

A World Without The Reformation

Megan Lauridsen

Martin Luther stepped up to the table where the monks were selling indulgences.

"Name of the deceased and relation?" one asked him.

"Heine von Luther, grandfather," Martin replied.

"Go to the staircase and say an 'Our Father' on every step. When you reach the top, your grandfather will be released from Purgatory."

Martin walked over to the crowded staircase and found a small space to begin his prayers. As he slowly moved from step to step, he became aware of how many people were surrounding him, of how much money they had all been made to pay. He stole a quick glance at the young woman next to him, looking cold and thin under her dirty, torn clothes. She may have been giving up meals to scrape enough money together to pay for this indulgence. The bare feet of the man in front of him were badly scarred and the cuffs of his pants were torn. How was the church justified in taking such amounts of money away from these people who cannot afford to buy sufficient food and clothing? When Luther finally reached the top of the staircase and looked down upon the people saying their prayers, he was overwhelmed with disgust.

Luther was conflicted that night. How could he, a faithful monk to the Catholic Church, go against the Church with such heretical views? Luther blamed the devil for planting these evil thoughts into his mind, and was trying to erase them from his mind. The priest came in to find a shaking, tormented Luther.

"Luther, stop blaming yourself." he said calmly.

"I have been given thoughts by the devil and I must rid myself of them at all costs, Father," Luther replied, still cowering on the floor.

The priest took a crucifix attached to a chain from around his neck and pressed it into Luther's hand. "God loves you," he said. "God will protect you."

Luther seemed to be put at peace with these words. "God will save me."

The next day, he turned to the Bible to answer his many questions. He needed proof that the clergy was justified in selling indulgences and that paying money actually gets people out of Purgatory. He searched the book verse by verse until he found verse 4:12 in the book of Acts that read "Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." This he understood to mean that only God could give forgiveness and men could not pay the Pope to release their relatives from Purgatory.

"Those dirty levereters, scamming people of their precious money!" Luther cried. This realization of the Church's wrongdoings led Luther to believe that the Church was not following God's will at the least. Instead, it used the threat of purgatory to milk the poor of their money so that the clergy could lead rich, comfortable lives. Luther was not going against God in the least. He was protecting God, as God had always protected him.

Luther worked day and night, writing up a document he called the "95 Theses." The document included ideas such as 'only God can give salvation, while a priest can only reassure that God will give salvation,' 'a sinful soul does not always have to be always sinful, it can be cleansed,' and 'The priest must not threaten those dying with the penalty of purgatory.' He showed it to his brother, Jacob Luther, and he became so passionate about Luther's ideas that he insisted Luther post it on the church door for all to see.

"I must admit that I am worried about the people's reaction to these ideas," Martin said. "Do you think there would be much conflict?"

"These ideas must be spread," Jacob said. "Bringing these ideas to light would allow the people to truly live by the word of God. It is worth every bit of the risk."

The next morning, Martin and Jacob were walking to the church to post the 95 Theses on the door. Jacob was admiring the bright green of the rolling hills when a horse was spooked by a loud pop. The young, inexperienced driver tried to control his horse to no avail as the cart began to barrel straight towards Jacob and Luther. Martin was reading over the Theses, unaware of his surroundings.

"Martin! Watch out!" Jacob cried, eyes predicting the horse's path and trying to avoid it. Martin snapped to attention just a second too late and was thrown to the ground with a horrifying crunch as the cart wheel ran over his body. The cart continued to barrel down the street. Horrified, Jacob rushed over to his brother, but it was too late. One of the wheels of the cart had crushed his torso and part of his head. Martin's arm lay limp upon the cobblestones, fingers still clutching the 95 Theses, as if they were handing it to Jacob.

"This must be a sign from God," Jacob thought. "Maybe God didn't want Martin to put the 95 Theses on the door." Jacob was confused and grief stricken. "Maybe God wills us to live like this, as part of His plan." Jacob took the Theses from his late brother's hand and hid it. As much as he loved his brother and his Theses, he was fearful that the Church or God himself would find it and put an end to his life as well.

Martin's funeral was attended by quite a large portion of the town. He had been a well known, beloved monk and he had lived a fulfilling life serving God. As he was buried, Jacob held the Theses in his hand. He promised Martin that it would be posted when the time was right. In time, Jacob got married and went on to have 7 children. He was a successful man and was able to provide a comfortable life for his family. He believed that God had rewarded him for never posting the 95 Theses that still lay underneath his bed, wrapped in cloth. He had protected the church when the devil had told him not to. His children knew about the Theses, but none of them dared to read it. Their father had told them that it had been written by their uncle who had been killed for writing it. Jacob read it often in fond memory of his brother, passionate about each word. When Jacob died in 1571, his children kept the scroll of paper, since it had been so important to their father. However, they never read it and remained obedient to the Church.

Over the next 50 years, Europe remained under the strict rule of the Roman Catholic Church. The public continued to buy indulgences, tithing went on, and people suspected of heresy continued to be burned at the stake. Technology remained at the same level as before, since most innovative ideas that would have contributed to technological advances were said to be thoughts of the devil. The Pope continued to control the people completely, as they struggled to pay for the essentials, tithes, and indulgences.

The year was 1620, and four generations of the Luther family had passed. Captain John Luther sailed his merchant ship around the outside of Europe and was now coming into the Mediterranean to reach the Ottoman Empire. He had sailed this route a few times before, and traded with the Turks for their furs and precious metals, as well as their sugar. He leaned back in the chair of the captain's chamber, admiring the portrait of his wife and children. They'd been painted by the best painter in Essex. John was very wealthy due to his inheritance from his father, who had moved to England to get a job in the trading industry. When he died, he had given John, his only child, his merchant ship, as well as all of his money. John didn't have to trade to sustain his family, but he enjoyed the sea breeze and the adventure, as well as interacting with the Turks.

