I will be asked to join in, otherwise, I am merely an onlooker.

MILTITZ

Yes, you don't want any unnecessary attention. Rome is watching you closely.

STAUPITZ

Very closely.

MARTIN

(nodding)

If I break wind in Wittenberg, they can smell it in Rome.

They all laugh heartily and take another drink.

STAUPITZ

Hopefully Karlstadt can defend those viewpoints effectively.

MARTIN

I'm certain he will. I won't have to face Johann von Eck.

Blackout.

Scene 9

June 1519. The debate hall in Leipzig.
 SOUND: Murmuring of crowd. MARTIN and Johann von ECK stand behind two podiums. ECK is dressed in the robes of a Doctor of Theology and speaks in an exaggerated oratorical style. MARTIN speaks in a casual but moving manner.

ECK

For this reason Christ has established a similar order upon earth. What a monster the Church would be if it were without a head!

MARTIN

When Dr. Eck declares that the universal Church must have a head, he says well. As for me, it is not my concern.

ECK

If the Church has never been without a head, I should like to know who it can be, if not the Roman pontiff?

MARTIN

The head of the Church is Christ himself, and not a man. I believe this on the testimony of God's Word. His kingdom is a kingdom of faith. We cannot see our Head, and yet we have one.

SOUND: Murmuring crowd.

ECK

Saint Jerome declares that if an extraordinary power, superior to all others, were not given to the pope, there would be in the churches as many sects as there were pontiffs.

MARTIN

If all the believers would consent to it, but it has yet to happen that such an agreement has been met, for even now, does not the Greek Church refuse to submit to Rome? And yet, the Greeks have not been declared heretics.

SOUND: Murmuring crowd.

ECK

The worthy doctor calls upon me to prove that the primacy of the Church of Rome is of Divine right. I will prove it by this expression of Christ: “Thou art Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church.” Saint Augustine, in one of his epistles, has thus explained the meaning of this passage “Thou art Peter, and on this rock - that is to say, on Peter - I will build my Church.”

MARTIN

If the Reverend Doctor desires to attack me, let him first reconcile these contradictions in Saint Augustine, who said many times that the rock was Christ, and more than once that it was Peter himself. Peter himself calls Christ the chief corner-stone, and a living stone on which we are built up a spiritual house.

ECK

Does the Reverend Doctor question the interpretation of the Bible as validated by the Pope?

MARTIN

A simple layman armed with the Scriptures is superior to both pope and councils without them.

SOUND: Murmuring crowd.

ECK

Do you question the role of the minister?

MARTIN

We are all ministers – some of us just happen to be clergy.

SOUND: The crowd roars. ECK quiets the crowd.

ECK

I am surprised at the humility and modesty displayed by the Reverend Doctor to oppose the teachings of our learned fathers and pontiffs, and councils and universities. No doubt, God himself has hidden the truth away from all the saints and martyrs and saved it alone for Doctor Luther.

MARTIN

The Lord God spoke once through the mouth of a donkey. If a donkey can speak the Lord’s truth, certainly one can perceive that I might also speak for the Lord. I do not speak against the Fathers. . Let my opponent set a curb to his tongue. To express himself as he does, will only serve to excite contention. Our Doctor Eck has this day skimmed over Scripture almost without touching it — as a spider runs upon the water.

ECK

And you Martin Luther, have spoken blasphemy, as you agree with the tenets of Jan Hus.

SOUND: Murmuring crowd.

MARTIN

Not everything that Hus taught is blasphemy.

SOUND: Crowd gasping in dismay.

MARTIN (cont'd)

And if the Hussites be heretics, then why have we not tried to win them over with charity as brothers, showing them the error of their ways.

SOUND: Raucous crowd noise in opposition to the comment. Obviously, he has found disapproval with the audience.

ECK

(silencing the crowd, very pleased)

The Reverend Doctor has spoken. I should be interested to hear what His Holiness, the Pope will say about those remarks.

MARTIN looks uneasy as the crowd roars.
Blackout.

Scene 10

October 1519. In CAJETAN's office.
CAJETAN is seated, TETZL and MILTITZ stand before him.

CAJETAN

And why not?

MILTITZ

Your Imminence, I tried my best, I pleadedbut Frederick will not be moved.

CAJETAN

Did you not explain the preconditions of The Golden Rose of Virtue.?

MILTITZ

Yes, Your Imminence, but he is reluctant to compel Luther to come to Rome.

CAJETAN

And you did nothing more?

MILTITZ

Oh, no, Your Imminence, I did, I spoke with Luther myself – three times - attempting to convince him to come by free will.

CAJETAN

And his response?

MILTITZ

He is a most respectful of your office, and especially to His Holiness, the Pope, but feels his ministry lies in Wittenberg.

TETZEL

Has he not been summoned to Rome?

MILTITZ

Well, yes, it's just-

TETZEL

Your Imminence, this is merely further proof of his infidelity.

