

THE TRIAL OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

by Marian Moyer



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**THE TRIAL OF
DR. MARTIN LUTHER**

By Marian Moyer

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

GUARD #1:	Functionary of the court (optional)
GUARD #2:	Functionary of the court (optional)
PROSECUTOR:	Spokesman for the prosecution
FATHER:	Luther's father
MOTHER:	Luther's mother
MONK:	A brother monk of Luther
TETZEL:	A powerful Dominican Friar, representing Pope Leo's interests
LUTHER:	Dr. Martin Luther, the leader of the protest
FREDERICK:	Elector Frederick the Wise, a governor
PRINCES 1,2,3:	German Princes
PHILIP:	Important spokesman for the Reformation Movement
KATE:	Luther's wife

(After the start of the church services, preferably after one stanza of a hymn, the two guards run out and begin:)

OPTIONAL OPENING

GUARD #1: Stop! Stop the services! (*Pointing at Organist:*)
You, you up there! Stop the music!

GUARD #2: You people . . . you who call yourselves
“Lutherans” . . . letting yourselves be named
after that heretic who destroyed the power of
the Holy Roman Empire . . . Martin Luther,
indeed!

GUARD #1: (*Scornfully, to other Guard.*) He said he preached
the truth according to the Scriptures . . .

GUARD #2: (*Interrupting*) But it was the Church and the Holy
Father in Rome who taught us the truth! Dr. Luther dared
to think he was more learned than such a great man as the
Pope? No wonder he was called a blasphemer and a heretic!

SECOND OPTIONAL OPENING

(*Start here if the first opening is too disruptive*)

GUARD #2: (*To Congregation*) Ladies and gentlemen of this
congregation . . . we will let you determine where the truth
is. We intend to put Dr. Martin Luther on trial here today
and let you be the judge. (*To other Guard*) Bring in the
Prosecutor. (*Guard escorts Prosecutor in*) (*Prosecutor
enters, places papers and books on table, turns to
Congregation, pacing as he begins to speak.*)

PROSC: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Martin Luther
was a convicted heretic as judged by His Eminence, the
Pope, as well as Emperor Charles the Fifth. And yet you
continue to ignore the counsel of those learned men. I
intend to show you that Martin Luther denied the teachings

- 1 PROSC: (contd) of the most Holy Roman Catholic faith.
 2 (Enter three representatives of the nobility [Prince 1, 2, 3]
 3 from the back and take seats in the front pews) Ah, I see
 4 we have representatives of the nobility with us. (Bow
 5 slightly) It is an honor to have you with us. Let us begin.
 6 (To Guard) Bring in the defendant, Dr. Martin Luther.
 7 (Luther enters from Right, nods at Prosecutor, sits to the
 8 Right of the Center.) (Prosecutor to Guard:) Bring in Dr.
 9 Luther's parents. (Parents enter from Left and go to witness
 10 stand, Left of Center.) Please state your names.
- 11 FATHER: My name is Hans Luther, and this is my wife,
 12 Margaret.
- 13 PROSC: And you are . . . (Looks at papers) . . . a miner?
- 14 FATHER: At first I worked in the copper mines in Eislaben.
- 15 PROSC: (Interrupting) Eislaben? Where is that?
- 16 FATHER: Eislaben is . . . well . . . it is in what is now called
 17 "East" Germany. But you must remember that five hundred
 18 years ago, Germany as a state did not exist. Most of Europe
 19 was one big area called The Holy Roman Empire.
- 20 PROSC: I see. And so, you worked as a miner in Eislaben.
- 21 FATHER: Yes, at first. Later, we moved to Mansfield, again,
 22 in your "East" Germany area where I leased a small smelting
 23 furnace. (Proudly) After much hard work and diligence, I
 24 soon acquired half a dozen mining shafts and two foundries.
 25 I was also, what you call here, a city councilman.
- 26 PROSC: Frau Luther, how many children did you have?
- 27 MOTHER: Four boys and four girls. Martin was our second
 28 son.
- 29 PROSC: When was he born?
- 30 MOTHER: In 1483. We had a day for celebrating the passing
 31 of autumn into winter . . . like you have Thanksgiving Day,
 32 I believe. Our day was called St. Martin's Day.
- 33 PROSC: Our Thanksgiving Day falls in November . . .
- 34 MOTHER: (Happily) Yah, yah, our St. Martin's Day too.
- 35 Anyway, on the night before, on November 10, our son was