"Captain, sir!" A young lad clattered down the ladder. "It appears the Turks are at war!"

Captain John stood up. This was not good for business, for he would need food to make the journey home, as well as money to pay the wages of all the men aboard his ship. "With whom would they be against, lad?" he asked. He sighed. He was going to have to see what he could trade with the Greeks to keep his crew alive.

"It appears they are fighting the Great Ming, sir."

John pushed past the boy, climbing up to the poop deck to see a startling sight. Loud explosions could be heard coming from the Turkish shores, as well as massive fires. He also heard loud pops, quick and constant. They couldn't be from the Turks, for he would have seen them in past trading expeditions and traded many goods for their imminent power. The yellow and white Ming flag could be seen floating above the chaos. "Turn the ship around! We won't go any further," he called to his helmsman. This was bad. The Turks had nothing but swords and spears, nothing compared to these popping machines. How long would it be until they reached England, or his cousins still in Eisleben?

Captain John Luther stopped in Greece to warn them of the popping machines the Ottomans were dealing with, but they had already heard. A few Turks had escaped to seek refuge, warning the Greeks of similar sounding "fire spitters" that had plagued their country.

"The Great Ming invaded, and quickly overwhelmed us with their fire spitters and big barrels that shot tremendous balls of fire. They're everywhere, Captain John," one escapee said, "and they give no mercy."

John traded with the Greeks, gathering as many resources as he could before setting sail for Essex, England. He needed to warn his people of what was to come. Not that they would have any chance against the fire spitters and barrels. What witchcraft were those crazy

Chinese playing with? They would all burn in hell for this, even if they were able to overpower Europe for a few decades.

The Chinese swept quickly across Europe, and due to the lack of combative technology in Europe due to strict religious beliefs, the continent was no match for the Ming Dynasty. They killed the weak and all they couldn't control and kept the healthy as slaves. These slaves were forced to aid them in conquering the rest of Europe. They were very distraught as they aided the very people that destroyed their hometown destroy those of others. Many chose not to fight, and were killed for their disobedience. Those who had hope for better times were forced to live through their trauma again and again as they burned other cities to the ground. Churches were especially targeted for burning and looting, due to the Chinese belief that they were saving Europe from Christianity. The government was toppled with the loss of the Church, and Europe fell into a state of chaos. People had flocked to western coastal European countries to escape their doomed hometowns, and the countries were overcrowded with people who had managed to escape the wrath of the Chinese and hoping to set sail for America.

Captain John discovered this overpopulation before he could even set foot on land. Essex was crowded with boats that had tied themselves to a dock that could only safely hold a quarter of them. He tied up to the largest boat he could find, and climbed over boat after boat until he could finally reach the town. When he reached his home, he discovered his wife and children living with 6 other families they had taken into their large home. 4 of the families lived in each of the children's bedrooms, one lived in the sitting room, and the other slept on blankets on the floor of the kitchen.

"They needed protection from the elements, the poor children would catch a cold out there in the pouring rain," Joanne said to her husband. "We can sleep in one room to give these poor people a roof over their heads, can't we?"

John smiled at his wife's generosity. "Of course we can, dearest. Don't worry about the situation too much, I'm sure God will help us. He always has." He needed to be strong for his family. John knew the Chinese were coming, and who knew what they would do with Europe? John publicly spoke of what he saw off the coast of Turkey, telling anyone who wished to know their fate about the fire spitters and barrels. The reinforcements built with wood around the city wouldn't stand a chance against the Chinese, but they seemed to give the city a sense of security.

John had a ship capable of sailing the seas. The next day, his family invited as many families as they could onto the ship, loaded as much food as they could aboard, and set sail for America, where they would be safe from the Chinese. In his haste to leave, John left his great-great uncle's 95 Theses within his house in a protective bag, to be found by a girl with incredible potential and a desire to understand her past.

In 1627, the Chinese reached England, the last country standing. The Chinese army was stronger than ever with its slave army built up from the continent wide plunder. King Charles knew that England would be no match for the Chinese, and surrendered his country. With that, Eurasia was entirely under Chinese control.

Anything that had to do with Christianity was banned the moment the Chinese came to power. After a few generations, the once great religion seemed to have been lost forever.

August 1764

Anne Luther ran as fast as she could. Once again, the mischievous girl had snuck into the forest surrounding the Baitou village that her family had lived and worked in for the past five generations. The familiar trees passed her by, pointing with their limbs to paradise.

At last, Anne came to the abandoned house in the forest clearing. It was quite different from the ones in the village, with once white walls that were now streaked with dirt, and roofed with fallen branches and leaves. The inside of the house was covered in dirt and fungus, but Anne loved it more than anything. To her, this house was her house, only shared with her best friend Sam Lyndon, and it would always be here. Her eyes settled on the row of pretty things they had collected to line the rotted windowsill. They included rocks with colourful swirls as well as carvings on pieces of wood. Some common carvings were 安妮 and 撒母耳, Sam and Anne in Chinese. The prettiest item on the ledge was a rock that was smooth on one side yet rough on the other. Her grandmother called it a *seashell*. Anne glanced out the window. Sunset was nearing, and she had to get back to the village in time for supper unless her mother may notice her absence.

Anne walked casually into her family's home to find her mother stirring a pot of soup. Her stomach growled loudly, quite audible through her skinny frame. Eleanor noticed the streaks of fresh dirt on her daughter's dress.

"You know you aren't allowed to go in the forest, Anne."