CAJETAN

I don't understand Frederick's reluctance to turn him over.

MILTITZ

He claims the case has not been officially discussed in a German court. Apparently the scholars of Saxony do not consider Luther a heretic, and Frederick will not send him to Rome unless he is found guilty of heresy.

TETZEL exits.

CAJETAN

He seems to have impressed the crowds in Leipzig.

MILTITZ

Indeed, he did, your Imminence. He gave a good drubbing to that pompous Johann von Eck. The crowd was quite amused - it seems that the pretentious Eck was merely interested in insulting Luther, rather than debating theology.

CAJETAN

I heard that Eck made some strong points.

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, he did. Very strong points.

CAJETAN

And that Luther lost the compassion of many when he sided with the Hussites.

MILTITZ

Your Imminence, almost everyone in Saxony has lost a relative in past history because of the bloodthirsty Hussites. Eck knew this and must have used it as a trap. Eck is a cunning and deceitful man. Many times Luther was forced to expose him in a lie.

CAJETAN

You claim that Doctor Eck is a liar?

MILTITZ

Most certainly.

CAJETAN

Grave accusations, von Miltitz.

MILTITZ

Grave, but true, Your Imminence. If he were here now -

TETZEL enters, followed by Johann von
ECK.

TETZEL

Your Imminence, the Reverend Doctor, Johann von Eck.

ECK bows.

ECK

Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

Doctor Eck.

ECK

Your Imminence, I have that which you requested.

CAJETAN

Very well. Von Miltitz here has been telling me about your debates in Leipzig.

ECK

Oh....yes, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

What was it you were saying, von Miltitz?

MILTITZ

A very impressive performance, Doctor. Very impressive.

ECK

Thank you.

CAJETAN

If you would leave us von Miltitz, we have some issues to discuss.

MILTITZ

Yes, your Imminence.

MILTITZ bows and exits with TETZEL. ECK produces a document.

CAJETAN

Have you covered everything?

ECK

Yes, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

It must be noted that many of his works have been labeled heretical.

ECK

(reading)

“We likewise condemn, reprobate, and reject completely the books and all the writings and sermons of Martin Luther..”

CAJETAN

To what extent?

ECK

(finding the place in the text)

“We forbid each and every one of the faithful to read, assert, preach, praise, print, publish, or defend them.”

CAJETAN

Very good.

ECK

(reading)

“Immediately after the publication of this letter, these works, wherever they may be, shall be sought out carefully and shall be burned publicly.”

CAJETAN

What about Luther?

ECK

(skipping ahead)

“As far as Martin himself is concerned, we have even offered him safe conduct and the money necessary for the journey urging him to come without fear or any misgivings. But he always refused to listen and disdained to come.”

CAJETAN

Get to the point.

ECK

(skipping ahead)

“Therefore we can proceed against him to his condemnation and damnation as one whose faith is notoriously suspect and in fact a true heretic with the full severity of each and all of the above penalties and censures.”

CAJETAN

Good.

ECK

“It is our hope, that he will experience a change of heart and if he certify to us by legal documents that he has obeyed, he will find in us the opening of the fountain of mercy. In the meantime, however, he shall cease from all preaching or the office of preacher.”

CAJETAN

Make that last passage more certain. Once signed, Luther may not teach, he may not write, and what he has written, will be burned as heresy. The Pope will gladly sign it.

SOUND: Hammer strikes three times.
Blackout.

Scene 11

June 1520. A Courtyard in Wittenberg.

SOUND: Monks singing in Latin.

MAN #1 and MAN #2 are placing books into a fire, MARTIN stands alone, off the side, watching the burning of his books. PHILLIP Melanchthon, a young monk enters, carrying the decree from the Pope. PHILIPP sees MARTIN and approaches him, speaks for a moment and then hands MARTIN the decree. MARTIN reads for a moment, then looks up, obviously distraught.

MARTIN approaches the fire, rips the decree into half, and tosses the pieces in the fire. MARTIN then exits angrily as PHILLIP, MAN #1, and MAN #2 look on. Blackout.

Scene 12

January 1521. The study in Wittenberg. Von STAUPITZ waits reading in the study, represented by a chair or desk. MARTIN enters.

	STAUPITZ
Another sermon, Martin?	
	MARTIN
Yes.	
	STAUPITZ
That's two in one day.	
	MARTIN
It's become part of my routine.	
	STAUPITZ
Philipp Melanchthon is quite impressive as a teacher. I see you asked him to take over the Hebrew studies.	
	MARTIN
Temporarily, yes, until we can find some one else.	
	STAUPITZ
He has quite a load then, Hebrew and Greek.	
	MARTIN
Yes, but he has a brilliant mind and a fresh attitude.	
	STAUPITZ
(pause)	
Two sermons in one day.	
	MARTIN
Does it bother you?	