- 1 MOTHER: (*contd*) born. We named him Martin in honor of
 2 the saint who watched over the event. That was just over
 3 five hundred years ago.
- 4 PROSC: Was there anything in his childhood that marked
 5 him as unusual?
- 6 MOTHER: No. He was like all the other children. He received
 7 his share of thrashings like the other children.
- 8 PROSC: Thrashings?
- 9 MOTHER: (*Impatiently*) Yah, thrashings. You know . . .
 10 spankings!
- 11 PROSC: I see. Please continue.
- 12 MOTHER: Yah, your Dr. Spock would have been most
 13 unhappy. We believed a good thrashing was as necessary as
 14 eating and drinking to raise a child.
- 15 FATHER: (*Nodding yes*) Yah, the teachers did their share of
 16 thrashing too. How else could a child learn?!
- 17 PROSC: Tell us about Dr. Luther's early schooling, Frau
 18 Luther.
- 19 MOTHER: Martin, like the other children, went to the school
 20 in town . . . everyday for eight years. There were
 21 no holidays in those days.
- 22 PROSC: What subjects did they teach?
- 23 MOTHER: Reading, Writing, Singing, and Latin. Latin was
 24 most important. This had to be drilled into the students,
 25 and when they made a mistake, a good thrashing taught
 26 them not to make the same mistake twice.
- 27 PROSC: What about his religious training?
- 28 MOTHER: Yah, we taught him at home.
- 29 PROSC: What did you teach him?
- 30 MOTHER: We taught him to seek salvation through the
 31 Church.
- 32 PROSC: Salvation through the Church?
- 33 MOTHER: Yah, the Church could save us all from the
 34 demons and devils, the witches and ghosts, that
 35 were everywhere.

- 1 PROSC: What do you mean, they were everywhere?
 2 MOTHER: When you hear thunder, don't you say, "The
 3 Devil is loose!"
 4 PROSC: (*Laughs slightly*) No. We have scientific
 5 explanations for thunder.
 6 FATHER: What's this word "scientific"?
 7 PROSC: Sorry. Sometimes I forget where I am. Please
 8 continue.
 9 MOTHER: Well, I don't know about your "scientific" but I
 10 do know that whenever something unusual happened, there
 11 was a devil responsible. I remember, when one of the
 12 children was sick, I wanted to know which one of the
 13 witches was responsible.
 14 PROSC: Why?
 15 MOTHER: Why? Why, because the Church had special herbs
 16 that could be used as protection against that child's dying.
 17 The Church could protect us.
 18 PROSC: But this is completely opposite to Dr. Luther's
 19 later beliefs.
 20 FATHER: Yah, I know. I don't know where we went wrong
 21 with him. I never agreed with him about his beliefs (*Shakes*
 22 *head sadly*). A parent tries so hard . . .
 23 PROSC: (*Nods agreement*) Some things never change, do
 24 they.
 25 FATHER: You, too, have this problem?
 26 PROSC: It must be universal, through the ages.
 27 FATHER: (*Becoming angry*) But it wasn't only that we
 28 disagreed . . . many fathers and sons disagree.
 29 PROSC: Then what else?
 30 FATHER: (*Looks at son*) I could see, even when Martin was
 31 very young, that he was very smart . . . that he had a great
 32 future ahead of him. I encouraged him in his studies. And
 33 when he earned his Master's degree, he graduated second
 34 out of seventeen students.
 35 PROSC: So, what was the problem?

- 1 FATHER: He could have . . . he should have . . . become a
 2 lawyer, as I planned for him. I even gave him his first law
 3 book. And he did enroll for one semester in law school. . .
- 4 PROSC: So why didn't he finish his law studies?
- 5 FATHER: Because of a thunderstorm!
- 6 PROSC: A thunderstorm?
- 7 FATHER: Yah, a thunderstorm! The summer after he got
 8 his Master's degree, he was knocked to the ground by
 9 lightning during a thunderstorm, and he became afraid. . .
- 10 PROSC: (*Interrupting*) Afraid, afraid of what?
- 11 FATHER: Afraid that the Devil was loose.
- 12 PROSC: I don't understand what that had to do with his
 13 not becoming a lawyer?
- 14 FATHER: When he was knocked down, and afraid, he called
 15 out, "St. Anne, help me . . . I will become a monk!"
- 16 PROSC: In other words, he thought the Devil was in the
 17 thunderstorm, and St. Anne could protect him
 18 from the Devil?
- 19 FATHER: Yah, and a vow like that must be kept! So he
 20 entered the Augustinian cloister at Erfurt. When I found
 21 out about it, I tried to change his mind, but nothing could
 22 deter him. (*Angrily*) I even asked him what will happen to
 23 us, your parents; who will take care of us in our old age!
 24 . . . What a waste . . . He should have been a lawyer!
- 25 PROSC: (*Sarcastically*) Yes, he should have. Then we
 26 wouldn't have all this trouble with him. You may step down.
 27 (*To Guard*) Please bring in Brother John. (*Guard escorts*
 28 *Monk. Monk carries two books.*) You were a monk at the
 29 Cloister when Dr. Luther entered?
- 30 MONK: Yes I was.
- 31 PROSC: And as an older, experienced monk, you were
 32 able to observe Dr. Luther?
- 33 MONK: Yes. And I tried to help him with his adjustment.
- 34 PROSC: Why? Did he have trouble adjusting to that life?
- 35 MONK: Yes. You might say he tried too hard.