Eleanor knew her mischievous daughter did not like living in the village, but could not understand why. In her perspective, the Chinese had been good to the Baitou, despite how much more powerful they were. The nobility, commonly known as the Guizu had always provided the Baitou with land, allowing them to farm to make a living, and even offered them the chance of reaching Nirvana. Life had dealt its cards to those it gave its gift to, and the best thing to do, in her opinion, was to be happy with what you have. She didn't mind village life, and had gotten good at working the fields. So when Anne began to have these rebellious ideas, Eleanor was furious.

Anne, however, didn't see anything wrong with a little curiosity and adventure. She sat down at the table behind a disappointed Eleanor, who took the pot off the stove and looked for bowls in the cupboard. Anne couldn't understand how her mother could be so passive about this boring, uneventful life. Although the schoolhouse books said that the Guizu had always treated the Baitou with courtesy once they had begun their reign, she knew the real story. She had heard from Sam's parents that the Guizu had violently conquered a vast span of land that had once been called Europe and Asia. Those they caught were forced to fight against the rest of their continent or die. The ones who had chosen to fight were determined to live, allowing themselves to be treated inhumanely by the Guizu. They told her about the first Baitou, who had been forced to live in labour camps, working the fields every day and giving all of their goods to the Guizu, who feasted every night, dressed lavishly, got filthy rich from trading with the Kunlun down south, only giving the Baitou the minimum amount of food they needed to survive.

“The Americas refused to trade with the Guizu,” Mr. Lyndon had said, “because much of the population there branched out from the refugees who managed to escape Europe in time. I’m sure they know what happened to us, but I’m not sure there’s anything they can do to help. The Guizu are just too powerful.”

Besides, the school system was a joke. It only taught its students two things. One was to think that the Guizu saved their race. The other was how to be a good Buddhist, which includes being generous with the Guizu, meditating often, and doing things for the greater good.

But Anne knew that the best thing any of the Baitou could do for the greater good was to free Europe and Asia from the Guizu.

Eleanor jerked her daughter out of her thoughts, saying “Go call your father and sister in for supper.”

Anne went into the fields behind their house. She could see her father and younger sister labouring in the fields, harvesting corn. The Luther family was a farming family, growing all sorts of vegetables and fruits from blueberries to zucchini. They only kept what was absolutely necessary to feed themselves, traded some with other families for meat and other goods, and gave everything that they had left to the Guizu. The more goods a family gave to the Guizu, the more chance they would have of reaching Nirvana, or eternal paradise, after they die.

“Papa! Mehitable! Time for supper!”

Anne’s papa waved and began to move toward the house. The late August sun beat down on the golden fields through a strikingly blue sky.

Anne and her mother set the table, laying out chopsticks, bowls, and spoons. As usual, the night’s soup was served in the marble bowl, a family heirloom that had been passed down for many generations, probably from even before the Conquering. The mostly white bowl was swirled with black that resembled sickness seeping through the pores of a once pure white stone. Anne chuckled to herself. It was like the Guizu spreading their poison around Europe, which had been pure and beautiful before they arrived.

“Something funny, my little chickpea?” her father asked as he walked into the room.

“Oh, I was just laughing at the fly who was struggling to get out of the door. He kept flying into the doorframe!” Anne lied to her parents because she knew that they were content with their lives. Saying anything bad about the Guizu would get her nothing but a spanking. When Anne had tried to speak to her mother about the issues that she saw in village life, she was enraged.

“Ungrateful wretch! The Guizu could have killed us all, yet they let us live under a better rule than any of our ancestors ever have. They have taught us so much, from Buddhism to their language. Why can’t you just be grateful for the life they have given you?”

But Anne knew that the Guizu couldn’t care less about the Baitou. They were half starved people, nothing but robots that kept the Guizu in power. She couldn’t understand how others couldn’t see it. The Guizu would not be this powerful if the Baitou were not giving them the supplies they needed to maintain their vast empire.

Eleanor sat down at the table. “Let’s start the prayer,” she said.

The Luther family joined hands. "May this food be dedicated to the triple jewel, The precious Buddha, The precious Dharma, The precious Sangha. Bless this food so we may take it as medicine, free from attachment and desire, so that it may nourish our bodies so we may work for the benefit of all sentient beings." They picked up their spoons in unison, hungry for the pea soup in front of them. Anne didn't like the plain soup that her mother always made. One day it was peas, the other it was tomato, the other it was carrot. Although there was variety in their diet, the Luthers did not want to put too many vegetables in their soup in order to give as much as possible to the Guizu. As Eleanor said, "When vegetables come from mama, her babies stay in Nirvana." As a result, the Luther family was very skinny, getting just enough food to keep them from starving.

After supper was the evening sermon. The nightly sessions had introduced the Baitou to Buddhism, the purifying religion that taught peace and acceptance, that rid their memories of the power thirsty religion Christianity and the power that it robbed its people of. The Guizu were so kind, everyone thought, taking in the Baitou who were so tainted with the sin of Christianity. Most of the Baitou settled on the floor of the temple and began to meditate, being thankful for what the Guizu had provided them with, and all the freedom that they had been given.

But one girl closed her eyes and imagined what it would be like to be free. Anne had already considered running away from the village, staying in her abandoned house that was surrounded by bullrush and asparagus to feed her. But the thought of such a secluded lifestyle was not very appealing to Anne, and although she was bothered by the ignorance of those around her, their companionship was better than nothing. Something about this life bothered her, something that made her want to rebel and resist. She had to find the issue and fix it, whatever it was. It would change the lives of all Baitou, everywhere.

"Anne. Anne." A familiar voice floated into her ear.

Her eyes flew open, searching for the speaker, and found his head peeking out over the shoulder of the man beside her. Scruffy haired Sam looked at Anne intently. "Meet me at the spot after sunset." Anne gave him a quick nod.