STAUPITZ
I fear for your future.

MARTIN
Ah.
(pause)
And your future, Johann?

STAUPITZ
Does that worry you?

MARTIN
In my earlier years, you were a great comfort to me. I was amazed at how wise, and how gentle a teacher you were.

STAUPITZ
And now?

MARTIN
I don't understand why you can't see how crucial this conflict is, why you don't choose between blessed piety and the abuses of the system ... how you are willing to sit and loiter between these two opinions, taking the middle course between Christ and the Pope.

STAUPITZ
This is your battle, Martin.

MARTIN
It is the battle of all who believe in the true nature of Grace.

STAUPITZ
I am leaving Wittenberg.

MARTIN
Why?

STAUPITZ
I'm going to Salzburg to live out my days. I'm old now, Martin. My time here has ended.

MARTIN
I have been called to the diet at Worms. To answer to the authorities, concerning my work...my beliefs.

STAUPITZ

It seems to me that the world is exasperated against truth, with the same hatred that once crucified Christ, and today, I see nothing waiting for you but the Cross. Come with me. Leave Wittenberg and join me. We can carry out our time together. This would please the Archbishop. It would give you some protection, and perhaps save your life.

MARTIN

(pause)

I hate my wretched life..... I fear death..... I feel empty of faith and full of qualities, which Christ knows, I would much rather be without. I would join you, but ... I must serve Him.

(pause)

Last night I dreamed about you. I dreamed that you were leaving and I wept. You waved to me and bid my cry no more, for you would come back. But for now, farewell..... and pray for me in my wretchedness.

STAUPITZ

You have undertaken a hard task and have shown great courage. As for me....I am but a baby, needing to be fed by mother's milk. At Worms, they have nothing yet against you, but the papists show extraordinary fury. Even so, I would think that you won't be condemned without the chance to be heard.

MARTIN

Johann, I beg you, don't yield to the point that you offend Christ. Your statements don't contradict the Pope's offenses. It bothers me that you tremble, instead of crying aloud on behalf of our Savior.

STAUPITZ

I exhort you to be humble, Martin,

MARTIN

And I exhort you to pride. You are too yielding.

STAUPITZ

And you are too stubborn.

MARTIN

It is a solemn matter: We see Christ suffer - should we keep silent and humble while the world mocks our Lord, or do we fight and offer up our lives for Him?

STAUPITZ

They will find you guilty of heresy.

MARTIN

May I be found guilty - of pride...of avarice, adultery, murder, and all other sins, rather than be silent when the Lord suffers.

STAUPITZ hugs MARTIN.

STAUPITZ

Peace be with you, Martin.

STAUPITZ exits.

MARTIN

(almost to himself)
...And with you.

PHILIPP enters.

PHILIPP

Martin, I heard about the Diet at Worms. What are they going to do to you?

MARTIN

Ah, Philipp...it's a weary game they play. We've kept a tedious balance, between my authority to preach the truth and the condemnation of a heretic, and at any moment, I may topple and fall into the hands of the enemy.

PHILIPP

Perhaps you shouldn't go.

MARTIN

This is my calling. This blessed doctrine will now make its way into the ears of the Emperor, and the papal representatives, and the German people.

PHILIPP

But they may condemn you....harm you. They may-

MARTIN

My life is no longer an issue. If I succeed in Leipzig, my personal outcome will not matter.

PHILIPP

Then I shall go with you.

MARTIN

No, Philipp, you must stay. There is much to be done here.

PHILIPP

But I can't stand here in front of students while you risk your life.

MARTIN

If I don't come back - if my enemies put me to death - you must go on teaching and standing fast in the truth. If you live, my death will matter little.

PHILIPP

It will matter to me.

MARTIN

Yes, I suppose it will. If they put me to death, you'll have to take over my classes.

Blackout.

Scene 13

April 1521. The Diet at Worms. Lights up on a table with several stacks of books. Behind the table stands ECK. Before him stands MARTIN.

ECK

Martin Luther, yesterday we brought you forward to question you on these books before me. In response to our questions, you asked that you be given more time to consider, lest you answer too hastily. We have given you this time and now stand ready to hear your response. Are you prepared to answer?

MARTIN

I am.

ECK

First, do you confess that these books before me, which circulate under your name are yours, and will you acknowledge those as yours or not?

MARTIN examines the books briefly. MARTIN answers in a quiet unassuming voice, much like a child who has been scolded, hoping to share the truth, but afraid of being scolded again.

MARTIN

Most serene Emperor, most distinguished Princes, most merciful Lords, those books are manifestly mine and published under my name, by me.

ECK

And do you want to regard all the books as admittedly yours or do you, in truth, want to retract something?

MARTIN picks up some of the books,
continuing to speak in a quietly with respect.

MARTIN

To this I would respond: My books are not all of the same type.