- 1 PROSC: What do you mean . . . too hard?
- 2 MONK: He thought he could win salvation by punishing
3 himself; and he outdid all the other Brothers with his zeal.
4 When we had to fast . . . he fasted to the point where he
5 was almost skin and bones. When we slept . . . he slept on
6 the cold stone floor without any covers, even in the coldest
7 time of Winter. When we had to pray . . . he prayed on his
8 knees on the stone floors for long, long hours into the night.
- 9 PROSC: Why did he do this?
- 10 MONK: Apparently, he felt that the more he did, the
11 closer to salvation he would be. But he was always angry. . .
12 as though none of it was enough.
- 13 PROSC: Enough . . . enough for what?
- 14 MONK: To be saved.
- 15 PROSC: It sounds as though he had a great deal of inner
16 turmoil.
- 17 MONK: Yes, Brother Martin was a troubled young man.
18 He had a constant battle with what he perceived
19 as sinfulness.
- 20 PROSC: But surely he knew that confessing his sins to the
21 Priest was one avenue for atoning for his sins!
- 22 MONK: Ah yes, his confessions. (*Shakes head in disbelief*) Sometimes he confessed for six hours at a stretch, day
23 after day, until both he and the Confessor were exhausted.
24 Six hours!
- 25 PROSC: Come now. Surely he didn't have enough sins to
26 confess for that length of time.
- 27 MONK: Brother Martin was terrified . . . yes, terrified . . .
28 that he might have forgotten some sin and thus would not
29 be saved. So he confessed every single thing he thought
30 could conceivably be a sin.
- 31 PROSC: Did his efforts relieve him of his turmoil?
- 32 MONK: No. He continued to worry that he had forgotten
33 something. And he was always so angry inside.
- 34 PROSC: Angry?

- 1 MONK: Yes, angry. In fact, one of his Confessors said to
 2 him: "God is not angry with you. You are angry with God."
 3 (*Pause*) Still, he didn't find the inner peace he sought.
- 4 PROSC: Surely all his efforts . . . by that I mean his
 5 fasting . . . prayers . . . confessions . . . surely all
 6 that brought him peace.
- 7 MONK: Let me read to you something Brother Martin
 8 wrote about this. (*Opens books and reads:*) "If ever a Monk
 9 got to Heaven by his monkery, I would have made it. Had
 10 I gone on with it, I would have killed myself with vigils,
 11 prayers, readings, and other works."
- 12 PROSC: (*Laughs*) His "monkery"?
- 13 MONK: (*Laughs also*) That's what he wrote. He also
 14 wrote: (*Picks up another book and reads:*) "When I was a
 15 monk, I believed it was all up with my salvation. Each time
 16 I experienced the temptations of the flesh, that is to say, a
 17 number of evil desires, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, in
 18 regard to a Brother, I tried all kinds of remedies. I confessed
 19 daily, but it was of no avail; the covetousness always
 20 returned. This is the reason why I could find no peace, but
 21 was perpetually in torment, thinking: 'You have committed
 22 such and such a sin. You are still the victim of jealousy . . . ;
 23 in vain you have joined the order. All your good works are
 24 useless.' "
- 25 PROSC: (*Impatiently*) Didn't he understand the teachings
 26 of the Church? That the Church knew what was
 27 best for him?
- 28 MONK: It wasn't that he didn't understand it; remember,
 29 he was a brilliant man. Rather, the more we tried to teach
 30 him, the more he had to wrestle with. Perhaps it would have
 31 been better if he had the learning of a peasant.
- 32 PROSC: Like Shakespeare wrote, "A little knowledge is a
 33 dangerous thing."
- 34 MONK: Who is this "Shakespeare"?
- 35 PROSC: (*Laughs*) I forgot. That was a writer about a

