

“Schlagt sie tot!”

- *the Fire of Change*

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English translation based on the Swedish original script

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Act 1

Scene 1

THE YEAR 1518. THE WITTENBERG CASTLE CHURCH (28 August 1518)

Relics, mass and prayers, with all the liturgy and for all the senses – incense, flickering candles and emotive imagery. A heartfelt and intimate atmosphere. Priests recite prayers separately at different altars. Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, Germany’s most powerful Prince and friend of the Emperor, has taken the new, barely 14-year-old Landgrave Philip of Hesse under his wings. He has requested his secretary, Spalatin, to show Philip his pride: a large collection of relics.

CHORUS:

“Esurientes implevit bonis
dimisit inanes.”

*(“He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.”)*

SPALATIN:

Your Excellency, Landgrave Philip:
Here are some of the great Elector Frederick’s famous relics...

PHILIP OF HESSE:

Of which he has thousands, right?

SPALATIN:

We have just counted 17,443 sacred remnants.
... Here, a splint from the cross of Christ.
The collection commenced in the 1300s.
... a thumb of Saint Anne
... and some hay from the Holy Crib.

PHILIP OF HESSE:

So that gives a little money in the coffers?

SPALATIN:

Yes, in fact, it pays for our new university.
... milk from the Virgin Mary...

ELECTOR FREDERICK: *Interrupts:*
 Little Philipp – in good hands!
 My secretary Spalatin is also a brilliant humanist.
 As a Prince, you should always surround yourself
 with the best talents of the age!
 My new university in Wittenberg
 already outshines those of Leipzig and Erfurt.
 Have you heard of Philip Schwartzerd,
 called Melanchthon?

PHILIP OF HESSE:
 No, not yet...

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 My new Greek professor.
 A boy like you,
 but with a staggering intellect.

SPALATIN:
 He's just arrived.
 Recommended by Erasmus himself,
 the great master and paragon of all us humanists...

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 Neither should we forget our Doctor of Theology,
 famous and infamous for his brilliant theses
 against the papal trade in indulgences.
 A new St. Peter's Basilica surely begs sordid methods!

PHILIP OF HESSE:
 We all know Martin Luther!
Demonstratively recites: Thesis No. 82!
 "If the Pope can free anyone from purgatory,
 why does he only save those who pay?!"

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 Yes, a ruthless critic
 and a great personality.
 They already call him a heretic.

PHILIP OF HESSE:
 Are you protecting him?

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 Magister Spalatin, you know him.
 Did he fathom what he was doing?

SPALATIN:
 Great things are seldom borne of wisdom,
 or caution...

But maybe he really is a holy man.
 Perhaps the time is right for the great battle
 between God and Satan?

ELECTOR FREDERICK:

Who knows.

Some call the Pope an Antichrist.

Others believe that Luther is a prophet.

The times are rife with anguish, confusion and deceit.

Indeed, the end of all times may be nigh.

Or maybe not.

Spalatin opens the church door cluttered with academic posts. They head out into the glorious sunlit square and are greeted by a sea of students. Elector Fredrick and Landgrave Philip observe the unfolding events at a gracious distance, all while Spalatin embarks on his next endeavour; welcoming Melanchthon.

Scene 2

MELANCHTHON MEETS LUTHER

Jubilant students arrive on foot with the young, curly-blond Melanchthon amidst them, accompanied by Andreas Karlstadt.

STUDENTS:

Magister Melanchthon,

You must meet Doctor Luther!

Doctor Martinus! Where is he?

In Wittenberg, we have the man

who dares speak the truth,

who dares defy the Pope!

Doctor Martinus! Where is he?

SPALATIN:

Raises his hand to hush the students. To Melanchthon:

Magister Philip,

on behalf of the Elector, I welcome you.

Doctor Karlstadt, you look so happy!

KARLSTADT:

The rumours are true.

We now have a young man of a giant mind.

And look, there we have Doctor Martinus!

The students greet Luther with enthusiasm and encircle him to create a stage-like setting for the first encounter between Luther and Melanchthon:

STUDENTS:

Doctor Luther!

LUTHER: *Immediately captivated:*

Philip Melanchthon!

Our 'Graeculus', our 'Griechlein'!

Like God's little angel!

MELANCHTHON:

Doctor Martin, an honour to meet you.
You are a hero to your students.

LUTHER:

Yes, they are heartily sick of sophisticated teaching!
They seek the true gospel.
Faith is greater than erudition!

MELANCHTHON:

Although, notwithstanding the value....

LUTHER: *Interrupts:*

I am thrilled to make your acquaintance!
Someone who knows Greek like you,
can really find the truth in scripture!

MELANCHTHON:

I can teach you Greek...

LUTHER:

Grabs his arm and looks him straight in the eye:
I will teach you theology!

Captivatingly from the heart:

Read Paul!
It's about love! About grace!
Not about the law, not about good deeds!
To find God, we have no need for frills and ceremony.
We are all priests!

I will teach you theology, Philip Melanchthon!

*Lets go of his arm and looks around at the cheering students.
Luther continues, while beckoning his admiring followers to join him.*

MELANCHTHON: *Confused:*

A man of great charisma...

SPALATIN:

We humanists learn to seek and to doubt.
Doctor Martin accepts but one truth
and denies any doubt.

Still, I am deeply captivated.
His faith and conviction is magical.

KARLSTADT:

We all believe in a reform of the church.
The time is ripe!

Scene 3

“CRANACH I”: IS INTRODUCED TO LUTHER

Spalatin makes his way to court painter Lucas Cranach and his large workshop located by the square. Dim, labyrinthine corners filled with paint rags, pigments and jars alternate with sunlit areas of work. There are also printing presses for woodcuts and pamphlets. Craftspeople and apprentices are at work. There are half-completed paintings with motifs ranging from the bloodstained Christ to variations of Venus in full nude figure as well as luxurious, almost lustful, commissioned portraits on the same grand scale. But there are also examples of other kinds of assignments that a court painter would undertake, such as creating decorations for festivities and embellishing weapons and carriages.

SPALATIN: *Looking around:*
Honourable Master Cranach;
Your workshop is a magnificent place.
But I have an urgent undertaking:
The Elector wishes that you assist Luther.

LUCAS CRANACH:
As a court painter, I am always at your service.
I also feel that the Reformation of the church
deserves my contribution,
despite iconoclasts wreaking havoc!

SPALATIN:
Firstly, we would like an official portrait
for distribution. Now!
I have summoned Doctor Martin here.
The “Luther Problem” is at the top of every agenda!

LUCAS CRANACH:
We’ll handle that, Magister Spalatin.

SPALATIN:
We would also like your new printing press to be used
for his and Karlstadt’s writings.
Everything must stem from Wittenberg!
Takes his beret to leave.

BARBARA CRANACH: *Enters.*
Doctor Luther has arrived!

On his way out, Spalatin bids farewell to Barbara and places an affirmative hand on Luther’s shoulder as they meet at the door. Luther gazes across the workshop and briefly dwells on “the suffering Christ” which leans against a “nude Venus”, yet he is soon captivated by the genuine warmth of the Cranach couple:

LUCAS CRANACH: *To Luther:*
Welcome my friend.
It’s an honour to finally meet you.
You must be portrayed – take a seat!

BARBARA CRANACH:
Anything to drink, Doctor?

LUTHER:

Thank you, Mrs Cranach, I never say no!
Master Lucas,
are you and Elector Frederick close?

LUCAS CRANACH:

Yes, very. I was also once
his envoy to the Emperor in Mechelen.

BARBARA CRANACH:

Lucas painted little Prince Charles,
who, they say, will be the next Emperor.
Are you seated well?

LUTHER;

Yes - how peaceful is your workshop!

LUCAS CRANACH:

Yes, it's a fine place. My fortress.
Mid-life suddenly became painful.
Then I moved the workshop here,
away from the tiff and tussle of the court.
I married and had kids.
Your sermons also helped.

In the light of God's grace,
my troubles soon diminished.
A mystical peace
released me from anxiety.
Faith – Scripture – Grace...

LUTHER:

Sola fide - Sola scriptura - Sola gratia...
You've grasped what's most important, Master Cranach.
But now everyone only talks
of whether or not to obey the Pope.

LUCAS CRANACH:

Yes, it all points inexorably to
excommunication
of both you and your colleague, Karlstadt.

LUTHER: *With terror in his eyes:*

I envision being roasted at the stake!
But all attempts at reconciliation fail.
No one listens!
I can't take it anymore!
Enough! Attack I must...

BARBARA CRANACH:

Then do it!
You already know how to preach
to all of Germany through printing!

LUCAS CRANACH:

The Elector wishes me to print
and distribute your writing.
And here we have the portrait,
depicting a strong and defiant monk!

*Hands the sketch to Luther who is delighted and inspired by the sight.
He gets up to leave.*

LUTHER:

Maybe also satire?
The Pope as Antichrist?
We need to reach ordinary people!

LUCAS CRANACH:

A good idea.
My workshop can also manage such images.

BARBARA CRANACH:

And one thing is for sure, Doctor Martin:
You master the word and hold the people in your palm.