MARTIN places several books in a stack

MARTIN (cont'd)

The Papal decree which declared some of my books as heresies also declared some of my books as harmless. These books have I written to address the Christian faith and life of piety so directly and evangelically that even my opponents are forced to admit that these books are of some value. If I were to retract these, I would be denying the truth that both my friends and enemies equally acknowledge.

MARTIN places several books into another
stack

MARTIN (cont'd)

Of my books, there is another type which attacks the Pope and the doctrine of the Papists. No one can deny this, since the witness is the experiences of everyone who has seen this tyranny lead to the entrapment of the conscience and the devouring of money and property. So if I retracted those, I would increase the strength of this tyranny, and to such great impiety I would be offering a great cover for wickedness and tyranny myself.

MARTIN places the remaining books into a
third and smaller stack

MARTIN (cont'd)

There is a third type, which I wrote against those who endeavored to defend the Roman tyranny and destroy the piety I taught. Against those I admit that I was harsher than is fitting for religion or profession, though I do not debate about my own life but about the doctrine of Christ. Nor is it honest for me to retract those, because by this retraction it would again happen that tyranny and impiety would reign and rage more violently against the people of God. And so I ask, through the mercy of God, Most Serene Majesty and your Most Exalted Lords, for someone to give evidence of my errors by the Holy Scriptures, for if I can be shown whatever error to retract, I will be the first to cast my books into the fire.

There is a pause as though no one is certain
that MARTIN has finished his explanation.

MARTIN (cont'd)

(meekly)
I have spoken.

ECK

(pause)

Martin Luther, your errors are the errors of former heretics such as Wycliffe and Hus, who have been condemned by the Church and the Council of Constanz. If you admit freely to your errors, the Emperor may take care that your works which do not include such errors, may be treated more gently. I ask you, Martin Luther, answer candidly, without horns, do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?

MARTIN

Since Your Imperial Majesty and Your Lordships demand a simple reply, I will answer, without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convinced of error by the testimony of Scripture or by manifest reasoning - since I put no trust in the authority of the Pope or councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves, I stand upon the Scriptures, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word: I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.

(pause)

Here I stand..... I can do nothing else..... God help me.

SOUND: Uproar of crowd. Lights fade out.

Scene 14

May 1521. The Road to Wittenberg.
 PHILIPP sits on a tree stump waiting.
 MARTIN enters with his satchel slung over his shoulder.

PHILIPP

Martin!

PHILIPP runs to MARTIN and they hug.

MARTIN

Dear Philipp, you are far from home.

PHILIPP

I heard you left Worms long ago and began to worry.

MARTIN

No need to worry. The Emperor agreed to my safe passage before I left Wittenberg and must allow me free return.

PHILIPP

Where have you been?

MARTIN

Ah...in every town along the way it, seems. Everywhere I go there is a large turn out and I can't resist preaching to them. I've spoken in almost every monastery and church between here and Worms.

PHILIPP

And what of your appearance before the Diet?

MARTIN

The results weren't favorable. The Emperor attempted to turn the German lords against me, and when they would not, he issued a decree against me. Soon the Church will order my excommunication and I will be an outlaw.

PHILIPP

Do you...do you wish that you hadthat you had...

MARTIN

I couldn't do it. All I can do is stand fast with what God has shown me....and pray that He keep me safe.

PHILIPP

Won't you be in danger at the University?

MARTIN

Well, we can look into that when we get back. I'm sure we can find-

PHILIPP

(wary of something in the distance)

Martin.

MARTIN looks at PHILIPP who points.
MARTIN looks in that direction as MAN#1,
MAN#2, and MAN#3, enter wearing black
hoods to cover their faces. MAN#1 and
MAN#2 carry torches and weapons.
MARTIN and PHILIPP back away.

MAN#2

We seek Martin Luther. Identify yourself and your companion will go unharmed.

MARTIN steps forward.

MARTIN

I am Luther.

MAN#1 and MAN#3 approach MARTIN to bind him. PHILIPP lunges at them, and MAN#2 knocks him to the ground and holds him at bay with his sword. MAN#3 places a bag over MARTIN's head and MAN#1 and MAN#3 exit with MARTIN. MAN#2 backs away from PHILIPP and exits. PHILIPP picks up MARTIN's satchel and exits hurriedly. SOUND: Three strikes of the hammer. Blackout.

End of ACT I

I Cannot Say *Revoco*

ACT II
Scene 1

August 1521. A guest room in Wartburg Castle. MARTIN is sitting at a table writing. He does not wear the robe of a monk, but instead he's dressed in middleclass garb – britches and tunic. He wears a full beard, and is writing intently. PHILLIP enters, followed by HANS.

PHILIPP

Good day, sir. We seek Sir George, the knight.

MARTIN

(without looking up)

I am Sir George.

PHILIPP

Then I should tell you - you make a sorry looking knight.

