

Reformation

MARTIN LUTHER

THE GRAPHIC
BIOGRAPHY

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Money in the coffers

From time immemorial, the Pope in Rome could grant dispensations from penalties prescribed by church law. But the eternal God alone decided who should go to heaven or hell. Nevertheless, the length of time spent in the cleansing and purifying fires of purgatory could be reduced for the penitent sinner through good works. As Giovanni de' Medici ascends to the papacy as Pope Leo X in 1513, the trade in indulgences is already flourishing. Pope Leo issues a license to sell indulgences to Margrave Albrecht of Brandenburg, the proceeds of which would allow him to repay his debt to the Church of Rome and the Fugger Bank in Augsburg. Officially this license to sell indulgences is to finance the rebuilding of St. Peter's, which is still in the early stages and wouldn't be completed for over 100 years, at which time it would be one of Christianity's most impressive monuments ...





Is there any news from Rome?



I've been waiting for months to be recognized as the Archbishop of Mainz.



Do not be so impatient, Albrecht. You're already archbishop of Magdeburg, and you know that Rome does not approve of the concentration of power in a family such as yours. But we are working on it ...



To date we've deposited 48,236 gold ducats. The Pope will be able to build himself a new church and the Emperor will have nothing more to object to ...



But you know that we Fuggers have our price. You will have to involve us in the sale of indulgences, so that you can pay back the money you owe us.

The campaign to sell indulgences is commissioned to a particularly convincing preacher, the Dominican friar Johann Tetzel.



Do you know with certainty what will happen on the Day of Judgment?

Do you think you can sleep peacefully?



Do you really think that this little creature is innocent in God's eyes?

How greatly mistaken you are ... No one is innocent!

Whoever buys this letter of indulgence is rescued from the flames of purgatory!

In Vollmacht aller Heiligen
und in Erbarmung gegen Dich, absolviere
Ich Dich von allen Sünden und Missethaten,
im und erlasse Dir alle Strafen auf zehn
Jahre.
Johannes Tetzel

Thanks to this indulgence, you can bring these relics of the saints into safety, so that they will protect you from the eternal flames.

Tetzel has a money coffer in which proceeds from the sales of indulgences are kept. On it is written: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."



A coin for your soul is a modest price!



How can you keep calm when your loved ones are being relegated to purgatory ...? Wouldn't you rather free them from this torment?

One coin! One coin and their souls will fly into paradise!



Thank you, Father ... I came on foot from Wittenberg to receive your blessing.



Well, well, my son ... Spread the word among your countrymen, so that they will also rush to donate a stone for the building of St. Peter's Basilica.



Oh how beautiful! So many saved souls!

A little later, at the University of Wittenberg.



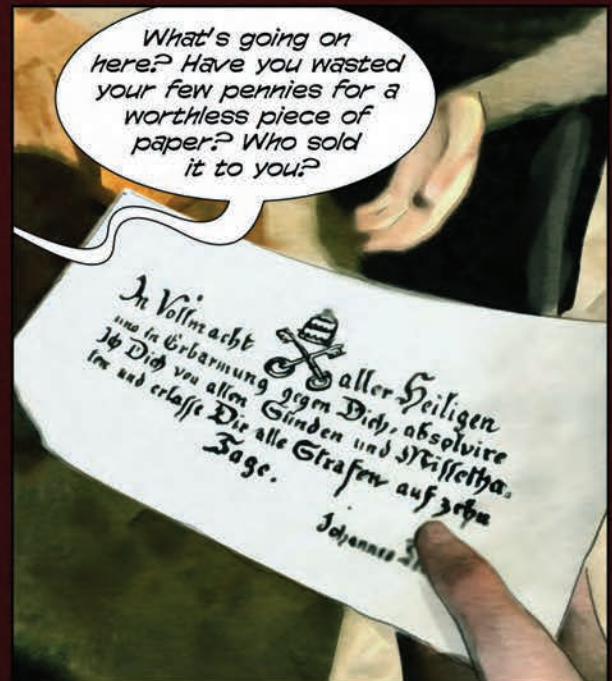
... All descendants of Adam are corrupted by sin, faith in God through Jesus Christ alone can absolve them from their sins. Not pilgrimages, not fasting, not saints or relics: We are saved alone through faith in God and the Holy Word of God.