Scene 4

THE MEETING WITH ERASMUS IN COLOGNE & LUTHER'S LETTER TO POPE LEO

Simultaneous night scenes:

- *Cologne, where everyone is gathered after the imperial coronation in Aachen. Spalatin with torch in hand leads Erasmus along the dark alleys to the Elector, who seeks advice from the "lumen mundi" (5 November 1520).*
- *Wittenberg. In the light of a wax candle, Luther writes a letter to Pope Leo X (Letter written after 12 October 1520, antedated to 6 September, before receiving the Papal Bull).*
- *Optionally, Pope Leo X in Rome can be included, in all his papal splendour and authority.*

SPALATIN:

My dear Erasmus! My master is very grateful
for your precious time,
now that our roads meet here in Cologne.

ERASMUS:

Naturally, I am at your disposal.
Elector Frederick is a wise and powerful man.

SPALATIN:

But times are troubled.
Emperor Charles is only 19 years of age.
The situation is precarious.

ERASMUS:
 Yes, the Turks are advancing.
 And in Saxony, you have the “Luther Problem”.

SPALATIN:
 Exactly.

*Luther writes with rising excitement.
 Spalatin and Erasmus reach the waiting Elector:*

ERASMUS:
 An honour. *Bows.*

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 My dear Erasmus,
 I need advice from you,
 everyone’s “lumen mundi”!

ERASMUS:
 At your service, Your Excellency.

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 You have yourself – with great elegance! –
 criticised the decay of the church.
 And the criticism is now spreading!
 A Papal Bull is pending for two of my theologians,
 Andreas Karlstadt and Martin Luther.
 It’s escalating on both sides.
 What should I do?

Simultaneously, in his monastery in Wittenberg, Luther despairingly writes a letter to Pope Leo X:

LUTHER:
 Most Blessed Father, Pope Leo!
 As your humble servant, I beg your attention!
 For three years, I have waged war against the evils of our time.
 But nobody can stand the truth anymore!

ERASMUS:
 The problem is the figurehead, Luther.
 His ways!

LUTHER:
 No one can stand the truth!
 But listen to Christ and the prophets:
 They do not offer flattery!

ERASMUS:
 He’s right about many things,
 but is too feisty a man.

LUTHER:
 Blessed Father Leo!
 What could be more corrupt than your Court in Rome?
 A den of thieves, a brothel!
 It's unworthy of you,
 It stinks!

ERASMUS:
 Since so much is written in anger and excitement
 you should not promptly call for the stake;
 not exasperate him even further!

LUTHER:
 Rome that was the gate of heaven
 has become the gaping yawn of hell...
 More ungodly than the Turks...!

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 He thinks no one is listening.
 He thinks he's being violated
 and trodden upon!

LUTHER: *Self-righteously rambling:*
 Blessed Father,
 I agreed to everything!
 I had promised to keep silent...
 But that bedevilled lackey in Leipzig
 ruined the peace plan...!
 Shall I really be burned at the stake?
Sinks to the ground in despair.

ERASMUS:
 This is my advice:
 Request the Emperor to give him a hearing
 at the next diet in Worms.

It's always wise to proceed with caution,
 so not to degenerate into rumpus and uproar,
 to "tumultus"!

Indeed, the virtuous may love Luther's boldness.
 But it seems to me,
 that more can be achieved
 through meekness than by impetuosity
 Thus, Christ conquered the world!

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
 Will you venture to Worms, Erasmus?

ERASMUS:
 Maybe, but I am no man of contention... *Bows.*

Spalatin, in the flicker of torchlight, follows him to his home:

LUTHER: *Still addressing Leo X:*
 Father Leo!
 God will cast the mighty from their seats!
 Do not listen to flattery,
 listen to those who humiliate you!

Holy Father, I further send you my latest treatise,
 "On the freedom of a Christian."
 A little guidance on leading a Christian life,
 if you permit...

One thing is certain: I have always spoken
 honourably and well about you, Father Leo!

Scene 5

A. THE PAPAL BULL. (10 December 1520)

Daybreak. Melancthon, together with Karlstadt, posts a notice about book burning on all church doors. They are backed by a group of agitated students who distribute leaflets with the same message. Melancthon is nervous, yet resolute.

STUDENTS: *Scornfully singing:*
 The Pope in Rome stinks!
 The Antichrist must be overturned!
 The brothel Rome must be shut!
 The Papal Bull must burn!

Reads from a leaflet:

STUDENT 1:
 "Anyone entranced by evangelical truth should meet by the city gate at 9 o'clock..."

STUDENT 2:
 "...where, according to ancient apostolic custom,
 papal constitutions and godless scholastic tracts will be burned."

STUDENT 1:
 "This in response to the enemies of the gospel in Leuven, Cologne and Mainz
 having dared..."

STUDENT 1+2:
 "... to burn Luther's pious books!"

The comrades cheer. More students and curious townspeople stream towards the city gate, where the pyre is already burning. Ordinary people join the students and their rally cries. The atmosphere is festive, yet aggressive. Aided by students, Melancthon and Karlstadt hurl the canonical law and Eck's writings, etc. onto the fire, encouraged by rowdy taunts.

STUDENTS:

Rome is now a den of thieves, a whorehouse!
The kingdom of sin, death and damnation!
Burn the books! Burn the law!
Burn them!

LUTHER:

Steps into the middle by the bonfire:
The Pope has sent a warning:
“Exsurge Domine”!

Lifts the Papal Bull:

“Since you perverted the holy truth of God;
may the holy fire pervert you.”

*He thrusts the Papal Bull on the fire with a demonstrative gesture.
Waves of cheers.*

LUTHER: *Hushes the crowd:*

It’s but a lark.
We should burn the papal chair itself!
Whoever fails to defy the ridiculous papal regime
will never be blessed!

*Turns and leaves the square. The congregation disperses to relentless rejoice. One senses
the unleashed power of the masses.*

B. PARADE OF “LIVING SATIRICAL PRINTS”

*While the elderly retire, students embark on a spiteful carnivalesque parade. They dress in
costumes and pull carts.*

STUDENTS:

The Pope in Rome stinks!
The Antichrist must be overturned!
The brothel Rome must be shut!
The Papal Bull is burnt and gone!

*The parade proceeds through the streets of Wittenberg. Costumed students on carts
represent devils, the Pope as a donkey Antichrist, cardinals as hogs and wolves, the beasts of
the apocalypse and the Babylonian harlot. They deride the gluttony of Rome with food orgies
and lust, all staged as “live satirical prints”.*

*Other students follow, cheerfully singing. The sentiment is one of having been cheated and
taking revenge. The street is lined with enthusiastic yet also horrified spectators, including
Melanchthon.*

*Students start singing a defamatory song illustrated by wild tableaux on the carts. Other
spectators join in and sing along to the chorus, while the spite escalates.*

*First verse: The Pope has rejected the law of God, and therefore receives a new one from the
Devil. The Pope is depicted as the Antichrist taking advice from the Devil, who speaks from
inside a bush, just as God spoke to Moses.*

STUDENTS:

“The Pope makes laws that would condemn
us all to everlasting pain.
What God has not truly devised
derives from the Devils advice.” *(ESH after Hans Sachs)*

A donkey-pope with Devil’s dope!
Papa-papa stinks, papa-papa Papst
Papa-papa stinks, papa-papa Papst
...this donkey-swine!

Second verse: The Pope’s excess is ridiculed. We see indulgences sold, greedy monks and Turks in giant turbans. Money flies, the poor are plundered and the Pope’s wealth balloons.

STUDENTS:

“The pope keep riches manifold,
indulgencies and Turkish gold.
With many means and simony
excels in wiles and trickery”. *(ESH after Hans Sachs)*

A donkey pope in sinful pomp!
Papa-papa stinks, papa-papa papst
Papa-papa stinks, papa-papa papst
... this donkey-swine

On the side line, Melanchthon feels uncomfortable. For the first time, the situation is out of control. The protests have taken on a life of their own.

Scene 6

ERASMUS DISTANCES HIMSELF

SPALATIN:

Doctor Martin has humbly requested the support of Erasmus,
a small acknowledgment. The answer has arrived.

Melanchthon reaches out for the letter and reads.
The manner and methods scare him.
He will seek to calm and warn!

MELANCHTHON:

Continues reading the letter and looks up at Spalatin:
As humanists, do we not somewhat agree...?
We must make Luther understand what he means!

SPALATIN:

... if he’s ABLE to understand.

LUTHER:

Enters. Becomes suspicious of the mood:
What’s this about?

SPALATIN:
The response from Erasmus...

LUTHER: *Lights up.*
Finally!

SPALATIN:
He agrees that reforms are needed,
but urges caution.

LUTHER:
What?

MELANCHTHON:
He writes that there is a difference between criticising something,
and, like you, ATTACKING.

SPALATIN:
It's your attitude.
That you should calm yourself.

MELANCHTHON:
That your aggressive way can incite people
and lead to rumpus and uproar,
to "tumultus"...