After her family had gone to bed, Anne left the house and headed for the trees separating the schoolyard from the stream. She climbed the trunk of the weeping willow tree and up the thickest branch with ease, having done it so many times before. This was The Spot. A younger Anne and Sam had hidden here when they wanted a few more minutes of recess, often to no avail. Their Gaizu teacher soon noticed a trend in their hiding spot.

The tree shook, and Sam's white blonde head of hair poked up through the lower canopy of the tree.

"You're late, Samuel Lyndon," Anne remarked.

"Hey, Anne," he said as he climbed up the branch to sit next to her. "You're going to like this."

He pulled a dark bag out of his waistband and handed it to her. Anne's eyes widened with fascination. "What is it?"

"I'm not sure, but it's a scroll of paper with some kind of writing on it. It's not written in Mandarin or Cantonese, though."

Anne slid the scroll out of the protective bag. The pages were yellowed and some of the edges had been ripped, but the paper had been very well preserved. It was covered in swirly writing of a type that Anne had never seen before.

"Sam! This is so cool! Where did you find this?" Anne's imagination was on fire. Who knew who had written this, and what it meant?

"I was down at the abandoned house this afternoon, just fixing up a few things, making the house nicer. I've been working on making the floor flat and maybe I'll put some boards in so the house feels more like a house and not so much of an abandoned dump. As I was digging a raised part of the floor away, I found this bag. Looks like it had been left in the house since before it was abandoned! I was going to just leave it there and show it to you tomorrow, but I knew you wouldn't want to wait."

Anne was studying the ancient paper. How old was it? How long had it been sitting in their house? "We have to find someone who can read this," she said to Sam.

"Are you crazy? Since it's in a different language, it's probably something that happened before the Conquering, and it might be against the Gaizu or Buddhism itself. We can't just go around the village asking people if anyone can read it. What if we ask the wrong person and they report us to the Gaizu and something happens to us?"

"We have to find someone. We won't go door to door asking people, because that's too risky. Maybe we could possibly look for people who might be less likely to be offended by it?"

"Like who, exactly?"

"Maybe your father?" Anne had learned everything anti-Gaizu from Samuel's father. She trusted him more than her own father, and she knew that Sam's father would help them get to the bottom of this mystery. "Ask him tomorrow morning. He will help us understand what this says, even if he doesn't know what it means himself. We can't do this on our own."

"If anyone knows how to read this language, Dad would know them," Sam agreed.

Anne yawned. "Well, I'm gonna go home and get some rest. We have a lot to do tomorrow."

The two climbed down their tree and said their goodbyes as they parted ways for the night, their brains buzzing with the mystery of the scroll.

Anne woke to the tingling sensation of a slap across her face. She started, sitting up to find a very angry Eleanor in front of her. The sharp pain rippled over her face. "Mom!" she cried.

"You really don't think I notice when you sneak out in the middle of the night?" Eleanor lectured. "You are such a bad liar, Anne Marie Luther."

"For the last time, Mom, I don't have a middle name!"

"The only reason I'm talking to you now instead of last night is because I didn't want to wake your sister so rudely- again."

"Mom-" Anne whined.

"Don't you 'Mom' me. If I catch you sneaking out in the middle of the night again, you won't have breakfast the next morning. Understood?"

Anne sighed. "Yes, mom."

"Now get dressed for school. Quickly!" Eleanor stormed out of the room.

Anne pulled on her drab school uniform, which consisted of a gray cotton dress under a thin coat. She made her way to her spot on the mat, where her breakfast was laid out for her. Mehitable was eating her congee already. "You're late, Annie."

"Whatever, loser." Anne said a quick thankfulness prayer, gulped down her bowl of congee, pulled on her moccasins and padded out the door.

As Anne walked through the streets of Sinpo, she gazed at the green hills that gently rolled across the landscape, dotted with houses backed by stripes of crops. The sun was just higher than the top of the tallest hill, making the colours of the town even more vibrant. The manor in the center of the Gaizu section of the village stood at the highest point of the hill, making the family inside seem more powerful than anyone else in town, which was true. Anne thought it was funny how a house could say so much about the family within.

"Anne! Wait up!" Anne turned around to see Sam rushing towards her.

"Hey Sam!" She lowered her voice. "Did you ask your dad about..."

"Yeah, I did. He said he couldn't read it himself, but he knew someone who could."

"Sam! That's so exciting! Who is it?"

"He's a old school friend of my dad's. We can go see him after school, if you'd like."

"You're the best, Sammy. I couldn't do this without you."

Samuel's face flushed. "No problem."

After school, Sam and Anne walked to the end of the street, where a run-down looking house sat. The windows were lined with black mould and the door was always left ajar. Anne felt her heart begin to pound as she realized that they weren't just passing by their childhood haunted house, they were about to go in.

"We aren't going in there, are we, Sam?" she said skeptically.

"Yeah, we are. Don't worry, my father wouldn't send us somewhere unsafe. He doesn't hate us," Sam replied as he pulled Anne gently closer to the house.

Anne found herself holding on to Sam's arm as he knocked on the doorframe.

A grunt came from inside the house. "Who's there?"

"It's Sydney Lyndon's son, sir," Sam said. "I just wanted to ask you a quick question."

"Well come in then, lad. Take a seat." Anne and Sam walked into the house and found a middle aged man gesturing to a wooden chair. "I see you've brought a friend," he said, noticing Anne trailing behind. "Don't be shy, lass! There's nothing to be afraid of." His unkempt beard parted to display a toothy grin with a few black holes, only adding to Anne's nerves. Sam sat down in the chair while Anne stood behind him. Although she had her doubts about the man, she was determined to find answers to what the scroll read.

Sam seemed to be comfortable in the man's living room, leaning towards the man while pulling the scroll from his bag. "I found this in the forest, sir, and my friend and I were curious to know what it says. It's not in Mandarin or Cantonese, and my father told me that you might be able to read it for us." He handed the scroll to the man, who studied it intently.