My good son, I have not seen you at Mass for a long time. Would you like to go to confession?



That is no longer necessary, Father Luther. The Pope has absolved me from my sins!



What's going on here? Have you wasted your few pennies for a worthless piece of paper? Who sold it to you?

In Vollmacht  aller Heiligen und in Erbarmung gegen Dich, absolviere Ich Dich von allen Sünden und Missethaten und erlasse Dir alle Strafen auf zehn Tage.
Johanns



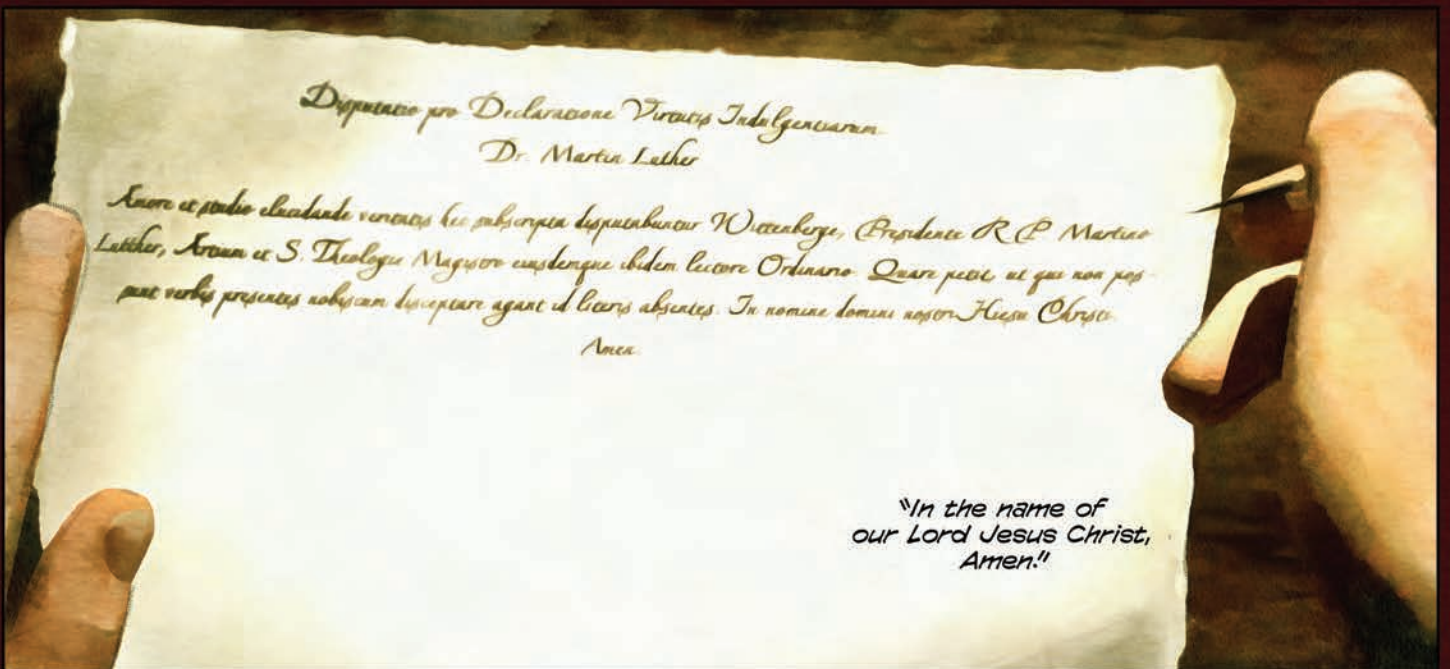
Father Johann Tetzel. Many of us have moved to Magdeburg to receive grace by His Holiness ... In doing so, we have contributed to the construction of St. Peter's!