LUTHER:
Calm down?
But what purpose has a sword's edge,
if not sharp?

God's word IS war and vexation. A poison!

My newest book is deemed a bugle call to war.
Indeed, it's full of liberty and combat.
But people like it.
Thousands have been sold, and it can't be withdrawn!

MELANCHTHON:
With growing unease:
But how can you not listen to Erasmus?
The whole of Europe seeks his advice?

LUTHER / ARIE:
Grabs Melanchthon and stares into his eyes:

What do you mean, my beloved Philippus,
my 'Griechlein'?
I'm speaking the truth!
To have faith is to be sure of your cause.
In all his dithering and doubt,
Erasmus is the enemy of God!

With sincerity:
God does not reveal himself

among the wise and learned,
 but in folly and wickedness ...
 in suffering and weakness ...
 "Sub contraria specie": Death is life!

With glowing prophetic gaze, Luther eyes Spalatin and Melanchthon:

Don't forget: Satan never sleeps!
 God has commanded me to speak and judge,
 as one of the apostles of the German lands.
 If necessary, by the sword, fire and blood!

Calmed and with faith in God, and himself, he turns on his heels and leaves his most trusted followers entirely speechless.

SPALATIN: *To Melanchthon:*
 Sometimes he is frightening...

They continue onto the crowded square.

Scene 7

"CRANACH II": HOLY IMAGES AS WASTE & A MEEK MONK

Commotion on the square. Barbara and Lucas Cranach load and dispatch carts filled with pamphlets and polemical writings. From the opposite side of the square arrives Karlstadt, who is overseeing a transport of dismantled altars, idols and church organs. A person weeps, makes the sign of the cross and tears a fragment from a shattered Madonna.

BARBARA CRANACH:
Receives large purses with money and dispatches the consignment.
To Karlstadt, who is just passing in his carriage:
 Things are pretty wild here!

KARLSTADT:
 Idols on altars are the Devil's ploy.

BARBARA CRANACH: *Shouting at him:*
 Removing images is a recognition that they possess power!
 Have you ever thought of that, Andreas Karlstadt?!

Eyes Luther at a distance and shouts:
 Doctor Martin, can you not control that man?
 How can we make a living when image-breakers seize power?

LUTHER: *Approaching.*
 These godless objects must go, Mrs. Cranach,
 if we are to uproot fake liturgy!

LUCAS CRANACH:
Comes out to load a new cart. Apprentices carry stacks of pamphlets marked with their destinations: Strasburg, Zurich, Nuremberg, etc.

To Luther:

But images can also be used to your advantage!

Takes a large package of graphic prints from the cart and loosens the cord.

Demonstrates:

Like this one: A new portrait
of Martin, the meek Augustinian monk!

BARBARA CRANACH:

The Elector thought
that the old one looked too defiant.
That you resembled a rebel!

LUCAS CRANACH:

So now you are a harmless and pious monk!

Returns the package:

We have printed thousands.
They will also be sold on the street in Worms,
while you are interrogated at the Diet.

LUTHER:

Gripped by anxiety

They have promised me safe conduct into the beast's yawn!
But I don't believe I'll be returning alive...

BARBARA CRANACH:

You will, Doctor Martin. You'll make it.
Besides, I also need a godfather! (*Pointing to her womb*)

INTERMEZZO – *triumphal passage to Worms.*

Luther preaches along the way, drinking and playing the lute in the taverns, like Orpheus with his lyre.

Scene 8

DIET OF WORMS. (*17-18 April 1521*)

A. PRAYER

In anguish and fear, Luther, in his moonlit monastic cell, prays to the Lord above before appearing the next day before the Emperor in Worms.

LUTHER:

God, stand by me against all the reason and wisdom of the world!
Can you hear me, God? Are you dead?
No, you cannot die... you're just hiding...
I will stand in front of the world's great men...
Ready to sacrifice my life... like a lamb...

B. INQUIRY

The delegates – Princes, Cardinals, Diplomats and representatives of the Imperial cities – convene in the hall. The crowd fans out and we see Luther in front of the interrogator, Dr. von der Ecken of Trier, and the Emperor. All Luther's books and pamphlets are stacked on a large table, his prolific authorship is literally in eye's view.

DR. VON DER ECKEN:
You have now tediously entertained us
with your endless tirades,
endless digressions.

Can we get to the point!
Did you, Martin Luther, write these books?

LUTHER: *Approaches the table:*
Yes, they are all mine.

DR. VON DER ECKEN:
Do you revoke your writing?
"Revoco ..."!

LUTHER: *Meek yet firm:*
Most Serene Emperor, Illustrious Princes: No.
While writing about faith, I am bound by scripture.
In my criticism of the church, I only reflect
the experiences and complaints of all men.
The tyranny of the Pope has plagued and starved the Germans.
To revoke would be to open the door widely
for this godless monstrosity!
I cannot and will not act against my conscience.

DR. VON DER ECKEN:
There is no more to discuss.
Your heresies equal those of Jan Hus,
which are already condemned by the Council of Constance.

The Emperor whispers something to Dr. von der Ecken, who nods and continues:
Do you believe that councils can err?

LUTHER: *With force:*
Yes! And I can prove it!

EMPEROR CHARLES V: *Rises*
Thank you! That suffices!

LUTHER: *While being ushered away in haste,*
Only the word of God is infallible!

C. RECEPTION – OPINIONS MINGLE.

The meeting draws to an end and is followed by an extravagant dinner party. Food and drink is served. Women arrive. Groups converse with different mood and intensity. Luther himself is now confined to his monk's cell. He is terrified and almost in a stupor of anxiety at the thought of what he believes is his fate on the stake.

GEORG OF ALBERTINE SAXONY:
 A wild boar in the vineyard!
 Sanctioning,
 that everyone can interpret the Bible as they please!

PHILIP OF HESSE: *Now 16 years of age:*
 But wasn't that impressive?
 He follows his conscience!

FIRST WOMAN:
Produces one of Cranach's prints of the meek monk:
 Have you seen in the streets of Worms
 how Luther's image is kissed,
 as were he a saint?

GEORG OF ALBERTINE SAXONY:
 It's disgusting!
 I won't get a night's rest
 before this friar Martin is on the stake!
 And why isn't Erasmus here?
 Where is Erasmus?

In another group:

DIPLOMAT:
 Just like Jan Hus in Constance,
 he will feel the fire burning...

SECOND WOMAN:
 The execution of Hus
 only fanned the flames of heresy!

THIRD WOMAN:
 What happens if Luther is killed?

DIPLOMAT:
 Elector Frederick will not tolerate
 that the little Emperor interferes
 in Saxony's affairs.

Third group:

FIRST CARDINAL:
Looks around to ensure no one is listening:
 We all want the church to be reformed.

SECOND CARDINAL:
 Yes, but not ravaged!
 That man must be stopped!

FIRST CARDINAL:
 One lies as one nests.
 Have we ever had such a Pope?

Not only corrupt,
but also devoid of reason!

SECOND CARDINAL:
He has constantly underestimated
the danger of this monk!

Fourth group, includes Spalatin:

PHILIP OF HESSE:
Will the Emperor outlaw him?

ELECTOR FREDERICK:
Possibly.
But his popularity in Germany
is already feverish...
He cannot and should not be executed.
Spalatin! Get hold of him. Now.

Interrupted by trumpet call. The Emperor exits in a procession preceded by trumpeters.

D. BREAKDOWN

*Spalatin takes care of Luther, who is broken by fear and tension.
Luther is remanded by a couple of guards.*

LUTHER:
The devils are taking me... that Satan... never sleeps!

SPALATIN:
It's me! Spalatin!
You did it!

Signals to the guards to drag him along and follows after them.

LUTHER:
They didn't listen... I'll get roasted like a goose!..
... that Antichrist... that Satan...

SPALATIN:
Don't worry, I'm here. You won't get roasted.
You've been given safe conduct.
We'll hide you... Don't worry!

Scene 9

“THE GERMANS ARE NOW AS POSSESSED”

A. THE FIRE OF FANATISM RAGES

Droves of people: The masses are set in motion, and the world is turned on its head in a call for change. Fear – destabilisation – freedom! Pandora's box has sprung open.

*Chorus, dialogues, chaos. Many carry Bibles, pamphlets, leaflets and hammers.
One by one, the various groups and individuals draw attention:*

ALL:

Freedom!
The freedom of a Christian!
We obey but God!
Delivered by Christ
we overturn Antichrist!
But where is Luther?!

LONE VOICE: (*soprano*)

The great Erasmus is fleeing!
The students overthrow his chair...!

ERASMUS: *On the run wearing a coat and with a stack of papers in hand. A servant hurries along with his travel trunks on a cart:*

The Germans are now as possessed!
No one can save themselves from this madness!
Oh, this Luther tragedy,
if only it had never been staged...

*We see a core of radical students, just as in the parade (Scene 5B) wearing animal masks:
They parody the church mass, they ridicule the liturgy and the plump monks.*

ALL:

We were cheated by fat clerics,
the Devil's lackeys!

Return to scripture!
Return to Christ!
Faith alone; "Sola fide!"