- 1 PROSC: (contd) hundred years after your time.
- 2 MONK: Something else that developed . . . “after my
3 time” . . . was the concept of a loving God. In my time,
4 when Brother Martin and I grew up, we lived with the
5 expectation of punishment from everyone over us.
6 Thrashings from parents and teachers . . . and a punishing
7 God. Perhaps that is why Brother Martin was so fearful and
8 angry. And with his brilliant mind, he thought about all
9 this too much.
- 10 PROSC: What did his superiors do to help him?
- 11 MONK: They felt that perhaps he had too much time to
12 think . . . if he was busier, he wouldn’t have so much time
13 to analyze and think about the Church’s teachings. So they
14 sent him to the University of Wittenberg to earn his
15 doctorate, to preach, to teach, and many other duties.
- 16 PROSC: I’m not familiar with the University of Wittenberg.
- 17 MONK: I’m not surprised you haven’t heard of it. It was
18 quite new and quite small . . . only six years old . . . when
19 Brother Martin arrived in 1508. Our Elector, Frederick the
20 Wise, built the university as well as the castle and the church.
- 21 PROSC: Wait a minute . . . who, or what, is an Elector?
- 22 MONK: The Holy Roman Empire was divided into areas,
23 and each area was governed by a ruler. Like here in the
24 United States, you have areas called states and rulers for
25 each state. . .
- 26 PROSC: (Interrupting) Well, I wouldn’t call it “rule”, but
27 yes, we do have someone who “governs” each area.
- 28 MONK: Yes. Well, in our areas, they were called Electors.
29 And our Elector at that time was Frederick the Wise.
- 30 PROSC: And this Frederick the Wise. . . was he, indeed, wise?
- 31 MONK: For the most part . . . yes. He seemed to look
32 kindly on Brother Martin. I must admit, however, that they
33 didn’t always see eye to eye, but Elector Frederick didn’t
34 throw Brother Martin to the wolves when he was given the
35 opportunity in later years.

- 1 PROSC: What did they disagree about?
- 2 MONK: Oh, there were many things, but one stands out
- 3 in my mind . . . that was the subject of the
- 4 Elector's relics.
- 5 PROSC: Relics . . . what was that?
- 6 MONK: Relics were things of a religious nature . . . such
- 7 as a twig supposedly from the Burning Bush of Moses . . .
- 8 nine thorns supposedly from Christ's Crown of Thorns . . .
- 9 one piece of bread left over from the Last Supper . . . straw
- 10 and hay from the Manger . . . you get the idea. He had
- 11 collected over 17,000 such things during his lifetime.
- 12 PROSC: Was he just a collector? Or did he do something
- 13 with these "relics"?
- 14 MONK: Oh yes, it was more than just a collection. You
- 15 see, Elector Frederick put these relics on display; and when
- 16 the people viewed them, they could buy indulgences
- 17 attached to them for their sins. The money raised this way
- 18 paid for the building of Wittenberg University.
- 19 PROSC: Wait a minute . . . you're going too fast for me.
- 20 You say that people could look at these relics,
- 21 and then buy an indulgence? What is an
- 22 indulgence?
- 23 MONK: An indulgence was a way a person could avoid
- 24 the punishment the Church said was due for a sin.
- 25 PROSC: Give me an example.
- 26 MONK: Suppose you told the Priest in your confession
- 27 that you had stolen an apple at the market. The Priest could
- 28 tell you that your punishment would be three years in
- 29 Purgatory . . . Purgatory being a holding area for Heaven
- 30 or Hell.
- 31 PROSC: Okay . . .
- 32 MONK: So, you could buy an indulgence to lessen that
- 33 time.
- 34 PROSC: Like . . . "Time off for good behavior."
- 35 MONK: Right . . . you could buy your way out.

- 1 *(Tetzel enters from the back. As Prosecutor gives his atten-*
 2 *tion to Tetzel, he waves Monk off stand.) (Tetzel, with gold*
 3 *can holding coins, calls out his messages as he makes his*
 4 *way to the front, rattling can.)*
- 5 **TETZEL:** Indulgences . . . indulgences . . . Listen to the
 6 voices of your dear dead relatives and friends . . . beseeching
 7 you and saying, "Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment
 8 from which you can redeem us for a pittance . . ."
 9 Indulgences . . . indulgences . . . All who are contrite and
 10 have confessed and made contribution . . . will receive
 11 complete remission of all their sins . . . Indulgences . . .
 12 indulgences . . . As soon as the coin in the coffer rings
 13 *(Holds up can)* the soul from Purgatory springs . . .
 14 Indulgences . . . indulgences . . . *(Reaching the front of the*
 15 *church, facing the congregation . . . dramatically pulling*
 16 *coin from pocket and putting it in the gold can held high:)*
 17 Ah . . . he is saved . . . my poor dear father is saved at last!
 18 Now at last I can be sure he is in Heaven . . . and I need no
 19 longer pray for him!
- 20 **PROSC:** Sir, sir . . . what are you doing?
- 21 **TETZEL:** Why, selling indulgences. Would you care to buy
 22 an indulgence . . . a little insurance policy, so to
 23 speak?
- 24 **PROSC:** No, no. *(Points to witness stand, Tetzel takes*
 25 *his place.)* What is your name.
- 26 **TETZEL:** John Tetzel. I'm a Dominican Friar and I've come
 27 to town to sell indulgences to help Pope Leo finance the
 28 completion of the Basilica over the Tomb of St. Peter in the
 29 Vatican in Rome.
- 30 **PROSC:** I don't understand the connection?
- 31 **TETZEL:** The money I raise selling these pieces of paper
 32 will go to Rome . . . with some kickback going
 33 to various other Rulers . . .
- 34 **LUTHER:** *(Jumps up angrily)* I can no longer be quiet! You
 35 *(Pointing at Tetzel)* . . . Like a circus . . . you go