Have you covered the relics of a saint with gold because you believe it will save you from purgatory?



"Out of love for the truth and the desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter."



Wittenberg Castle Church, October 31, 1517



I do not know, it's in Latin!



What is written there?



"The Pope can not remit any guilt ...!"
What a bold idea. Everyone must take note of this.

"The Pope can not remit any guilt; except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God!"

Thanks to the recent invention of the printing press, the 95 Theses spread quickly and were immediately translated into German, so that everyone could understand them.





Martin Luther is right! The enrichment of this preacher has to stop!

The Holy See, St. John Lateran, Rome. Maximilian I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, visits Pope Leo X in Rome.



It is a very delicate moment, Your Holiness. And it is necessary to preserve the unity of all Catholic countries. This monk has enflamed tempers across the entire German Empire, and in the meanwhile the Turks are approaching.

Obviously all our warnings have achieved nothing, and I must wonder what the Elector of Saxony is thinking in being so lenient with this hotthead ...



Maybe he wants to be the only one among the Germans who takes money from the people's pockets?



The Holy Inquisition, Your Holiness ...



Yes, the Holy Inquisition! Luther has to be charged, and then we will see who has the last word — a little arrogant German monk or Christ's vicar on earth!



You will see, once he comes before a worldly power, he will recant everything ...

I certainly hope so, for his sake.



Should the Germans intend to split up the Church, they will be greatly mistaken. The Church is and will remain one: the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Augsburg, the Fugger Bank, October 12, 1518. At the margins of the Imperial Diet, inconclusive consultations are taking place about the successor to Emperor Maximilian I., who is critically ill. Cardinal Cajetan, the emissary of Pope Leo, urges Luther to recant his Wittenberg Theses.

Be prudent, Martin ...
If the Elector had not
been present today you
would be interrogated in
Rome and not here in
Augsburg!



Cardinal Cajetan is
acting on the Pope's
behalf. Don't think
he will give up.



Now,
Martin Luther,
do you recant your
teaching?



It was not my
intention to offend the
Holy Father. On the contrary!
I wanted to protect him from
the abuses of those who
claim to speak in
his name.



The Holy
Father does not need
your defense and he needs
debates about theses that
the Councils have already
discussed even
less.





But distortions of Church doctrine are being spread. People are being promised remission of guilt if they purchase a letter of indulgence ...



You are here to distance yourself from the infamies you have written.



I do not agree, Your Eminence. If you would just give me the chance to better explain myself! Look ... According to Catholic doctrine absolution forgives sin, but not the punishment that is served in purgatory ...



Enough of this! You should have shown more contrition. Instead, you stand here in front of me full of arrogance! Go and don't let me see you anymore!



What have you done ...? There's no turning back now.

Leipzig, July 1519. At the University, there is a fourteen-day disputation on Luther's Theses. Wittenberg professors Luther, Melancthon and Karlstadt are accompanied on the trip to Leipzig by 200 students. Luther's principal opponent in the debate is Dr. Johann Maier, known as Eck. Eck defends the authority of the popes and the councils. The minutes of the disputation and hence Luther positions are widely circulated.





There he is, the revolutionary! Hopefully you realize the gravity of your words!

Neither the Pope nor the council has the ultimate authority in matters of faith. Even Jan Hus ...



Jan Hus? Are you now invoking a heretic in this matter?