STUDENT WITH MASK:

Oh! The Holy St. Benno!
Opens the lid of the large footed relic chest:
What is this??! Horse bones? Cattle bones?
Laughing while tossing the bones over his shoulder and the relic chest onto a cart.

ALL:

But where is Luther?

Monks are attacking a statue of their own Francis, ripping off the rope and clothing until only a wooden frame with hands and head remain. Then they rip off the head.

FRANCISCAN MONKS:

We were slaves of you, Francis! Slaves!
Return to Christ and the cross!

Peasants arrive carrying a giant Madonna of black silk and gold. They parody an Easter procession:

ALL:

Throw her in the river!

See if she floats!
See if she's a witch!

LONE VOICE: *(alto)*
One sinner is enough
to bring on the plague, hunger
and the end of the world!

But where is Luther?

ERASMUS:
Hiding his face as he sneaks through the hostilities with his servant:
The fire of fanaticism rages...
Will I manage to leave the country
before being torn to pieces?

COMMON WOMAN: *seizes Erasmus:*
It's you, Erasmus!
Why are you fleeing?
Why are you hiding?
Why don't you do something?
Erasmus breaks free and disappears into the crowd.

ALL:
Delivered by Christ
we overturn Antichrist!

Anabaptist-like fanatics convene on the centre, as were it a frenzied arena. They baptize each other. A woman is gripped by convulsion. Others tear off their clothes.

MAN: *Smashing his tools:*
We need nothing!
Our God will provide everything we need...

WOMAN: *With cropped hair:*
The Holy Spirit speaks to me... I am the Messiah!

They are carried and dragged away by the law.

ALL:
Freedom!
We obey but God!
We can all read the Bible.
We are all priests!

The freedom of a Christian!
We obey but God!

B. THE EYE OF THE STORM: WITTENBERG

Karlstadt and his helpers quietly remove images, saintly idols and altars from the Wittenberg Castle Church, accompanied by the Zwickau Prophets in session with the Holy Spirit. Melancthon looks on. Ladders and tools. Quite a few objects end up being destroyed.

ZWICKAU PROPHETS: *Trio.*

Craftsmen in simple clothing in a corner, engaged in a trance-like encounter with the Holy Spirit:

Hallelujah! Reveal your truth! ... I hear you Lord, Hallelujah! ...

... The grapes on the vine of the Earth must be cut and thrown into the great winepress of God's wrath ... And as a sign, I see seven angels suffering seven plagues ...

MELANCHTHON:

Looking towards the Zwickau Prophets:

These Zwickau weavers.

It seems they are actually making contact with God!

ZWICKAU PROPHETS:

... Oh speak to me, Holy Spirit!

The hour is nigh... My Lord, in the last battle between God and Satan...

SPALATIN:

Turns up triumphantly at the church door:

Dear all! I have come with Doctor Luther!

MELANCHTHON:

You're back!

He hurries to embrace him.

Luther looks around at the dismantled idols.

His eyes meet those of a Zwickau Prophet.

ZWICKAU PROPHET:

Misty-eyed he gazes at Luther, consumed by religious zeal:

Doctor Luther!

Through me the Holy Father speaks.

He says that...

LUTHER: *Baffled and enraged:*

Don't tell me what God says!!

Vanish, you fanatics!

Grabs the person who spoke and throws him against the door. The whole group withdraws in fright.

To Karlstadt:

So, you do what pleases you?

Chaos and the stripping of altars!

Karlstadt! Who do you think you are?

KARLSTADT:

Still with a dismantled image in hand:

Look, you're not the only reformer in town.

LUTHER:

Verging on getting physical with Karlstadt:

What the hell...!

SPALATIN:

Grabs Luther by the arm and suddenly objects:

Doctor Martin!
 There are many who make an effort here.
 What would have happened
 if we hadn't kept you hidden at the Wartburg?

LUTHER: *Momentarily speechless.*
 ...Dear Spalatin, I know what I owe the Elector.
 And you. And my Philippus!
Laying his arm around Melanchthon.

But Karlstadt?! Over my dead body!

Gestures toward the dismantled images and broken statues.

KARLSTADT: *Has had enough.*
 Martin Luther,
 you obviously see yourself
 as king of the Reformation!
 As the Pope of the new faith!
 But that will be without me!

Drops what he has in his hands and leaves, but turns around to deliver a scathing farewell:

You are also terribly wrong,
 in your glorification of Paul
 and his Epistle to the Romans!
 He is no Apostle of Christ, no prophet.
Wheezing and scornful:
 And neither are you, you bloated cleric!

SPALATIN:
After a moment's hesitation, follows him:
 Wait, Doctor Karlstadt!

Luther and Melanchthon remain alone.

LUTHER:
Somewhat shaken, turns to Melanchthon:
 Good riddance to him.
 Now, it's you and me, my Philippus!
 Now, confusion must cease and the order of faith commence.

Scene 10

A. "CRANACH III": BATTLE FOR FAITH AND SOULS

(September Bible 1522 and the Nuns flight, 4-5 April 1523)

In the workshop, pamphlets are piling up, and Luther's new translation of the Bible is in progress. Bibles and catechisms are loaded onto carriages and driven off. Paid for with gold and noted in the sale's register on a table. We also see the great portraits of the Elector and his brother, Luther and Melanchthon, who are to replace the dismantled altars and saintly idols in churches.

YOUNG APPRENTICE:

Pushing a cart with large packages:

Two hundred Bibles for Nuremberg, Master Lucas.

LUCAS CRANACH:

Great!

Notices Luther, who tense and confused inspects some papers and flips through a Bible.
Martinus! Have you brought order to the city?

LUTHER:

Above all, we need to be preaching!

Ardently! *Provides a three-point strategy:*

Distinguish between what's vital and what's not.

Purge fanatics and visionaries.

A small catechism, (*demonstrates*)

so people can learn by rote the true faith.

LUCAS CRANACH:

Also with imagery, right?

LUTHER:

Yes, as in our Bible!

After all, I've expelled Karlstadt.

He must be banned from writing and preaching!

LUCAS CRANACH:

Really?

LUTHER:

Like the fanatic, Müntzer,

he incites the peasants.

LUCAS CRANACH:

Isn't Karlstadt in Strasburg?

LUTHER:

Free association without really listening:

Strasburg! And Zurich!

There they imitate us!

This Zwingli..! He hates music!

BARBARA CRANACH:

Suddenly enters and interrupts:

Forget Zwingli!! The women are here!

LUTHER:

What, Mrs. Cranach?

BARBARA CRANACH:

Have you not helped twelve nuns escape their convent?

Now, nine of them are right here, tired and dirty.

LUTHER:

His confusion and tension instantly soothed.

Yes! The nuns of Nimbschen!

What a victory for the new faith!

LUCAS CRANACH:

Barbara, let them greet Doctor Luther.

LUTHER:

Takes a list and gives to Lucas Cranach:

I'm looking for good men to marry them off to.

Three can stay here, right?

Nine dirty, tired and quite exhausted nuns step shyly and cautiously into the workshop.

LUTHER: *Takes centre stage:*

Brave women, welcome!

Out into the world and into everyday life!

Whom of you wrote to me?

KATHARINA VON BORA:

I, Katharina von Bora.

God bless you, Doctor Luther.

KATHARINA + NUNS:

Master Koppe from Torgau brought herring to the convent,

and we hid among the barrels on his return.

Now, we all smell of fish!

LUTHER:

Heroines of the Reformation!

MELANCHTHON:

Arrives with a print proof and gazes with amazement at the dirty nuns:

What is this?

BARBRA CRANACH: *To Melanchthon:*

The nuns who escaped from Nimbschen.

To the nuns: You need a bath, fresh clothes and food!

Lucas reads the note and he and Barbara disappear with the women.

Luther and Melanchthon are left alone in the large workshop.

B. FREEDOM OF THE WILL

LUTHER:

My Bible in German

And nuns who leave the nunnery:

What victories for the new faith!

MELANCHTHON:

But not everything is going well, Doctor Martin.

The peasants point to you when they revolt.

And now you alienate the scholars
with a savage attack on Erasmus!

Waves with the print proof of "Treatise on the Servitude of the Will" ("De Servo Arbitrio").

LUTHER:

Incensed by rage, but retains his outward calm:

Books by others

I've wiped my ass with!

But I've read Erasmus to the end.

And he attacks the heart of my theology.

Claims we have a free will!

MELANCHTHON:

I believe in grace as a gift of God.

Plucks up courage;

But – like Erasmus! – I also believe

in reason as a gift of God.

LUTHER:

Sincerely, despairingly and with a deep desire to reach his Phillipus:

The folly of God is wiser than any man!

Erasmus spreads his slippery talk

to the whole world!

I will kill that Satan with my pen;

I will eradicate his whole sect!

MELANCHTHON:

With similar despair:

Do you also want to eradicate me?!

Sotto voce:

You push everyone away.

Karlstadt, Erasmus and now me.

LUTHER:

Grabs Melanchthon, like so many times before:

No! Don't leave me... my 'Griechlein'!