MARTIN

(looking up, surprised)

Philipp!

(rises quickly and hugs Philipp)

It is good to see you. I see you got my letter.

PHILIPP

I brought you a visitor.

There is an awkward pause as MARTIN first notices his father.

MARTIN

Father.

HANS pauses not sure what to do. PHILIPP exits discretely. A moment of discomfort passes.

MARTIN (cont'd)

(somewhat uncomfortable)

Father. It is good to see you.

HANS

We were so worried, Martin. Your mother has been praying for you twice each day, hoping for your safety.

MARTIN

I am grateful for her prayers. How is she?

HANS

She is well.

MARTIN

And you?

HANS

Also well.

MARTIN

Good.

(pause)

It's good to see you.

HANS

When we heard about your capture, we feared the worst.

MARTIN

It was orchestrated by Frederick the Wise. I was brought here for my own safety.

HANS

So you are in danger?

MARTIN

The Pope's decree permits any German to capture or kill me, without question. I'm safe while I'm here. They are very protective of me. I don't go out wandering very much and of course, there's the disguise.....

HANS nods, not knowing what to say.

MARTIN (cont'd)

Of course, it's actually a blessing. Here in isolation I have a great deal of time. I've been translating the New Testament, into German.

HANS

Truly?

MARTIN

For too long the Scriptures have been hidden from the eyes of the people. A man shouldn't be required to get a degree and learn Latin, just so he can live a godly life.

MARTIN shows some of his translations to HANS.

MARTIN (cont'd)

With the printing of a New Testament in the common language, any man who can read will have access to God's Word. He will no longer have to rely on his priest to interpret it for him - he can take full responsibility for his own spirituality.

HANS

This is a massive undertaking.

MARTIN

If the Scriptures are the ultimate authority of God's will, then God's children should be able to come directly to this authority.

HANS

But will they understand it? Don't they need a priest to show them the way?

MARTIN

God will use the Holy Spirit, to open His Word. The Scriptures don't challenge the intellect, they challenge the Christian in his daily life, and through the scriptures, God will confront each one of us, showing us what He has for us at any given time – when God's Word falls on earnest ears, the Scriptures will move the heart, not just the mind.

HANS

(pause)

I think it suits you.

MARTIN

What?

HANS

The beard.

MARTIN

Oh.

(pause)

Father, do you remember what you once said, about the way I came into God's service?

HANS doesn't understand.

MARTIN (cont'd)

That lightning strike... that sent me “scurrying off to the priesthood like a frightened rat.”
Do you really believe that may have been sent by the devil?

HANS

Martin.... I don't.... I just....

MARTIN

Do you think that's true - that I have been deceived all this time, leading others in the
wrong direction?

HANS

You have been very diligent ... in God's service.

MARTIN

But do you believe that what I am doing is of God?

HANS

...Of course.

MARTIN

When I first came to know God, I feared Him, hated the very mention of His name. I saw
God in His holiness, demanding that I, too, leave my sinful nature - only I couldn't. My
sins were everywhere – I could not meet His standard, and every time I tried, I felt the
disapproval of God.

HANS

But... God... is your heavenly father.

MARTIN

I had known the feeling of a father's disapproval, how my transgressions were punished
promptly, even to the point of

(torn by memories of HANS as a strict father)

..... I knew God loved me, but I feared Him greatly. It was not until von Staupitz sent
me to the Scriptures - he said “Read it for yourself.” There I learned of God's love, of
His true nature.

HANS

Do you doubt that now?

MARTIN

Do you believe it, Father? Do you believe thatmy work is of God. That I am leading
others to the truth....

(unconvincingly)
...Yes.

HANS

MARTIN sits with his head in his hands.
HANS feels a need to encourage MARTIN,
but doesn't know how.

HANS (cont'd)
The people of Mansfeld speak of you often, with pride.

MARTIN looks up.

(pause)
It was good to see you, Father.

MARTIN

(an awkward pause)
I will tell your mother of your work here.

HANS

HANS exits. PHILIPP enters. MARTIN is
quiet.

PHILIPP
He came to me, worried. I thought I should-

MARTIN
No, it's fine. It was good to see him. Thank you.

PHILIPP
I overheard...your new translation.

MARTIN
Look at this.

MARTIN goes to the desk and picks up a
sheet of paper and hands it to PHILIPP who
reads.

PHILIPP
Martin, this is excellent.

MARTIN
Do you think so?

PHILIPP

Oh, yes. This description is so vivid – it’s much better than the old translations.

MARTIN

I was always annoyed at the mixture of dialects – some of them were almost incomprehensible. I hope that this can be understood throughout all of Germany, not just in Saxony.

PHILIPP

It’s very clear, it’s not completely High German, it’s more-

MARTIN

I’ve brought in the language of the people – the sellers in the marketplace, the tradesmen, mothers talking to their children. The Word of God should be heard by His people, not in the tone of a legal document, but in the words of their own use.