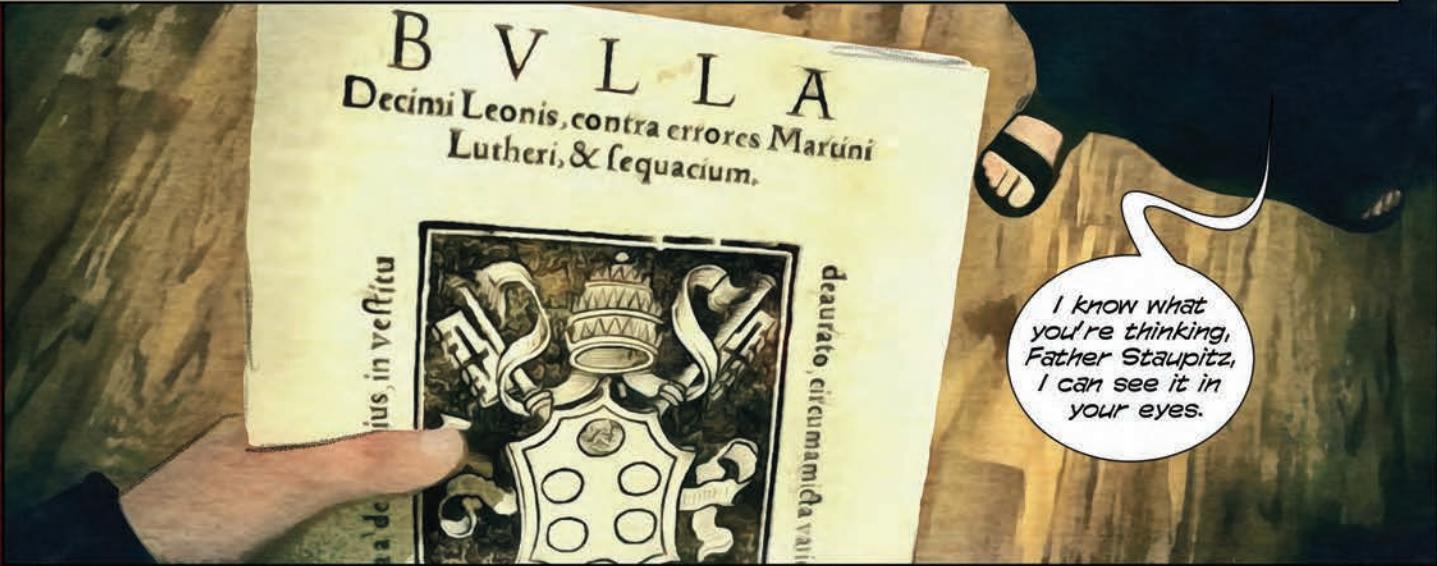


He too was telling the truth! It's not a question of heresy, but Christian teachings! The papacy grounds its "authority" solely in the ability to impose excommunication!



Martin Luther, you are condoning a schism that is irreversible. You deny the authority of the pope and the councils. You have fallen from the faith!

Upon returning to Wittenberg, Luther writes three eloquent pamphlets: "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation", "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church" and "On the Freedom of a Christian". He sends the latter tract together with a letter to Pope Leo, asking him to abdicate the papacy. In June 1520, Leo X issues the papal bull "Exsurge Domine" which threatens Luther with excommunication.



I know what you're thinking, Father Staupitz, I can see it in your eyes.



I tried to explain what I said in Leipzig in my "Resolutions", but that's all been forgotten ... And this is now your answer!

I have always encouraged you to reform the Church, Martin, not to destroy it. Now you've gone too far. You have sixty days ...

They have challenged 41 of my 95 Theses and have prohibited their publication throughout the Catholic world ...

Sixty days, otherwise you will be excommunicated! You have to do it, Martin, think about it!

Otherwise you are igniting your own funeral pyre!



No, I will not renounce my theses. Never.



December 10, 1520

The eternal fire shall devour you,

In December 1520, after the deadline for renouncing his Theses has passed, Luther burns the encyclical in Wittenberg.



because you've thrown the Lord's sanctuary into confusion.