All your writings are superior to mine!

MELANCHTHON:

Fails to resist, yet has the wherewithal to gain the advantage:

Doctor Martin!

So, for once: Listen!

The peasants and Müntzer

point to you when they revolt.

Beseech them to peace!

Beseech the Princes to gentleness!

The war has already reached Thuringia

and your own Eisleben...

Scene 11

LUTHER IN THE RUINS AT HELFTA (*Approx. April 1525*)

Luther, for the first time without a monk's cowl, is standing in the ruins of the famous Cistercian monastery Helfta by Eisleben, which has been razed by fire and destroyed by ravaging peasants. In the 13th century, this was home to three famous mystics: Gertrude of Helfta, Mechthild of Hackeborn and Mechthild of Magdeburg.

Weeping and injured nuns are scattered in the smouldering ruins. Burnt idols of the Virgin Mary and Saint Anna stare with dead eyes. The nuns lift in tears these ruined holy idols to worship them. Grief, tragedy.

A motley peasant militia has remained, armed with scythes, flails and knives. They randomly search the ruins for valuables.

DERANGED BEING:

With crazed eyes. Recognises Luther:

Sooo, you have returned to your Eisleben!

YOU – Martin Luder! Luther!

See! Our Holy Helfta, Crown of Mysticism, in ruins...!

Hissing: You spread the hate! You lit the fire!

THE NUNS:

Recognise Luther, encircle him.

Confused, he backs away and falls over a ruined brick wall.

You took it from us!

A woman's life of piety and learning!

Our books are ashes, our lives are ashes.

No one was more learned

than Gertrud of Helfta! Mechthild of Magdeburg!

Here we found the flowing light of divinity.

Do you understand what you've done?

Do you understand what you've never understood?

Luther tears himself away, only to face an armed peasant militia:

FIRST PEASANT:

We obey only God, not people!

SECOND PEASANT:

"Sola Scriptura"- we follow you, Martin Luther!

And Müntzer!

One of the peasant militiamen tarnishes a nun, but takes flight when armed monks appear, while heavily armed mercenaries arrive from the opposite side, including the commander of the princely army, Philip von Hesse, who inspects the destruction.

LUTHER: But... but... little Philip... of Hesse?

Is it you? Are you in command against the peasants?

PHILIP OF HESSE:
Yes, Doctor Luther, it's me.

LUTHER:
But you are, only, only ...

PHILIP OF HESSE:
... only 20 years of age, yes.
And indeed, I've already seen too much.

LUTHER:
Honourable Landgrave Philip;
This, I did not want!

PHILIP OF HESSE:
Responds in haste and continues
Nonetheless, you ignited the fuse!
Hell is paved with good intentions...

DERANGED BEING:
Pokes his head into Luther's face and grabs his arm:
... said the Holy Saint Bernhard...
A hell of good intentions!

LUTHER:
Beats his way out. Overcome by horror, despair and rage:

Rage:
I called for peace!
I called for gentleness!
What good did it do?
I condemn these robbing and murderous hordes of peasants
who defy the divine order!

Despair takes over:
God himself instituted the worldly power;
The Princes!
These Lords shall bear the sword of God,
not the peasants!
Stab, slay whoever you can
as you would a mad dog!

Fear:
This rebellion is Satan's doing.
The end of times is nigh.
I, Martin Luther, say: Slay them!

Act 2

Scene 12

NIGHT IN WITTENBERG – THE DEFEAT OF THE PEASANTS

(The Elector died on 5 May 1525. The Battle of Frankenhausen: 15 May. Müntzer executed: 27 May.)

The old, wise Elector has passed away amidst the great tragedy of the Peasant War. The coffin rests in the church where Luther, in deep anguish, has sought refuge with Melancthon. On the altar, there is only a crucifix, and on the walls, great paintings of Luther, Melancthon and the old and new Electors.

With his hand on the coffin:

So, our Frederick has died – the Wise...
Tormented by the question of
whether this rebellion was a just retribution
against the ruling class.

Looks towards Luther, who in prayer gazes at the floor.

The rebels point to you.
Words and pamphlets have turned into blood and death.
What should we answer?

LUTHER: *In weary defence:*

It's this fanatic, this madman Müntzer!
He is Satan himself.

MELANCHTHON:

It's not just Müntzer.
The whole of Germany is in turmoil.
People are reading the Bible
and seeing a new and different kind of justice!

LUTHER:

With sudden force and irritation:
Yes, and the real problem is
that people do not read the gospel properly.
That they are too stupid!

MELANCHTHON:

What happened to "The wisdom of God reveals itself in folly"?
That "a donkey can be more right than God"?
What should we answer?
And your bloody pamphlet against the peasants
only made everything worse.

LUTHER:

Again gazing downwards:
I never wanted this...

The word alone! Not violence.
Don't leave me, my Philippus!

SPALATIN:

Enters and interrupts:

Here you are! Listen!
Philip of Hesse's armies have triumphed at Frankenhausen.
Thousands of peasants are stabbed and beaten to death!
A massacre!

MELANCHTHON:

And Müntzer..?

SPALATIN:

...is imprisoned, tortured and executed.

Doctor Martin,
Maybe you're a prophet... I don't know.
The peasants are slaughtered.
My Elector is dead.
I've had enough...

Luther suddenly awakens from his paralysis.

LUTHER:

Quiet, almost whispering:

I, Martin Luther, did it. ... I did it...

Gets up and slowly walks through the dimly lit church toward Melanchthon and Spalatin:

They would not listen!
And he who listens not to God's word
when spoken with kindness,
must listen to the henchman...

In quiet triumph, yet with an inner fire:

I say unto you:

I, Martin Luther, have slain the peasants
for it was I who said: "Kill them!"

The others retreat in horror. Silence envelops. Then Spalatin turns on his heels and slams the church door behind him.

SPALATIN:

Rambling as he pulls away:

I've had enough. I will no more... no more...

Luther and Melanchthon's eyes meet. Luther sinks down again with his face buried in his hands.

MELANCHTHON:

I'm not leaving you, Doctor Martin.
I'll stay here with you.

MUSCAL INTERMEZZO: *The low point. Luther prays all night.*

Scene 13

MORNING OF DISPAIR

Luther is still in church. The day breaks and he prays and speaks to himself in despair. He cannot stand being alone. Melanchthon sits on a bench while working. Ragtag singers have come to practice and a woman is sweeping and washing the floor.

LUTHER: Philippus, are you there?

MELANCHTHON:
Sitting on a bench with some papers and a burnt candle:
Yes, I am here.

LUTHER:
Praying; inadvertently makes the sign of the cross, looks around to see if anyone noticed:

Merciful God,
give me power to deal with chaos and despair,
misery and depravity!

These days, you only need to curse Luther,
to immediately become a saint
equal almost to our Lord above!

Mad peasants, papists and clerics.
All these cackling hens!

Philip, are you there?

MELANCHTHON:
I am here.

LUTHER:
Pray for me!

MELANCHTHON:
Maybe you should withdraw the pamphlet against the peasants?

LUTHER: *Coming to his senses:*
Silence!
The devils are pulling and tearing at me ...

In despair to the ragtag singers, who leaf through their partbooks:

Sing!! I say SING!
Music makes evil take flight!

Scene 14

MUSIC AS MOVEMENT / Intermezzo

Everyday life is conquered and bathed in divine light: The world is transformed by music and by the heavenly dawn. Everything turns into a kaleidoscope of movement – of musical and mundane movement: Musica mundana, musica humana, musica coelestis.

LUTHER:

Music is the comfort of the despairing;
that's why David played for Saul!

VOCAL ENSEMBLE + CHORUS OF EVERYDAY PEOPLE:

Comfort the sorrowful,
empower the dispirited,
humble the proud,
calm the passions.

Through music, the spirit of God acts on Earth;
Guides our emotions, our will,
the motion of planets and the music of the spheres.

VOCAL ENSEMBLE, CHORUS:

Comfort the sorrowful,
empower the discouraged;
Musica mundana, musica humana, musica coelestis;
all this divine movement.

LUTHER:

Master Josquin – a glimpse of God!
A heavenly harmony of voices,
an image of the divine!

VOCAL ENSEMBLE, CHORUS:

Musica mundana, musica humana, musica coelestis,
all this divine movement;
music of man, music of the spheres,
music of wind and birds.
All is the spirit of God, the gift of God, the grace of God.

The real world returns:

LUTHER:

Partially speaking to himself:
He who cannot understand the greatness of music
might as well listen to a donkey!

Scene 15

“CRANACH IV”: WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

Lucas Cranach and Luther sit among piles of Bibles and pamphlets in Cranach's workshop. Identical portraits of Luther are lined up.

LUCAS CRANACH:
 Life is not a breeze.
 After the first triumphs, sobriety calls.

LUTHER: *First in a low voice:*
 I imagined either victory or the stake.
 Not this endless swamp!

LUCAS CRANACH:
 Life must go on, Martinus.
 Write hymns!! Poems!
 Poetry and music reach further
 than hate and polemics.