"Well, the writing is sure swirly, but I can understand it. This language is called Latin, a language used by the upper class before the Conquering. It talks about repentance, and something called tithing and Purgatory. Why would you kids want to read mumbo-jumbo like this?"

"We didn't know what it was until now, sir. It looked important and interesting, so we wanted to know what it said." Sam explained.

"Ah, of course. Well, even though I am able to understand what the words sound like, I'm afraid I cannot understand them. I do not know what tithing or Purgatory is, and I'm guessing you two don't know either," the old man continued.

The children shook their heads, disappointed. They were so close to finding out the meaning of the scroll, only a few words that had ceased to exist were holding them back.

"I wouldn't worry about it too much. It sounds like it has something to do with Christianity, which was good for nothing anyways." The man coughed. "Would you two like some water? I'm getting some for myself."

"No thank you, sir, we don't want to be any trouble. The water rations are low these days with the drought, and our households have enough to sustain us."

Anne was beginning to think this man wasn't so scary after all. "Thank you for your time, sir," she said.

The man popped his head around the corner. "She speaks!" he exclaimed. "And what are your names, children?"

"I'm Anne Luther and this is Samuel Lyndon." Anne paused for a moment. "And what would be yours?"

"Reginald Cunningham, miss, at your service." Reginald did a little bow.

Anne smiled and curtsied. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Reginald."

Sam stood up, smiling at Anne. "Let's go."

They walked away from the run-down house in silence, their minds plotting ways of finding out what tithing and Purgatory meant. They weren't about to give up, not until the full meaning of the scroll was found.

The next day, Anne and Sam forfeited their lunch break to go to the school library. They went to the history section and pulled out all the books they could find about the Baitou. They scoured the lines of characters, searching for anything that sounded like tithing or Purgatory, but could find nothing.

Disappointed once again, they went to their forest cottage after school. The forest was the same as it had always been, yet the familiar trees seemed to mock them. They knew all the answers, Anne thought. This forest was likely here before the Conquering, the older trees might have witnessed the frustrations of the man behind the scroll. He must have been pretty passionate about whatever he was writing about. Anne yelled at the forest in her head. Can't you just give me a little clue, just the smallest hint of what happened here?

And just like that, Anne and Sam found themselves in front of the woodland cottage. "That's weird," Sam said. "Seemed to take less time to get here."

Anne agreed. It usually took at least ten minutes of walking to get to the cottage, and they had just entered the forest less than five minutes ago. Had the forest listened to her pleas? She shook the foolish thoughts off. She must be mad to think of such impossible possibilities.

She entered through the rotting door that Sam was working on replacing and saw the improved condition of the house. "Sam!" she exclaimed. "You've made so much progress!"

"Well I'm not quite finished yet," Sam remarked, walking around. "The floor is mostly level, but there's still this bit in the corner that I have to finish up before putting the boards in."

"I could finish it up for you," Anne offered, "so I've made a contribution as well." Sam agreed, and Anne picked up the shovel in the corner and began to dig. Sam prompted her to dig a little beneath the floor level, so that there was a hole, and then to fill the hole in evenly to make it flat. Anne got a few good shovelfuls out of a future hole when the metal hit something with a solid *thwuck*.

"What was that?" Sam jumped to his feet. "Maybe you've discovered another scroll!"

Anne dug the shovel around the foreign object and uncovered an old, half rotten book that was miraculously intact. Her eyes grew wide as she opened the fragile book. The cover was much smaller than the ones at school, yet there were more pages than Anne had ever seen in a book before. The words were somehow still readable, and were similar to the ones on the scroll. "Sam, we need to go see Reginald right now."

The kids burst into Reginald's old house with a newfound energy to find their translator sitting at the table, sipping a cup of water and chewing on a piece of bread. "Mr. Cunningham, look what we found!" they said in chorus, Anne putting the little book down on the table.

"You two have quite a talent for finding things, don't you?" Reginald said. "And call me Reginald. All this Mr Cunningham business is making me feel old. Now let's see what you've got here." He opened the book, wiping away the dirt. He cleared his throat. "Let's begin." Anne and Sam made themselves comfortable on the chairs in the living room, knowing that it would be a while before they would leave.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made..."

Anne and Sam listened intently for any mention of the words "tithing" and "purgatory," but the first part of the book did not mention those words. However, the children were fascinated by the story they were being told. It told of a deity who only a fool wouldn't believe in. This deity protects his people, repays their enemies, and ultimately gains their absolute admiration.

After thirty minutes of reading, Reginald paused, looking up at the children. "This is quite a book you two have found," he said to them. "But it will take forever for me to read this to you!"

"You don't have to read it all today, Reginald. But we want to know what this book says, it seems quite interesting," Sam said.

Reginald held the book carefully, as if its pages were about to burst out of its binding. "This would take me hours - no - days to read this monster!" He sighed. "You two really are serious about reading all of it?"

"Yes sir, very much so!" Anne exclaimed.

"I'm not sure if I can read all of it to you, and it will be difficult to study if you only listen to me translate it. Maybe you should learn how to read it yourself."

"How would we learn this language, Reginald? Isn't it hard?" Sam asked.

"It's not too hard, son. The language consists of 26 individual characters, each with its own sound, that are strung together in different orders to produce words. Once you memorize

the sound of each letter and the meanings of different words, you can read it. I'll be willing to teach you. It will probably be easier than reading this book in its entirety!"

Anne gasped. "Really? If you did that, we would be able to read the scroll by ourselves, as well!"

Reginald smiled. "I'm sure you two will find another Latin book out there somewhere over the course of your lifetime, since you have found two in the span of two days. And that way, you won't have to bother me anymore!"