PHILIPP

This is remarkable, Martin. It will surely make a difference.

MARTIN

Thank you. How are things at the University?

PHILIPP

There are... there are several, Martin, who have taken your teachings to heart.

MARTIN

Yes?

PHILIPP

Only, the tone has troubled many of us. They cling to your teaching of all Christians being ministers, so much so, that they are denouncing the clergy.

MARTIN

What?

PHILIPP

They claim that there is no need for clergy, if each man can find his own salvation. Karlstadt has become very vocal.

MARTIN

Andreas Karlstadt?

PHILIPP

He speaks out in Mass, not whispering in Latin, but shouting in German. He has condemned the emblems in the church, he has opposed infant baptism - he has even spoken against the vows of the clergy.

MARTIN

Of all the progress we have made....we cannot allow the zealots to force us backward.

PHILIPP

What can we do, Martin? We need your guidance.

MARTIN

This is distressing.

PHILIPP

It is worse than you know. Karlstadt even plans to take a wife.

MARTIN

Marriage?

(pause)

And they call me a heretic.

Blackout.

Scene 2

December 1521. Lights up on an altar, with a small crucifix standing on it.

KARLSTADT, dressed in the robes of a priest, holds a bible in his hand.

KARLSTADT

Turn your eyes and ears toward the Scriptures! You have been told that the priest can show you how to find salvation. I say unto you: Your salvation is your own, you must work through it yourself. The demons of Rome have held you captive. You have been deprived of the voice of your own Savior. I say to: Listen, not to the church, not to the clergy – listen to God Himself.

KARLSTADT places the bible on the altar.

KARLSTADT (cont'd)

You have been told to call me Father Karlstadt, for I am a priest, I am of the clergy. But from this day forward, I shall be known only as Brother Andreas.

KARLSTADT rips off his robe, revealing his common attire, and tosses the robe onto the floor.

KARLSTADT (cont'd)

I may be a priest, but so are you. In God's eyes, we are all ministers of the Word of God. I hereby renounce my oath. I renounce my ties to the clergy, and to Rome. True religion is not what you have known. Your minds have been clouded by the traditions of men. Your hearts have been troubled by the fathers of corruption. Your souls are in danger, because the one true God has been hidden away from you. The love of God has been thwarted, and in its place we have been given circumstance and ceremony.

KARLSTADT removes the cross hanging around his neck and holds it high in the air, showing it to the congregation.

KARLSTADT (cont'd)

Does not the Lord say, "Thou shalt not make graven images?"

KARLSTADT throws the cross onto the floor.

KARLSTADT (cont'd)

Having images in our churches is contrary to the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods!"

Turning to the altar, and with a sweep of his arm, KARLSTADT strikes the crucifix, knocking it to the floor.

KARLSTADT (cont'd)

You have been told that you must confess before you partake in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but I tell you that confession is not enough. Not only must you renounce your sins, but you must also have faith in God, and your relationship with Him. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

KARLSTADT exits. MARTIN enters, still wearing the dress of the middleclass, and now clean shaven, followed by PHILIPP, moving slowly looking around, observing the change in the church, as if having entered a crime scene. MARTIN picks up the cross that KARLSTADT removed from his neck. PHILIPP picks up KARLSTADT's robes and places them on the altar, and then picks up the crucifix that was knocked to the floor.

MARTIN

I have been waiting for Satan to attack this sensitive spot – but he decided not to make use of the papists. Now he is making efforts in and among us Evangelicals to produce the worst conceivable schism.

KATHARINA von Bora, enters quietly, unnoticed by MARTIN. KATHARINA wears a dirty robe. Her hair is disheveled and face is smudged.

PHILIPP

(noticing the visitor)
Martin.

MARTIN looks around and notices KATHARINA.

MARTIN

What is it, child?

KATHARINA kneels.

KATHARINA

Reverend, I beg of you, tell me where I might find the Reverend Doctor Luther.

PHILIPP

Who are you?

KATHARINA

My name is Katharina von Bora. I am a Sister, of the Cistercian convent in Nimschen. I have come with eight other sisters, seeking refuge, with hopes of being a part of the new reformed church.

MARTIN

How did you get here?

KATHARINA

We slipped out at night and hid in herring barrels, allowing the merchant Koeppel to carry us here in his wagon. Please, sir, tell me where I can find Doctor Luther.

MARTIN

I am Luther.

(gestures to PHILIPP, then speaks to KATHARINA)
Go with Philipp. He will take you and the sisters to shelter.

PHILIPP leads KATHARINA, as they exit.

MUENTZER (offstage)

Martin! Martin Luther!

MARTIN turns to see MUENTZER enter. MUENTZER is dressed as a peasant and carries a bible and papers. He is wild-eyed and deeply passionate.

MARTIN

Thomas Muentzer.