Luther is silent.

Shake off the devils with your own advice:
 Music and good company!
Gives Luther a mug of beer.

LUTHER:
 Or women.
 Perhaps the Lord requires it of me?
 We were created to procreate.

LUCAS CRANACH:
 When all was barren,
 God gave me Barbara.

LUTHER:
 But if I marry,
 everyone will hate me even more.

With the pain of experience:
 But at least I'm telling the truth!
 Celibacy is lies and hypocrisy!
 Harlots always lined the monastic gate.

Why should we be ashamed
 of the way we are created?

LUCAS CRANACH:
 But Martin the monk was ashamed, or...?

LUTHER: *Not listening:*
 Even the trees bend towards each other in desire.
 Without lust, seed will not turn into fruit! Into life!
 Lust that is repressed
 poisons our flesh and blood!

LUCAS CRANACH:
 But do you dare women?

BARBARA CRANACH: *Interrupts:*
Do we disturb?

LUTHER:
With a gush of warmth and calm:
You never disturb, Mrs. Cranach.

BARBARA CRANACH:
I do know, Doctor Martin,
that you need music for comfort.
Gives him a lute.

LUTHER:
Tweaks the lute.
You are a good person, Mrs. Barbara.

BARBARA CRANACH
Anyway, we have our nuns from Nimbschen.
Not that easy marrying them off.

Beckons the three nuns to enter.

THREE NUNS FROM NIMBSCHEN: *(including Katharina von Bora)*

*They surprise Luther from behind, singing one of his latest hymns from small booklets,
while Luther himself improvises on the lute.*

“Amen! that is, let this come true,
Strengthen our faith ever anew,
That we may never be in doubt
Of that we here have prayed about.
In Thy name, trusting in Thy word,
We say a soft Amen, O Lord.”

(English translation Georg MacDonald 1824-1905)

LUTHER:
Music... my hymn,
my little ditty now as heavenly impression!
I almost want to cry.
And women’s voices, finally women...

Now you will, as wives,
take part in God’s creation!

KATHARINA VON BORA:
Steps a little closer:
Doctor Luther: We are grateful
that you seek to find good men for us.
But I still wonder: Was I wrong?
Should I return to the nunnery?

LUTHER:
No! Motherhood
is the woman’s divine purpose!

KATHARINA VON BORA:
The only one?

LUTHER:
Can anything be greater,
than giving birth and raising the young?

KATHARINA VON BORA:
Most humbly, Doctor Luther:

I do not wish to marry Pastor Glatz.
I was locked inside a convent,
but this prison will be narrower still.

Curtseys and retires along with the other two sisters and Barbara.

LUTHER: *To Lucas Cranach:*
If she becomes a nun again, the papists
will gain a terrible ace!

LUCAS CRANACH:
Marry her!

LUTHER:
No, she is proud and haughty.

LUCAS CRANACH:
Yes, and naughty as well!
A woman who dares to say:
“Not Pastor Glatz, but rather Doctor Luther.”
She’s the one who can handle your devils and life.
Take her!

LUTHER:
A monk and a nun.
What hatred should this not arouse!

LUCAS CRANACH:
I will flood the country with images of you!
Monks and nuns can marry!
Men and women should live together!

Scene 16

PIAE CANTIONES – Intermezzo

Singing students, many from Scandinavia, descent on Wittenberg with their knapsacks. The girls of Wittenberg welcome them and join the singing. Children peering along the wayside. An image of joy, love and fertility that turns into toxic slander.

CHILDREN, STUDENTS & GIRLS OF WITTENBERG:
In vernali tempore, verse 2 (Piae Cantiones):

“Terra viret floribus,
 Et nemus virore,
 Aves mulcent cantibus
 Et vocis dulcore,
 Aqua tempestatibus
 Caret, aer imbribus,
 Dulci plenus rore,
 Sol consumptis nubibus
 Radiis patentibus
 Lucet cum dulcore.” (*Morten Børup c.1450-1526*)

(“*Spring is blossoming again,
 flowers in abundance.
 Singing birds with gentle tunes
 gathering around us.
 Pearls of dew adorn the field,
 blissful rainy showers yield
 beauty and refulgence.
 Rays of sun revive all life,
 lands and waters now are rife
 with a new resplendence.*”) (*ESH 2020*)

FIRST STUDENT:
 Finally, back in Wittenberg! *Embraces his girl.*

FIRST GIRL
 But have you heard?! Luther has married a nun!

SECOND GIRL
 When a monk marries a nun, an Antichrist is spawn. A beast!

THIRD GIRL
 The whole Reformation was only about Luther
 seeking lustful satisfaction!

FIRST GIRL
 So, they say!

ALL:
 Who said that? The whole world laughs at the lecherous monk...
 ... laughs at Wittenberg... Everything he has achieved has turned to nothing...
 Is it true?

SECOND STUDENT:
 What does Master Melanchthon say?

SECOND GIRL:
 He is furious! He knew nothing!

SECOND STUDENT:
 Everything happened behind his back!

ALL:

Who said that? Is it true?... They call her the student whore...
The whole Reformation can fall... they say... is it true?

CHILDREN, STUDENTS & GIRLS:

In vernali tempore, verse 3.

“O quam mira gloria,
quantus decor Dei!
Quanta resplendentia
suae faciei,
a quo ducunt omnia,
ima, summa, media,
formam speciei.
Maior est distantia,
quam sit differentia
noctis et diei.” *(Morten Børup c.1450-1526)*

*(“See God’s glory and his grace,
how he sheds his riches,
radiating from his face,
source of life and species.
All created by his word
high and low in our world
unto us are given.
Nature’s own fertility
unveils his divinity
that can all enliven.”) (ESH 2020)*

Just like the young students, Luther now embraces his Käthe!

Scene 17

LUTHER AND HIS KÄTHE

LUTHER

Our marriage pleases my father, taunts the Pope
makes the angels sing and the devils cry!

KATHARINA:

Though, I’m called a whore!

LUTHER:

Never mind! You will be honoured and admired
as a paragon of the new faith!

Pulls out several of Cranach’s portraits of Käthe:
So perky and powerful you seem! So beautiful!

Through you, God will create children, life and joy ...

KATHARINA:

Joking:

So much to do!

LUTHER:

Yes, in marriage, sinful desire becomes
God's ongoing creation...

KATHARINA

The seed will become fruit...
Trees and flowers bend toward each other
in lust and yearning ...
Bending like a flower.

LUTHER:

Yes, in yearning and desire.
A sign of God's longing for life!
We were created for pleasure and joy!

KATHARINA

No more alone in a cell.
Living together, touching each other.

LUTHER:

Letting down her hair:
Imagine waking up with a couple of braids
on the pillow next to you.
Käthe! You have a pious man who loves you!
You are an Empress!

A sudden dark cloud:

But everyone hates me, persecutes me – us!
But so they also persecuted those who came before me.

KATHARINA

Are you saying that you're a real prophet?

LUTHER:

At least more so than that Swiss cheese
'Zwingel-Zwingli' !
A fool who claims
that the Eucharist is only symbolic!

KATHARINA

There is a desire for you to concur, right?

LUTHER:

Yes, Landgrave Philip is pestering me.
But I will never give in!
The terror of my first mass.
Jesus WAS there, alive in the bread!

Scene 18

THE MARBURG COLLOQUI 1529 *(1- 4 October 1529)*

PHILIP OF HESSE:

Doctor Luther! *Waves, beckons him to come.*

Pastor Zwingli in Zurich respects you.
But you call him a fanatic, devil and heathen.
I'm tired of your eternal mockery, hatred and din!
Once you wept because no one would listen to you;
now you refuse to listen to others!
Hardly clever, Herr Doctor.

Now, I unite the Protestants, militarily and politically.
The Emperor is ready for concessions.
Now, all we need is for you to unite in faith:
You, Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli!

LUTHER:

Zwingli? Never! He hates music.
Conspires with Karlstadt.
Calls the Eucharist symbolic!

But Jesus said: "This IS my body!"
That's what the gospel says!

PHILIP OF HESSE: *Mockingly:*

Well, yes: One day "Sola scriptura";
the next day, you translate the Bible
as befits you!
But "now, we are all priests",
and must compromise!
I summon a meeting at my castle in Marburg:

Smooth transition to Marburg:

*Theologians (chorus + soloists) dressed in flowing robes arrive from all directions,
and Philip of Hesse introduces the representatives of the most important cities:*

- Pastor Huldrych Zwingli, Zurich,
- Doctor John Oecolampadius, Basel,
- Pastor Andreas Osiander, Nuremberg,
- Doctor Stefan Agricola, Augsburg.

From Wittenberg:

- Magister Philip Melancthon,
- and YOU, Doctor Martin Luther!

Luther enters the circle.

- As mediator: Doctor Martin Bucer, Strasburg.

*Everyone greets one another with anticipation, not least Melanchthon and Bucer.
Luther and Zwingli demark their territories, like hounds:*

LUTHER:

Mr. Zwingli! Sola scriptura!
Jesus said, "This IS my body"!