With that, Reginald began to teach Anne and Sam how to read Latin. After teaching the children the sounds of the alphabet, they began sounding out words from the Bible, stopping at each unknown word to learn what it meant. After two years had gone by, they had read all the way through the Bible, and the children were now able to write notes on each section in Latin.

The children had jumped with excitement when they came across the verse that described tithing. According to the Bible, tithing was giving ten percent of one's income to a group of people called the Levites, who in turn gave ten percent of that to the priests. This offering was done to sustain those who did not work the fields, so that they could do a good job leading their people and spreading the word of God. Turning back to the scroll, they read about indulgences being bought to live in salvation, and to save souls from purgatory. It sounded like their ancestors had paid the church large amounts of money to guarantee their salvation and the salvation of loved ones. The person who wrote the scroll was obviously frustrated with this practice.

As Anne and Sam poured over the Bible at Reginald's table, a horse cart rumbled past, the horsemen ringing their bells and hollering, "Collection! Collection!"

Anne groaned. Time for her family to get robbed of their crops again. She stood up, pushing back her chair. "I should probably get back. My parents need help with collection."

Sam agreed, saying they would continue the next day, and they hurried home to help their families. Collection was a very important event that happened once every year, and everyone was required to be at their homes by the time the horse cart rattled through.

Anne made it home just as her parents were bringing out the first crates of corn, beans, and other vegetables. "Anne Marie, where have you been?" Her mother asked the question as if she hadn't heard Anne's answer the first three hundred times.

"I was with Sam, Mother, studying books at the library."

"You spend too much time there. You should be here, helping us with the harvest. Now get to work, child! The cart will be here soon!"

Anne began the laborious task of carrying all of her family's goods out to the roadside. While each family was only required to give ten percent of their goods to the Guizu, most families gave at least fifteen in order to increase their chances of getting into Nirvana after death. Anne frowned when she came to this thought. It sounded awfully familiar. Anyhow, the Luther family had enjoyed a very good harvest this year; they could afford to give twenty-five percent of their goods away to this year's Collection.

When the horse cart finally came to the Luther house, the wagon was already full with goods from other families. "Ni hao, Luther de jia ren." Hello, Luther family. The Guizu Collection men counted the crates of vegetables, then asked the family how much they were willing to give away this year.

“Twenty five percent, sir,” Matthew Luther said. “We’ve had a great harvest this year.”

“Hao.” Good. The man scribbled a few notes on his scroll as Anne’s family loaded every fourth box onto the cart. “Xiexie,” thank you, and the man mounted the cart once more, riding to the next house on the street. Matthew and Eleanor smiled at each other. They’d cheated the man, keeping an extra five crates of vegetables. The man hadn’t even noticed.

On the other hand, Anne was deep in thought. Was the system that had frustrated the author of the scroll still going on in the present? The scroll made so much sense now. Indulgences were Collection, and Nirvana was salvation! The Guizu were taking Baitou goods and promising them entrance into salvation, when it can only be granted by God himself!

Once her parents had gone inside to celebrate a successful year and Collection, Anne ran to Sam’s house as fast as she could. She tried to control her breathing as she rapped her knuckles on the beautiful wooden door that Mr. Lyndon had carved. The door swung open, and it’s creator’s face popped out from the shadows within. “Can I talk to Samuel?” Anne gasped.

“What’s the matter, dear? Your face is quite pale, though I can see you’ve been running.”

“I’m fine, Mr Lyndon, but I really need to speak to Samuel.”

Sam appeared from behind his father, stepping outside and closing the door. Anne began to talk about the scroll and the indulgences, but Sam shushed her, reminding her not to be so loud, and the two went off into the forest. Once they were out of earshot, Anne told Samuel everything. She’d realized that the unjust system that had driven the author to write his scroll was still ongoing in their society. “We’ve been starving ourselves to get into Nirvana when faith in God alone will get us into salvation! What if God led us to the house in the forest in the first place, so that we would find the scroll and the Bible? Instead of Buddha, we belong with God, who loves all of his children. Everything is wrong, Sam, and we have to do something about it!”

Sam’s face was scrunched up in thought for a moment, then relaxed in understanding. “Anne, you’re a genius! Of course God exists! A book as long as that can’t just be a fairy tale! We’ve been brainwashed our entire lives. We will be the ones to save all of the Baitou from the Guizu, and we will all live in peace and harmony with the Bible and its teachings.”

“But how will we do it, Sam? Everyone in the village is convinced that the Guizu are giving us an opportunity to reach Nirvana instead of being condemned to eternal reincarnation, never to fulfill our potential.”

Sam smiled. “The first step is to tell Reginald. He will help us figure something out.”

Anne lay awake in her bed, thinking of possible ways to spread their idea without the Guizu finding out that she and Sam had started it. A town speech was unrealistic; who would want to listen to a couple of fifteen year olds talking negatively about the Guizu? She remembered her previous thought. What if God had led them to find the scroll and the Bible? Maybe she could ask Him for help. “God, please help Sam and I find a way to bring back Christianity,” she whispered. “Please.”

After school the next day, Anne and Sam went to Reginald’s house to explain their discoveries about the scroll, the Bible, and Collection. “We have to stop it, Reginald!

Christianity is our true religion, and we have to follow it. We have starved ourselves for our entire lives for the wrong religion, when we have always belonged in salvation with God!"

Reginald sighed. "So? How are we going to teach all of Europe about Christianity without the Guizu finding out?"

Anne shrank. "We were hoping you would know a way to do it."

Reginald chuckled. "Me? You two are the geniuses, understanding language that nobody uses anymore and linking it to our own world. Anne, Sam, you will be the ones to start this revolution. But if you need help in any shape or form, know you can always ask me."