- 1 LUTHER: (*contd*) about deceiving people . . . telling them
 2 that your worthless pieces of paper can take away
 3 the punishment for their sins . . . as if . . .
- 4 TETZEL: (*Standing, shouting back.*) Worthless? Worthless?
 5 The people certainly don't think them worthless! Have you
 6 seen the crowds streaming in to buy them? I can hardly
 7 keep up with my customers.
- 8 LUTHER: Ach!! (*Begins pacing, trying to find the right*
 9 *words.*) Your . . . "customers" . . . think they can buy
 10 forgiveness at the going rate!? No one, not even the Pope,
 11 has the power to grant such pardons. And you, as a
 12 representative of the Church in Rome, tell the people that
 13 it is so . . . you are deceiving the people!
- 14 TETZEL: Are you disputing the power of the Pope?
- 15 LUTHER: (*Verbally attacking Tetzel and driving him*
 16 *Offstage*) I am saying that through the grace of God are
 17 man's sins forgiven . . . not as a fund-raising method for the
 18 Church in Rome. (*Tetzel now Offstage, Luther returning to*
 19 *Centerstage.*) It's because of this (*Pointing to Tetzel's exit*)
 20 that I nailed my 95 theses on the castle church door on
 21 October 31, 1517.
- 22 PROSC: Theses?
- 23 LUTHER: Arguments.
- 24 PROSC: I don't understand. What did you hope to
 25 accomplish with that?
- 26 LUTHER: In 1517, we didn't have newspapers . . . otherwise,
 27 I could have expressed my views in a letter to the editor. Or
 28 the radio . . . I could have called in to a "talk-back"
 29 program to debate the issues. Instead, I used the only forum
 30 available to anyone who wanted to debate an issue . . .
 31 posting the arguments on the castle church door. I was
 32 trying to start a debate on the Church's abuses.
- 33 PROSC: (*Sarcastically*) Abuses? You mean there were
 34 more than just the one . . . the sale of
 35 indulgences?

- 1 **LUTHER:** Yes . . . but indulgences were the spark that
2 ignited the fires. I couldn't help but wonder . . . if the Pope
3 did indeed have such power, why didn't he, in Christian
4 charity, empty Purgatory right away. And . . . we all know
5 how rich the Pope is. Why didn't he build the Basilica out
6 of his own pocket instead of wringing the pockets of the
7 poor!
- 8 **PROSC:** So, did you get the debate you wanted?
- 9 **LUTHER:** More. Much more. You see, thanks to that new
10 invention, the printing press . . . copies were printed and
11 distributed to many people. Even the Pope received a copy.
- 12 **PROSC:** I don't imagine he was too pleased!
- 13 **LUTHER:** Initially, he didn't have too much to say. He
14 called me a "drunken German who would think differently
15 when I sobered up". However, when the people became
16 interested and began to support my views, the Pope
17 summoned me to Rome. But Frederick the Wise helped me.
- 18 **PROSC:** Thank you, Dr. Luther. Please return to your
19 seat. *(To Guard)* Please bring in Elector Frederick. *(Elector*
20 *Frederick goes to witness stand)* Your Grace, did Dr. Luther
21 appeal to you for help?
- 22 **FREDERICK:** Yes he did. Now remember that I did not
23 necessarily agree with all of Luther's ideas. But at the same
24 time, I was concerned about a German being summoned to
25 Rome to be judged by Italians. So I worked it out that
26 Luther be interviewed by the Pope's representative in
27 Augsburg, Germany.
- 28 **PROSC:** And how did it go?
- 29 **FREDERICK:** Not very well. The Cardinal questioned Dr.
30 Luther about his views and tried to prove him wrong. But,
31 as you know, Dr. Luther is a very good debator and he
32 would not retract anything. The Cardinal became very
33 angry, ordered Dr. Luther out of his sight and not to return
34 unless he was willing to apologize. Of course, Dr. Luther
35 would not apologize. And then, rumor had it that he