ZWINGLI:

Doctor Luther,
after a formidable feat you are now astray!
But, I am sure that I can convince you!

PHILIP OF HESSE:

Quickly gathers attention:
Now, DEBATE, but agree!
I want to see a united front
meeting the Emperor in Augsburg!

BUCER: Humanity will thank us should we succeed!

The disputation is staged in a classic semicircle. Philip of Hesse lets servers wait on his guests. Martin Bucer leads the negotiations. Luther is angry and despises Zwingli, who with condescending patronage sees himself as superior.

BUCER:

We agree on fourteen points,
but not regarding the Eucharist,
on the nature of Christ's presence in bread and wine.

ALL: *(Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Luther, Melanchthon + chorus)*

"Hoc es corpus meum!"
This is my body!

One by one, the participants hold up their writings from the year of polemics and read the titles:

OECOLAMPADIUS:

Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt was first: *Lifts his book:*
"About the recipients, signs and promises of the Holy Sacrament and the flesh and blood of Jesus. Also, about adoration and veneration of the signs of the New Testament." (1521)

ZWINGLI:

And Karlstadt continues: *Lifting his book:*
"Whether one may prove with the Holy Scriptures that Christ with body, blood and soul is present in the Sacrament." (1524)

LUTHER:

This fool, this fanatic Karlstadt!
But he withdrew it!

MELANCHTHON:

Doctor Martin Luther answers: *Lifting his book:*
"That the words of Christ, 'This is my body', are steadfast against the fanatics!"
(Luther 1527)

ALLA: Hoc es corpus meum!

ZWINGLI: *Lifting his book:*

My truth: "De Eucharistia!"

(*"Subsidium sive coronis de Eucharistia" 1525*) (*"On the Eucharist"*)

ALL: Hoc es corpus meum!

The arguments in Latin:

OECOLAMPADIUS:

My thesis: Sacramentum est signum corporis Christi!

(*The Holy Sacrament is a symbol of the Body of Christ!*)

LUTHER:

No! Corpus Christi est in pane! (*No! Christ's body is in the bread!*)

ZWINGLI:

Corpus non potest esse sine loco, ergo Christi corpus non est in pane!

(*A body cannot be everywhere, thus the body of Christ is not in bread!*)

MELANCHTHON:

De ubiuitate sive omnipræsentia corporis Christi! (*Christ's body is omnipresent!*)

OECOLAMPADIUS: *Cites the title of his writing from 1525:*

"De genuina verborum Domini: Hoc est corpus meum, iuxta vetustissimos auctores expositione liber" (*"Genuine exposition of the Lord's words, 'This is my body,' according to the most ancient authorities."*)

ALL: Hoc es corpus meum!

BUCER: Silent! Be quiet! Silentium!

Finally, Zwingli vs. Luther in German:

ZWINGLI: *Somewhat patronising:*

Unfortunately, I must correct you, Doctor Luther.

The body of Christ cannot, like his divinity,
be everywhere at the same time.

LUTHER:

I myself have trembled in terror
at the living Christ in the bread.

"Mysterium tremendum"!

So he's there!

We bite him, we chew him!

ZWINGLI:

In aversion, almost spoken:

What are you saying?!

LUTHER: *In broken logic:*

That you are wrong.

And that I do not intend to be lectured to
by the Devil himself.

ZWINGLI:

Shocked yet offers his hand to Luther:

Doctor Luther, I will pray for you, as for a brother.

Luther refuses his hand.

BUCER: *Intervenes:*

Stop! Take his hand!

Looks Luther right in the eye:

Is someone a Devil because he has another opinion?

LUTHER:

Switching from aggression to relaxed ease:

I wish to live in peace and on good terms with the Swiss!

But I do not consider this man to be a fellow Christian.

Luther leaves the meeting, enjoys refreshments served by the princely court and begins to read his correspondence. The others are shocked and confused.

MARTIN BUCER:

Is this the same Luther,
who once entranced me?

ZWINGLI:

Confused and emotional:

So illogical. And the way he treats me!

I want to weep.

MARTIN BUCER:

Magister Philip,
why are you loyal to this man?

Philip of Hesse barges in:

PHILIP OF HESSE:

Listen! The meeting is a failure.

The Eucharist that should unite all Christians,
will now disunite them.

With inner rage:

The Turks have besieged Vienna!

The whole of Christianity is threatened.

But rather let everything fall
than deviate an inch from the slightest of paragraphs!

To all

The Protestants will **come to** Augsburg divided.

Philip Melancthon – you will speak for Wittenberg!

Scene 19

LUTHER AT COBURG / Letter Aria (1530)

First, he writes to Käthe, who struggles with children, the home, vegetable-growing and tenants:

“My dearest Käthe!
Our Landgrave did everything,
to unite us as brothers in Christ.
This we refused.
But it all ended with a lovely dinner!

Now, Magister Philip is in Augsburg,
alone to defend the true faith.
But he tortures me with his silence!
There is no news from the Diet, other than gossip.

But I don’t complain, dear Käthe.
At Coburg, I live like a prince high in the skies,
content to watch the Diet of the Birds outside the window.
A forest of ravens, crows and jackdaws
that dart and fly, screech and quarrel!

There is yet no nightingale, but we heard the cuckoo.
Kiss the children from me!

From the realm of the birds and your obedient servant,
Martin Luther.”

Moves on to write to Melanchthon, who under constant attack leads the incredibly demanding negotiations in Augsburg, occasionally driven to tears.

“My Philip, I miss you so much.
But why make a martyr of yourself?
Where’s your faith? Your confidence?
God has told us not to worry!

And why consider
how much you can concede to the papists?
It’s already too much!

But I have read your Confession with delight.
And Apologia.

Never could I word it
as softly and sweetly as you!
You surpass me in theology, too!
May Christ strengthen and comfort you!

From the wilderness and a castle full of devils,
Martin Luther”

Scene 20

“CRANACH V”: NEW PORTRAITS *(15 years later, around 1545)*

Wittenberg. Cranach approaches Luther with a cart load of the new portrait: “Luther as Authority”. Simultaneously, the dinner table in Luther’s home in the Black Monastery is set, while students practice a motet. Cranach unpacks his portraits with the help of assistants.

LUTHER:

The years pass, Lucas!
And what has come of them?
Compromises! Military alliances!
Kidney stones, tinnitus
and devils who delude me.
The years pass, and come to nothing.

CRANACH:

Teasingly:
My dear friend,
It’s not quite that bad, is it?

LUTHER:

You may be right...
And God shows who his true servant is!
First, his verdict fell on Müntzer, then Zwingli.
Their death in disgrace shows that I was right!
Soon, he will also deal with Karlstadt,
the papists and the Turks.

CRANACH:

Raises one of the Luther portraits:
We will hang it here.
You must shine as the true authority!
Here are some more.

He leans another five or six Luther portraits of various sizes against the wall.

LUTHER:

What? Yes... That’s brilliant Lucas...
Absolutely brilliant!

Turns to all the guests who are now gathered:
Music! My motet! “Sermo et vox”!

STUDENTS / CHORUS: *(Composed by Luther)*

“Non moriar sed vivam a narrabo opera domini.”
(“I shall not die, but live and declare the words of the Lord”)

Scene 21

TABLE TALKS

Students, guests, children and servants have poured in. The new portrait is admired. Luther, self-satisfied, enjoys his role as a bastion of faith, while pontificating on every aspect. A student takes notes of his words – the ‘Table Talks’

LUTHER:

Enjoy life, my friends.
That’s what God wants!

Everyday life is our divine service!
So much better than fasting to death
like all the monks,
perpetually praying on their knees.
Yes, while the papists kill people,
we are devoted to life, and take several wives, ha-ha!

KATHARINA:

Several wives? That’s devil’s talk!

LUTHER:

A woman can only give birth to one child a year,
while a man can breed several, ha-ha!

KATHARINA:

Rather than endure such jabber,
I should return to the nunnery!

LUTHER:

But you don’t have that choice, Käthe!
That ungodly institution I have abolished!

Gestures towards his wife:

See my amazing Käthe!
She runs the house like a queen,
but never keeps her silence at the table!

To the note-taker: Did you get that?

Continues:

Well, boys! Would you ask me anything?

STUDENT:

As Melancthon arrives:

Yes, what is your opinion of Mr. Calvin in Geneva, Doctor Luther?

LUTHER: *In high spirit:*

Calvin ‘the calf’, ha-ha!! And then Zwingel-Zwingli’s lackey, Bullinger ‘the bull’, and finally the chatterbox, Bucer, ha-ha!

Sees Melancthon approaching. With wry irony:

But Master Philip loves
to mingle with these bandits.

MELANCHTHON:
Sorry to interrupt...
Pulls Luther to the side:
... but Landgrave Philip is here
with the English delegation.

Käthe gestures and the guests reluctantly pull away, all while curiously observing Luther and Melanchthon. She starts cleaning and clearing away.

LUTHER:
Won't you take care of it, Philip?
I'm sickened at the thought of such disputation
which leads to nowhere.
Faith in the Lord is better!
He created the sea, nature and all the animals.
What did we create?!