Just then, an idea magically popped into Anne's head. It was the voice of God, telling her to write her grievances on a scroll, just like the author had done. Anne thought for a moment. "Sam, we have to go."

Sam nodded. "Where to, saviour of Christianity?"

Anne flushed. "I'm not that big of a deal, Sam. We're just kids."

"Kids who are about to valiantly rescue all of the Baitou from the malicious clutches of the Guizu," Reginald added in a heroic voice. "You're kidding me, right?"

"Well, we should do whatever Anne is thinking, Reginald. We'll see you later." Sam followed Anne out of the room, who was already heading for the library.

Anne sat down at the table in the farthest corner of the library, the 95 Theses in one hand and feather pen in the other. She'd snuck an ear of corn from her parents' barn to pay for a small scroll of paper. She dipped the quill into the inkwell and began to translate the Theses into Cantonese, using Collection instead of indulgences and Nirvana instead of salvation. She wrote for hours, her hand moving rapidly over the scroll. She stopped briefly once in a while to shake out her cramping hand. By nightfall, the Cantonese adaptation of the 95 Theses was complete.

Satisfied, she lay against the backrest of her chair, clutching her painful right hand. She rolled up both of the 95 Theses, put them in her bag, and headed home. She snuck a bite to eat before slipping under her covers.

Thwack! Pain shot across the left side of Anne's face, pulling her abruptly from a deep sleep. She sat straight up in bed to see her mother in front of her. "Anne-Marie Luther, how many times have I told you that you MUST be home for dinner?"

"Many times, mother."

"And were you home for dinner last night, Anne-Marie?"

"No, mother."

"Were you home by the time we went to sleep?"

"No, mother."

Eleanor sighed. "I don't like worrying about you, Anne. You know how worried I get when it is after sunset and you're not home? Who knows where you could be?"

"But Mother, I'm always at either Sam's, Reginald's, or the library!"

"Don't lie to me, child. I know you go into the forest as well. So what were you doing last night that was so important to stay out that late?"

Anne's mind raced. She couldn't tell her mother about the 95 Theses, she would be furious. She couldn't say that she was with Sam all night because that would sound suspicious. But she needed a valid excuse that sounded important and time consuming enough that it would mean her staying out all night...

"Are you hiding something from me? You'd better tell me the truth."

Nothing would work but the truth, Anne thought. "Alright, fine! I'll tell you everything."

Anne began her story with Sam's finding of the scroll in the forest. She explained how she had met Reginald, who seemed scary at first but turned out to be the nicest man she'd ever met. She told of how she had found a book called the Bible the next day, also from the forest, and how they had taken it to Reginald to read for them. She explained how Reginald had taught them to read Latin, the language of the book and scroll, and how she had just figured out what the scroll meant. She explained the issues within their society, including the Gaizu, Collection, and how they oppressed the Baitou. Eleanor frowned at this, but kept listening to her daughter's most creative excuse to date. Anne told the truth, saying that she had stayed out all night to translate the scroll into Cantonese, replacing the old names with ones that the Baitou used in everyday life.

"Can I see this scroll?" Eleanor asked, wondering if this elaborate story could actually be true. Anne fished the Cantonese scroll out of her bag and showed it to her mother.

95篇论文

我们的主和主耶稣基督，当他说，波宁特派恩认为，信徒的一生应该是悔改。

这个词不能被理解为是由祭司管理的圣礼忏悔，即供认和满足。

但这并不意味着内在的悔改不，没有内向的悔改，不会对潜在的肉体造成伤害。

因此，只要对自己的仇恨继续下去，惩罚[罪]就会继续下去。因为这是真正的内向悔改，直到我们进入天国为止。

5. 教皇不打算汇款，也不能免除任何由他自己的权力或者经典人施加的惩罚。

...

As Eleanor read the scroll, her eyes widened in fascination. After she reached the bottom of the scroll, she put the paper down, in deep thought. Her mind was extremely conflicted. She had believed that the Guizu had supported the Baitou all her life, but the scroll disproved the basis of this belief. It did make sense that the Guizu would use the Baitou as slaves to sustain them. Eleanor still believed in Nirvana, but why would segregated Baitou slaves be allowed into paradise? She opened her eyes now to

see a very anxious Anne staring at her, worried that she might get another slap on the face. "Anne," she said slowly, "I'm so sorry."

"About slapping me?" Anne was confused.

"No, you still have to be home for dinner, but I'm sorry that I never supported your views on the Guizu. You were absolutely right this entire time."

Anne beamed. "You really think so? Do you think that God still loves us?"

"He loves you, that's for sure. You're the one who is saving Him this time. You're bringing Him back." Eleanor said. "So how do you plan to break this news to the rest of the village?"

"I'm gonna post this paper on the door of the Temple," Anne said, "so when people go to the evening sermon, they will read it and understand the situation."

"Daring girl," Eleanor said. "Never afraid to make a stand. But you're still in trouble for staying out last night. That's not okay. So you have to cook dinner tonight, wash the dishes, and do the laundry. I get a day off today." She smiled. "Now you'd better go post that paper on the door before there are too many people around to do it."

Anne pulled some clothes and shoes before running out the door into the crisp September morning air. She kept running all the way to the Temple, where she produced a small tack from her pocket and posted the paper on the door. A man saw her, yelling "How dare you mark the Temple!"

Later that day, as Anne was taking a walk around town, a crowd had gathered around the Temple door. A Baitou man held a piece of paper, and was reading it to the crowd. Anne was stunned. Could it be her 95 Theses? She ran closer to hear the end of it.

"To suppress the above is to expose the Guizu for what they are and to make true believers unhappy.

If priests had worked as they should (and by example) all the problems stated above would not have existed.

All those who say there is no problem must go. Problems must be tackled.

Those Guizu who claim there is no problem must go.

Believers must follow their deity at all cost.