1 FREDERICK: (*contd*) would be arrested, so his friends spirited
2 him out of Augsburg in the dead of night.

3 PROSC: Did Rome take any action against Dr. Luther as
4 a result?

5 FREDERICK: Yes, indeed. On June 15, 1520, Pope Leo the
6 Tenth put his signature on this document. (*Unrolls scroll*
7 *and reads:*) "Arise, O Lord, and judge Thy cause. A wild
8 boar has invaded Thy vineyard. Arise, O Peter, and consider
9 the case of the Holy Roman Church, the mother of all
10 churches, consecrated by Thy blood. Arise, O Paul, who by
11 thy teaching and death has and does illumine the Church.
12 Arise, all ye saints, and the whole universal church, whose
13 interpretation of Scripture has been assailed. We can
14 scarcely express our grief over the ancient heresies which
15 have been revived in Germany. We are the more downcast
16 because she was always in the forefront of the war on
17 heresy. Our pastoral office can no longer tolerate the
18 pestiferous virus of the forty-one errors. We can no longer
19 suffer the Serpent to creep through the field of the Lord.
20 The books of Martin Luther which contain these errors are
21 to be examined and burned. As for Martin himself, good
22 God, what office of paternal love have we omitted in order
23 to recall him from his errors? Have we not offered him a
24 safe conduct and money for the journey? . . ."

25 LUTHER: (*Interrupting*) I never received such an offer!

26 PROSC: (*Motions to Luther to be still, to Frederick to*
27 *continue.*)

28 FREDERICK: (*Continuing*) ". . . And he has had the temerity
29 to appeal to a future council although our predecessors,
30 Pius the Second and Julius the Second, subjected such
31 appeals to the penalties of heresy. Now, therefore, we give
32 Martin sixty days in which to submit, dating from the time
33 of the publication of this edict in his district. Anyone who
34 presumes to infringe our excommunication and anathema
35 will stand under the wrath of Almighty God and of the

- 1 **FREDERICK:** *(contd)* Apostles Peter and Paul.”
- 2 **PROSC:** And were his writings burned?
- 3 **FREDERICK:** Yes. In many cities the bonfires consumed his
- 4 writings. But this was not a popular action in the cities
- 5 where Dr. Luther had many followers. Many of his
- 6 followers rioted and burned the anti-Luther publications.
- 7 **PROSC:** Did Dr. Luther participate?
- 8 **FREDERICK:** *(Laughs)* On December 10, 1520, Luther himself
- 9 held a special bonfire. Hundreds of people showed up, and
- 10 Luther said, “Since they burned my books, I burn theirs.”
- 11 With that, he added to the fires the Canon Law, which is
- 12 the most sacred writing of the Church! And then he added
- 13 the document that I just read *(Holding up scroll)* to the fire.
- 14 **PROSC:** And his excommunication?
- 15 **FREDERICK:** That became effective a month later, in January
- 16 of 1521. Luther was a man without a church. And,
- 17 according to church laws, he was consigned . . . by the
- 18 Church . . . to eternal damnation. And this included anyone
- 19 who associated with him. Luther was now a fugitive.
- 20 **PROSC:** Did Emperor Charles agree with the Pope’s
- 21 action?
- 22 **FREDERICK:** Well, in spite of the Pope’s edict for Luther’s
- 23 excommunication, the problem didn’t go away. So Emperor
- 24 Charles invited Dr. Luther to appear before the Congress in
- 25 the city of Worms to answer the Pope’s decree. If Luther
- 26 agreed to take back his criticisms of the Church, Emperor
- 27 Charles thought he might be able to get the Pope to lift the
- 28 ban against Luther. If Luther refused, the Congress would
- 29 support the ban.
- 30 **PROSC:** Did he go to Worms?
- 31 **FREDERICK:** Yes he did. And when he arrived, he was greeted
- 32 by the people of that city like a hero. Worms was a city of
- 33 about 9,000 people, and over 2,000 of those people swarmed
- 34 about him as he arrived. The bookstores were running
- 35 specials on his books — posters and banners bearing his