MUENTZER

Martin! Have you seen what we've done? You started a revolution, and we have carried on in your footsteps.

MARTIN

What?

MUENTZER

We have appealed to the princes of Saxony and the people to rise in arms against the Roman priests!

MARTIN

Thomas, this is not of God!

George, the MARGRAVE of Brandenburg, a Prince dressed in royal robes and wearing a crown, enters.

MUENTZER

Is it not Christ who said: 'I have come to bring, not peace, but the sword'?
(to MARGRAVE)

What can you do with that sword? You can do only one thing:

PRIEST enters, wearing the robes of clergy.

MUENTZER (cont'd)

If you wish to be the servants of God, you must drive out and
(pointing at PRIEST)

destroy the evil ones who stand in the way of the Gospel. Christ ordered very earnestly 'But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'

MARGRAVE

If God chooses to remove the clergy, then God alone could-

MUENTZER

Do not resort to empty assertions that the power of God could do it without aid of our sword, since then it would have to rust in its sheath. We must destroy those who stand in the way of God's revelation, we must do it mercilessly, as Elijah destroyed the priests of Baal, else the Christian Church will never come back to its origins. We must uproot the weeds in God's vineyard at the time when the crops are ripe.

MARGRAVE

The priests are a part of our community-

MUENTZER

God said through Moses, "Thou shalt not show mercy unto the idolators, but ye shall break down their altars, dash in pieces their graven images and burn them with fire that I shall not be wroth at you." Martin Luther has shown us the failures of the Church – he has provided a new teaching.

MARTIN

Is this the fruit of the new teaching - that no one should obey but all should rise in revolt and rush together to reform or perhaps destroy altogether the authorities, both clergy and layman?

MUENTZER

(producing document)

We have prepared a document which shall remove the reproach from the word of God, and give the Christian excuse for the disobedience or even the revolt of the entire Peasantry.

MARGRAVE

Revolt?

MUENTZER

The gospel is not the cause of revolt and disorder, since it is the message of Christ, teaching only love, peace, and patience. The peasants demand that this Gospel be taught them as a guide in life and they ought not to be called disobedient or disorderly.

PRIEST

You stand on shaky ground, Thomas Muentzer.

MUENTZER

First, we petition that we should have power and authority for each community to appoint a pastor, and the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly. This pastor shall teach us the Gospel pure and simple, without any addition, doctrine or ordinance of man -

PRIEST

(interjecting)

The peasants cannot appoint their own clergy. Only the Church can provide ministers.

MUENTZER

(reading)

Secondly, just as the tithes in the Scriptures, we are willing to pay the fair tithes of grain. Our appointed pastor shall gather and receive this tithes, and from this we shall -

PRIEST

The tithes belong to the Church, the holy Church of Rome.

MUENTZER

give to the pastor and the poor, as the circumstances and the general opinion demand.

PRIEST

Have you forgotten? The Pope may demand tithes as needed for the administration of Church.

MUENTZER

We will not pay an unseemly tithes which is of man's invention.

PRIEST

This is rebellion against the Pope.

MUENTZER

We have been ruled as property, even though the Scripture tells us we are free. Not that we would wish to be under no authority, for God teaches us to live an orderly life. We shall yield to our elected authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian, however you will release us from serfdom as true Christians.

MARGRAVE

It is our divine right. You must submit to your ruler.

MARTIN takes document from
MUENTZER.

MARTIN

Your Grace, under the circumstances, these requests are not unreasonable.

(paraphrasing from document)

The poor should be allowed to hunt and fish... A man shall be permitted to gather wood for his fireplace, and the forest shall be at the disposal of the community.

MARGRAVE

That's unthinkable.

MARTIN

(paraphrasing)

The nobility shall no longer force services from the peasant without payment.....The rent paid on lands will be evaluated, so that it does not exceed the value that the land can produce, so that the peasants shall not work for nothing -

MUENTZER

Since the laborer is worthy of his hire.

MARTIN

(paraphrasing)

The custom that allows a lord to take the best portion of a peasant's belongings upon his death shall be halted, so that a son may inherit all of his father's goods.

MARGRAVE

These demands are not-

MUENTZER

If any one of the articles should not be in agreement with the Word of God, we will willingly recede it when it is proved to be against the word of God by a clear explanation of the Scripture.

MARTIN confers with MARGRAVE and
PRIEST.

MARTIN

The contents of this document do show justice according to the Scriptures.

MARGRAVE

I am their ruler.

MARTIN

He who would be a Christian prince certainly must lay aside the intention to rule and to use force, to serve, not toward selfish pleasure, and profit, but to the salvation of others.

PRIEST

The Pope will not stand for this.

MARTIN

They do not appear to be concerned with the Pope.

MARGRAVE

They have discarded all loyalty to their rightful ruler.

MARTIN pauses and returns to
MUENTZER.