Let the believers experience problems if they must – and overcome them – rather than live a false life based on present Guizu teaching."

The Baitou were in uproar.

“Darn you, Guizu! May you never reach Nirvana!”

“The truth has been uncovered!”

“Let’s get our power back!”

Anne couldn’t believe her eyes. In the span of 5 hours, the 95 Theses had already made the Baitou angry with the Guizu.

“Does it say who wrote it? I wish to commend this man!”

This comment created a wave of discomfort that washed over Anne. She was scared all of a sudden, realizing the gravity of what was to happen in the next couple of months. She pulled her hood up, hoping that this will all end well.

By the next day, the entire town had heard of the 95 Theses. The majority of the Baitou were convinced that the Guizu were indeed using them for their goods so they could live in luxury. That night, Anne attended a town meeting that had been called to discuss exactly how the Baitou would regain their power.

The man who read the 95 Theses to the crowd assumed the position of Commander over the town. He decided that it was very possible to take the power away from the Guizu, but this town couldn’t do it alone. They needed to get other towns into the plan, so they can defend against Guizu from other non-converted towns.

“We need to send messengers to read the 95 Theses in different towns. Any volunteers?”

Many hands shot up, excited to be the bringer of truth to other towns. Just then, Anne’s fear faded away. She was the true messenger, not all of these other people. They were guaranteed to win, as God was on their side. He will make sure that the Baitou win against the Guizu. What was there to be afraid of? Anne pushed through the crowd, and climbed up the stairs to the stage. Nobody stood in her way for she had an authoritarian air about her. She stood in the center of the stage, everyone watching her. She gathered her words before opening her mouth.

“I am not the author of the 95 Theses, but I found another version of it in the forest surrounding our village about a year ago. At the time, I knew not what it meant, but had the feeling that it was important. It was in a different language called Latin, one that nobody speaks anymore. With the help of Reginald Cunningham, I learned how to read and write this language. I connected the original Theses to our current society, realizing everything that was wrong with it. I decided that the best way to raise awareness about it was to write it out in our language. I am the one who has brought you all here.” She paused. “In a way, I am your leader.”

The crowd bustled, the sound of urgent conversation bumping about the room. The man approached Anne. "You are the girl who wrote the Theses?"

"I translated it into our language," Anne said, "I also found a book called the Bible. It is also in Latin, but it is the most beautiful book I have ever read. It teaches of a God who has always looked out for the Baitou since the beginning of time. He is our leader, our saviour, and our protector. We are bringing Him back to life, and He will guide us and ensure that we will be victorious."

The man was astonished. "Child, what is your name?"

"My name is Anne Luther," Anne said proudly, "and I bring truth and justice to the Baitou."

At this, the crowd roared once again, but Anne put her hand up. "I will be one of the messengers to spread the word to other towns. I trust that..." she looked towards the leader, not knowing his name.

"John Higgins," he said

"...John Higgins knows how to conduct this revolution, for I am just a girl with an idea. I would make a terrible leader for I know nothing about battle tactics. I trust that John will be able to lead you in this revolution, and declare him your leader."

"Why thank you, Anne. And the people thank you for your views on the Guizu. This system has gone on for too long."

With a curt nod, Anne stepped down from the podium. Hands went out to her, and she smiled politely as she passed them. People offered goods, some bread, a cob of corn, even a shiny necklace, but Anne did not accept them. She did not start the revolution to seek reward, she did this to benefit her people. She left the room.

The next day, she and three other messengers were sent to neighbouring towns. Anne stood tall and proud in front of the town of Sunnan, reading them the 95 Theses. She told them of the Bible, how God had always been watching over the Baitou, and how He would help them succeed. By the time she left, the town was fully on board to take part in the revolution. They, too, sent out messengers to tell other towns.

John Higgins was busy planning the attacks. "It would make most sense for all cities to attack their Guizu on the same day, so that Guizu from other cities won't be able to provide reinforcements and fight back." A date was planned, set for February 15th, 1867. Again, messengers were sent to the three neighbouring towns to spread the word.

When the day came, all cities attacked their Guizu. Many lost their lives due to the Guizu's wealth and military weapons and might. But since the Baitou outnumbered the Guizu greatly, they were able to win.

John Higgins marvelled at his victory. The Baitou truly had incredible potential. He organized a "The Army of Liberated Baitou" who fought against other towns of Guizu, cutting the Chinese nobility down like grain with a scythe. They moved back across the continent, regaining land lost so long ago, and spreading the word of God.

In August 1867, the last Guizu held town fell. The Army of Liberated Baitou was so mighty that the town stood no chance. The Baitou had been liberated, and lived in peace and harmony together, always sharing what they had and giving what was needed. They were so grateful to Anne that they called themselves Lutheran Christians. Once again, Anne protested, not knowing that it was actually the perfect name. For little did she know that her ninth great grandfather had written the original 95 Theses three hundred and fifty years ago.

Although Martin Luther had failed to correct the issues he had initially intended to, his 95 Theses brought Christianity back to Europe and Asia, saving an entire race from generations of oppression.

Works Cited

Szczepanski, Kallie. "The Invention of Gunpowder: A History." *ThoughtCo*. N.p., 13 Mar. 2017. Web. 29 June 2017.

Luther and the Protestant Reformation: Crash Course World History #218. Prod. John Greene. Perf. John Greene. *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Nov. 2014. Web. 29 June 2017.

The Protestant Reformation. *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Sept. 2016. Web. 29 June 2017.

Luther, Martin. "95 Theses." *Martin Luther's 95 Theses*. N.p., 1997. Web. 29 June 2017.

Trueman, C. N. "The 95 Theses - a Modern Translation." *History Learning Site*. N.p., 17 Mar. 2015. Web. 29 June 2017.