- 1 **FREDERICK:** (*contd*) name were everywhere. Someone jokingly
 2 reported, "Nine-tenths of the people shout hurrah
 3 for Luther, the other one-tenth shout against
 4 Rome!"
- 5 **PROSC:** Thank you, Your Grace. You may step down.
 6 Dr. Luther, will you please take the stand.
 7 (*Luther moves to stand, carrying scrolls.*) Now, Dr. Luther
 8 . . . because you are on trial here before these good people
 9 (*Motions with his arm*), I shall ask you exactly as you were
 10 asked at Worms . . . are these your books? (*Showing Luther*
 11 *books and pamphlets*)
- 12 **LUTHER:** Herr Prosecutor, because I am on trial here before
 13 these good people (*Motions with his arm*) I must answer
 14 exactly as I did at Worms. (*Reads from scroll:*) "My
 15 writings can be divided into three groups: The first . . .
 16 are about simple faith, and even my enemies cannot deny
 17 them. The second . . . show how the Pope and his followers
 18 are destroying Germany. To deny them would be like
 19 saying, 'Go ahead with your tyranny.' The third . . .
 20 contains attacks on individuals, and I cannot renounce
 21 these for the same reason I cannot take back my writings
 22 against the Pope. If you can show me wrong from the
 23 Bible, I will be the first to throw my books into the fire."
- 24 **PROSC:** And you shall be answered exactly as you were
 25 at Worms. (*Reads from a scroll:*) "Martin, you have not
 26 sufficiently distinguished your works. The earlier were bad
 27 and the latter worse. Your plea to be heard from Scripture
 28 is the one always made by heretics. You do nothing but
 29 renew the errors of Wyclif and Hus. How will the Jews. . .
 30 how will the Turks . . . exult to hear Christians discussing
 31 whether they have been wrong all these years! Martin, how
 32 can you assume you are the only one to understand the
 33 sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above
 34 that of so many famous men and claim that you know more
 35 than they all? You have no right to call into question the

- 1 PROSC: (contd) most Holy Orthodox Faith, instituted by
 2 Christ, the perfect lawgiver, proclaimed throughout the
 3 world by the Apostles, sealed by the red blood of the
 4 martyrs, confirmed by the sacred councils, defined by the
 5 Church in which all our fathers believed until death and
 6 gave to us an inheritance, and which now we are forbidden
 7 by the Pope and the Emperor to discuss lest there be no end
 8 of debate. I ask you, Martin . . . answer candidly and
 9 without horns . . . do you or do you not repudiate your
 10 books and the errors which they contain?"
- 11 LUTHER: And I shall respond as I did at Worms (*Reads*
 12 *from another scroll:*) "Since then Your Majesty and your
 13 Lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns
 14 and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and
 15 plain reason . . . I do not accept the authority of Popes and
 16 Councils, for they have contradicted each other . . . (*Begin*
 17 *moving to Centerstage*) My conscience is captive to the word
 18 of God. I cannot, and I will not, recant anything, for to go
 19 against conscience is neither right nor safe. (*Now at*
 20 *Centerstage*) Here I stand . . . I cannot do otherwise . . .
 21 God help me . . . Amen." (*Silence - Pause*)
 22 (*OPTIONAL . . . SERMONETTE: Tower Experience =*
 23 *Justification by Faith*)
 24 (*Luther returns to witness stand*)
- 25 PROSC: (*Sarcastically*) In spite of what you have said,
 26 the Emperor signed the edict against you.
- 27 LUTHER: That was surprising because I thought I had won
 28 our confrontation.
- 29 PROSC: I have a copy of the edict here. I shall read from
 30 it: ". . . Luther is to be regarded as a convicted heretic.
 31 When the time is up (*As an aside:*) — 21 days of safe
 32 passage — no one is to harbor him. His followers are also to
 33 be condemned. His books are to be eradicated from the
 34 memory of man."
- 35 LUTHER: Yes, yes. I remember it well.

- 1 PROSC: And did the Emperor give you 21 days of safe
2 passage for the journey home?
- 3 LUTHER: Yes, but you know that safe passage assurances
4 are not binding for supposedly convicted heretics!
- 5 FREDERICK: *(Standing)* I must say something here!
- 6 PROSC: Certainly, Your Grace.
- 7 FREDERICK: As you know, I did not sign the edict against Dr.
8 Luther, so my feelings were clear. However, I feared for Dr.
9 Luther's safety during his journey home. So some of us
10 arranged for a "kidnapping" . . . at least it was to appear as
11 a kidnapping. But we really took him into hiding to the
12 Wartburg Castle. Only a few people knew of his
13 whereabouts. Others believed he might have been murdered
14 by the Pope's followers. *(Resumes seat)*
- 15 LUTHER: There I stayed in hiding. I put aside the monk's
16 cowl, and dressed as a knight and grew a long beard to
17 disguise myself. I did not want to be there . . . I would
18 rather have been in the fray. Indeed, I'd have preferred to
19 burn on live coals than rot there. I suffered many illnesses
20 and insomnia. At last I found that work and more work
21 helped occupy my time.
- 22 PROSC: *(Sarcastically)* You should have used the time to
23 repudiate your books and correct the errors! If you had,
24 then these good people would still be members of the Holy
25 Roman Catholic Church!
- 26 LUTHER: I put my trust in this jury to determine that my
27 course was correct.
- 28 PROSC: Well, we shall see. In the meantime, while you
29 were in hiding, what was going on in Wittenberg?
- 30 LUTHER: The reformation of the Church had begun; and
31 with or without my presence, it could not be stopped. My
32 very dear friend, Philip Melanchthon, and a few others,
33 took over the leadership of the movement.
- 34 PROSC: Yes, I understand many changes began to take
35 place in the Church.