MARTIN

Thomas, I beg you, do not take action. The princes and the clergy will surely make way for reform, but they cannot make such changes immediately. You must be patient.

MUENTZER

We have been oppressed for centuries, Martin. The time for patience has passed.

MARTIN

But this is your earthly authority. You are bound by God's will to comply.

MUENTZER

Christ would not have us bound to an unjust authority.

MARTIN

Christ is not concerned with your bondage, Thomas, but with your soul. The reform of the Church is not to overthrow governments, but to make way for people to experience the true Christ.

MUENTZER

Does not your heart ache, Martin, at the suffering of so many of your countrymen?

MARTIN

It is my friendly and fraternal prayer, to be careful what you do. Those who take the sword shall perish by the sword and every soul should be subject to the powers that be, in fear and honor. If the government is bad and intolerable, that is no excuse for riot and insurrection, for to punish evil belongs not to everyone, but to the civil authority which bears the sword. Suffering tyranny is a cross given by God.

MUENTZER

(pause)

You have heard our demands –
(to MARGRAVE)
what say you, Your Grace?

MARGRAVE

You are an ungrateful dog.

PRIEST

May God forgive your rebellious heart.

MUENTZER

And may God grant mercy on you also. We shall revolt!

MUENTZER exits hurriedly, as preparing for battle.

MARTIN

(to MARGRAVE)

We can thank no one for this foolish rebellion but you my Lord, and

(to PRIEST)

especially blind bishops, parsons, and monks, who, ever hardened, continue to rage against the holy Gospel, although you know that our cause is right and you cannot controvert it.

MARGRAVE

They wish to unseat the government.

MARTIN

You do nothing but oppress and tax.... to maintain your pomp and pride, until the poor common man can bear it no longer. The sword is at your throat and yet you think you sit so firm in the saddle that no one can hoist you out. By such hardened presumption, you will break your necks – if the peasants don't do it, others will.

PHILIPP enters.

PHILIPP

Martin....., Muentzer and his followers have established a barricade at Schlachtberg. They are preparing for battle.

MARTIN

And the Lords?

PHILIPP

They have summoned their knights to move against the peasants.

MARTIN

(to MARGRAVE)

I beg of you, do not act in violence. If you appease them for a little while, they will eventually lose their fervor.

PHILIPP

The princes promised the peasants amnesty, if they deliver Muentzer to them.

MARTIN

And what has Muentzer done?

PHILIPP

He assembled the people in a circle to debate the proposal. A knight and a priest amongst the crowd expressed encouragement for surrender.

MARTIN

And Muentzer?

PHILIPP

He brought the knight and the priest into the center...and had them both beheaded.

MARTIN is shocked – his heart sinks in despair. Finally, he knows what he must do.

MARTIN

(to MARGRAVE)

My Lord...there is but one course of action-

PHILIPP

Do not allow this, Martin!

MARTIN

(to PHILIPP)

I dared not judge the peasants, since they asked to be instructed, but before I could look around, they took to violence, and now they rage like mad dogs.

PHILIPP

If you do this, people will say you betrayed the peasants – that you are supporting the nobles for your own purposes.

MARTIN

They do the devil's work, especially Thomas Muentzer, who does nothing but pour out blood.

PHILIPP exits.

MARTIN (cont'd)

(to MARGRAVE)

I, myself, am a peasant, and I come from peasant blood. Even so, the Gospel does not support rebellion. If you move against the peasants, you are obedient to God's Word in Romans 13, and in the service of love to free your neighbor from the bands of hell and the devil. I implore everyone to avoid the peasants as he would the devil himself. I pray God will enlighten them and turn their hearts, but if they do not turn...let none, who considers how intolerable is rebellion, think this too difficult.

MARGRAVE and PRIEST exit. MARTIN kneels and genuflects, praying silently. PHILIPP enters.

PHILIPP

The knights surrounded the mountain. After a short time, they broke through the barricade and captured the peasants' cannon. The peasants fled.

MARTIN

And Muentzer?

PHILIPP

He was captured....put on the rack. The princes had him tortured.... then decapitated.

MARTIN winces in anguish.

PHILIPP (cont'd)

Of the peasants, more than five thousand are dead. The rest have fled, looting and burning churches, attacking the nobility they meet on the roadways.

SOUND: Battle, horses, men yelling, clashing of swords. PHILIPP exits in the midst of this. The battle noises go on as MARTIN, collapsed on the ground, wincing in horror as if in some nightmare. Finally the noise fades and all is still. KARLSTADT enters, and waits quietly for MARTIN.

MARTIN

(regaining his composure)

How many?

KARLSTADT

(quietly)

Across Saxony...more than fifty thousand. Some say one hundred thousand.

MARTIN rises.

MARTIN

Such a waste.

**To read the rest of this script, you may contact the author for a full copy.
Please contact him at WriteDaveTucker@yahoo.com.**