MELANCHTHON:
I do trust in God,
but we also depend on the Princes.
We need to negotiate, compromise.

LUTHER:
With a fiery glint in his eye:

Compromise!?
I know, Philip, that you make concessions that I have not approved!
That you make changes to texts that we have agreed upon
and write magnificent dedications to the most amazing swine!
There are too many tortuous correspondences!
Far too many!

Pulls away and waves menacingly with the manuscript "Against the Papacy" and leaves the room.

Scene 22

MELANCHTHON'S DISPAIR
Käthe lingers to clear and tidy up.

MELANCHTHON:
One learns to keep one's silence.
We must help one another, Käthe!

KATHARINA:
Once, you were jealous of me.

MELANCHTHON:

I adored him
and would rather die than leave Martin.

But now!
A disgrace in slavery
to his capricious whim and anger!

That man is a genius and a disaster!
What happened to reason?
Everyone asks me to intervene,
but there is nothing I can do.
Europe is torn apart like a sail!

The Catholics convene in Trent, but without us.
Emperor Charles has conquered the Turks,
and now it's our turn.
But some of us still struggle,
– desperately! – for that mutual goodwill
that Erasmus dreamed of.
The old Erasmus.

KATHARINA:
But maybe someone had to pave the way with clout and clamour?
The doctor was the prophet everyone hoped for!
He was magical.

Yes, but even a prophet
needs to know when things must end!
And he who fails to listen
becomes very, very lonesome.

KATHARINA: *With firmness:*
So true... and then it won't help
being king of the dinner table.

Grabs the last thing on the table and makes her sortie.

Scene 23

“CRANACH VI”: A FINAL ATTACK ON THE POPE

Plump and aging, Luther triumphantly hands Lucas Cranach his new pamphlet: “Against the Papacy, instituted by the Devil,” while proudly proclaiming his own maxim:

LUTHER:
“Pestis eram vivus, moriens ero mors tua, Papa.”
Living, I was your plague – dying, I shall be your death, Pope!

CRANACH: *Reads the title of the new book*
“Against the Papacy, instituted by the Devil”?
First new pamphlets against the Swiss, against the Jews,
and now the Pope.

What's the point? Look around you!
 We're painting battle standards.
 We are expecting war!

LUTHER: *Deaf to Cranach's views:*
 Yes, Satan never sleeps!
 We must bolster the hatred of the papacy.

Gives Cranach a tightly written paper.

CRANACH:
Casts his eyes on the paper:
 I'm a court painter.
 I deliver to order.

I depict you and your family
 on the altarpieces,
 as were you apostles and prophets.
 For the bishops, I paint Madonnas,
 and for the Princes nude women.

And now I will render – for Doctor Martin Luther –
 a soldier who shits in the Pope's tiara.
 But as your friend, I say: Stop it!
 Nobody listens to you anymore.

LUTHER:
Increasingly infuriated:
 You pitiful painter!
 He who does not attack the Pope is himself a heretic!

CRANACH:
Jarred and tormented.
 Martin, why this insane anger?

LUTHER:
With madness in his eyes:
 Because it makes everything easier!
 Anger is my weapon; it refreshes my blood,
 sharpens my mind and chases the devils away!

Leaves the workshop in anger and slams the door.

Scene 24

BROODY HEN

KATHARINA: *Grabbing his arm:*
 Barbara says you've snubbed Master Cranach?

LUTHER:
Looking up, Käthe realises he's beside himself.

He attacks my new book.
 But the hatred of the papacy must stand strong!
 My Philippus is also wavering
 and in parlance with the enemy.
 Just imagine, Käthe, both are fickle fraudsters!

But it'll soon all be over.
 The whole world thinks
 that getting rid of me is for the better.
 The Devil has sworn to kill me, and...

KATHARINA: *Interrupts:*
 No! He's been defeated by Christ!
 Don't you yourself trust God's grace?

LUTHER: *Suddenly pitiful:*
 Give me your words of comfort!

KATHARINA:
 "He who God loves belongs to his kingdom."

LUTHER:
 But he doesn't love me!

KATHARINA:
 "Simul iustus et peccator."

LUTHER: *Almost rambling:*
 Yes, both a righteous and a sinner ...
 ... and we can do nothing ...
 ... what we ourselves attempt turns to evil...
 ... everything is in the hands of God, not mine...!
 I must believe it's true,
 so I can be safe... secure... forgiven...

KATHARINA:
 You're scared! Fear has ruled your life.
 But there are also hearts full of love!

LUTHER: *Desperate:*
 No! We are all evil,
 with hearts full of hatred!

On the verge of collapsing with all the devils literally tearing and pulling at him:

Oh, all these devils,
 like flies, like cockroaches!

Käthe becomes increasingly desperate in her attempts to reassure him:

KATHARINA:
 Take the lute... scare them off... with music!
She attempts to give him the lute but is thrust away.

LUTHER:

No! The only thing that works is contempt,
festivity, lust of the flesh and a fart in the face!

Do you not understand?
The devils cling and clutch onto me and tell me I was wrong!
That I led people astray into the abyss of delusion...

Slow change of mood:
But suddenly, God speaks,
and he says I'm right!
That the others are false prophets. Liars!
God doesn't hate sinners... he doesn't hate me.

Grabs Käthe, who he has just pushed away.
Käthe! In the midst of death, we are surrounded by life!
Let Christ, the Son of God, save you,
just as he saves me!

Like a small child:
Only with him are my sins no longer sins.
Protected by his warm wing, my shame is forgiven.
He is my little brooding hen, under whom I crawl
to escape the wrath of God.

He bursts into tears in Käthe's outstretched hands.

INTERMEZZO - Chorus

Broken like shadows; echoes and facets from another time:

"Fecit potentiam in brachio suo
Dispersit superbos meant cordis sui."
(*"He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts."*
Luke 1:51)

From deep affliction, I cry out to you...
...Our Father in heaven...
...A mighty fortress is our God...
...Lord, hear my call...

Scene 25

THE END – "TUMULTUS" (*After the Battle of Mühlberg, 24 April 1547*)

The Emperor and his allies have besieged and captured Wittenberg. The years of triumph and defiance (1517-47) are over. Nephew of Elector Fredrick the Wise, Johan Fredric, is captive and has been deprived of his title. Darkness, rain and fog. Everyone is out on the streets. Soldiers, turmoil. Students with knapsacks are fleeing. Battle standards from Cranach's workshop lie slashed on the ground. Barbara Cranach pushes in front of her a heavy cart full of artworks they intend to salvage...

KATHARINA:

Carries a bundle with Luther's death mask. Out of breath:
Oh, Barbara... Wittenberg, beaten and humiliated... just think, the Emperor...

BARBARA:

... the little Charles that Lucas once painted!

KATHARINA:

Did you know that the Elector has become captive...?

BARBARA:

Yes... and also the Landgrave!
I'm glad the good doctor was spared this experience.

KATHARINA: *Lifts the bundle:*

Here's his death mask – what should I do with it ?!

BARBARA:

Maybe Magister Philip?
The rest of us must flee!

KATHARINA:

What will become of me, Barbara ?!

BARBARA:

Käthe, believe in yourself and be proud.
We changed the world!
Everyday life!

That all turned so violent,
so chaotic and so difficult is the fault
of those who refused to reform themselves.

All the greedy, idle and power-hungry.
How different could not things have been?!

There is Lucas!
God be with you, Käthe...
She pulls off with the cart.

KATHARINA:

Catches sight of Melancthon in the crowd and grabs him.
Magister Philip!
Take care of it... the death mask...! *Slips it into his hands.*

New loud blasts and soldiers terrify Käthe; she hurries on.

MELANCHTHON:

Unwinds the fabric and stands face to face with Luther – his death mask:
Doctor Martin... so strangely quiet!... Like a shadow...

We sought to renew faith, renew life.
And what's left? A death mask,
war ... exhaustion, dissolution.

A hand is placed on his shoulder:

Philip of Hesse, captured and surrounded by the Emperor's guardsmen, bids farewell:

PHILIP OF HESSE:

Aloof and with his characteristic irony:

Yes, what's left? "Tumultus"!

Magister Philip, I just wanted to bid farewell.

MELANCHTHON:

We failed, Noble Landgrave!

We didn't unite the Protestants.

We did not reconcile with Rome.

We failed to prevent the war.

Europe is torn apart, like a sail!

PHILIP OF HESSEN:

Takes the mask:

But our Doctor here succeeded!

He ended up as a prophet.

Pilgrims are already tearing splinters from his bed.

A sudden affinity between the two men from two different worlds – and sadness.

While Melanchthon wraps the mask, a reminiscence of how everything started:

MELANCHTHON:

He became our life, our destiny.

PHILIP OF HESSE:

We were so young... so full of hope.

MELANCHTHON:

You were fourteen, I was twenty-one.

PHILIP OF HESSE:

You loved him, didn't you ...?

MELANCHTHON:

Pause.

Weren't we all seduced?

The guards drag their prisoner, Philip of Hesse, on into the fog and rain.

THE END