- 1 LUTHER: Yes. Some of the more obvious were Priests
 2 beginning to marry . . . private confessions to a Priest were
 3 no longer required . . . both the bread and wine of
 4 Communion began to be shared with the people . . .
- 5 PROSC: (*Interrupting*) Ah, but there were excesses in
 6 the changes.
- 7 LUTHER: I'm afraid so. Perhaps there were too many
 8 changes too fast. Yes, I'm sorry to say that some riots even
 9 broke out. As I continued to receive these reports, I realized
 10 I had no choice but to return to Wittenberg. When I arrived,
 11 I preached for eight days in a row, calling for moderation.
- 12 PROSC: But what about the edict against you?
- 13 LUTHER: (*Laughs*) Well, everyone was too busy. . . F peror
 14 Charles was busy in Spain directing a war against the Turks.
 15 And the German Catholic Princes were afraid to act
 16 because I had such a strong following among the people.
 17 (*As Princes stand to interrupt, Luther returns to his seat.*)
- 18 PRINCE #1: Herr Prosecutor! We must be heard!
- 19 PROSC: (*Turning to them*) Come forward. (*Princes leave*
 20 *seats and come to Centerstage and the Right*) What do you
 21 have to say on this matter of Dr. Luther?
- 22 PRINCE #2: We speak, not of Dr. Luther, but of the
 23 Reformation Movement he started. Dr. Luther just
 24 mentioned the German Catholic Princes. Not all German
 25 Princes were Catholic; we are the German Lutheran Princes
 26 of Northern Germany and Southern Germany.
- 27 PROSC: Yes, but . . .
- 28 PRINCE #3: Please, let us continue. At the meeting in Speyer,
 29 in 1529, Emperor Charles wanted the edict against Dr.
 30 Luther enforced. Because we, the German nobility, were
 31 now divided between Catholic and Lutheran, many could
 32 not agree to Emperor Charles' wish. Only the Catholic
 33 Princes voted to enforce the edict against Dr. Luther.
- 34 PROSC: The Emperor also stated that no reform religions
 35 could be practiced in Catholic states . . . but that

- 1 PROSC: (contd) Catholicism could be practiced in the
 2 Lutheran states.
- 3 PRINCE #2: He did, but we protested that was not fair. If
 4 Catholic lands were to remain Catholic, then Lutheran lands
 5 should remain Lutheran. We made this statement. (*Reads*
 6 *from scroll:*) "We protest before God and before men that
 7 we and our people will not agree to anything in this decree
 8 that is contrary to God, to his Holy Word, to our right
 9 conscience, and to the salvation of our souls."
- 10 PROSC: You protest . . . you protest, indeed. You are the
 11 protesting estates.
- 12 PRINCE #1: Yes, we soon became known as Protestants.
- 13 PROSC: Like the name "Lutheran", the word
 14 "Protestants" has lived through the ages. Thank you,
 15 gentlemen. (*Princes return to their seats*) Please bring in
 16 Philip Melanchthon. (*Philip takes witness stand*) Please
 17 state your name.
- 18 PHILIP: Philip Melanchthon, but I don't know what I can
 19 add.
- 20 PROSC: Well, Dr. Luther said you were the spokesman
 21 for the Reformation Movement while he was in
 22 hiding at the Wartburg Castle.
- 23 PHILIP: Yes.
- 24 PROSC: But first, a little background material. I
 25 understand you were called "the boy wonder" . . . that you
 26 earned your Bachelor's Degree when you were only 14 . . .
 27 and your Master's Degree when you were 15.
- 28 PHILIP: (*Embarrassed*) Well, yes.
- 29 PROSC: And at age 22, you lectured at the University of
 30 Wittenberg in the subjects of Hebrew, Latin,
 31 Greek, Rhetoric, Physics, and Philosophy.
- 32 PHILIP: You've done your homework.
- 33 PROSC: Your reputation is well known. After all, when
 34 2,000 visitors try to crowd into your lectures, it
 35 speaks highly of you.



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