

HARRY GERALD HAILE

# Luther

*An Experiment in Biography*



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*LUTHER*



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An Experiment  
in Biography

H. G. HAILE

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This religious attitude, so to speak, toward truth is not without its influence on the total personality of scientific man. Aside from what presents itself to his experience, and the rules of thinking itself, the researcher recognizes as a matter of principle no authority whose decisions or utterances can lay claim to "truth." This gives rise to the paradox that a man who dedicates his best powers to things outside himself becomes, from the social point of view, an extreme individualist who, in principle at least, relies on nothing but his own judgment. One can even argue the position that intellectual individualism and scientific aspiration appeared at the same moment in history and have remained inseparable.

ALBERT EINSTEIN, 1950



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many generations of pious labors have erected, in Luther scholarship, one of the major monuments to learning in modern times. It is certainly parochial, the views expressed sometimes seem quaint, and biased—but the endless devotion and meticulous care of all those good men have made my own, more detached presentation possible (if such it be). I am conscious this Luther portrait would seem impious to many of them, so I confess here both my immense debt, and my doubt that I have become any less captive to conscience than they.

I was privileged to work at one of the world's noblest libraries, with an unusually large collection of imprints from that early era of the book so much influenced by Martin Luther, and including original issues not yet catalogued, even though Luther is surely the most bibliographed of authors. Thus I was able to do all my work here in the American Middle West, although I am grateful to the University of Illinois Research Board for sending me to Saxony to get the lay of the land. The Board has been generous with me over the years, from matching large sums with the library for rare Luther imprints, to wages for assistants. In a day when aid is preferably channeled into projects conceived to pay off in grants to the institution, so that efforts are encouraged to resonate with accepted philosophies, we in the humanities must be happy with any help whatsoever. How thankful must I therefore be for the long, worthy tradition at the University of Illinois, of gleaning science and engineering grants to support the humane studies. My university also gives me time for research and, beyond that, has allowed me to wander off to guest appointments at other great German departments. At Georgia and at

Michigan I was given all freedom and facilities for writing. Thus I am indebted to many department heads, deans, directors, secretaries, and—at the top of the heap—students who have put a lot into this book. I have enjoyed advantages rare in the venerable history of Luther scholarship.

H. G. HAILE  
Champaign, Illinois  
Fall 1979

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

FOR  
HIS CONTEMPORARIES

LUTHER

EUROPE

1483 Martin Luther born on  
10 November, in Eisleben.

Richard III murders Edward, to become  
king of England.

Charles VIII succeeds to rule in France.

Portugal denies Columbus support in his  
quest for a sea route to India. He  
petitions Spain instead.

1484 The family moves to  
Mansfeld, where Luther  
spends his boyhood.

Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss  
reformer, is born.

1485

The House of Saxony is divided  
between Ernest and Albert.

Henry VII deposes Richard III.

1486

John Eck, great Dominican  
opponent of Luther, is  
born.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1488		Ulrich von Hutten, militant humanist, is born.	Bartholomeu Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope.
1489		Thomas Cranmer, English reformer, is born.	
1490		Albert of Brandenburg, later cardinal, is born.	
1491		Henry VIII of England and Ignatius Loyola are born.	Botticelli completes his drawings to accompany Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i> .
1492		Margaret of Navarre, French novelist, is born.  Ludwig Senfl, German composer, is born.	Alexander VI, father of Cesare and Lucretia Borgia, is elected pope.  The Inquisition drives the Jews out of Spain.

William Tyndale is born.

Behaim in Nuremberg manufactures the first globe.

Columbus lands in Cuba.

1493

Cesare Borgia becomes cardinal.

Pope Alexander, dividing the New World between Spain and Portugal, reveals Europe's near total ignorance of the western hemisphere.

Paracelsus, German physician and thinker, is born.

Maximilian I becomes emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

1494

François Rabelais is born.

Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* is published.

Hans Sachs is born.

1495

Albrecht Dürer makes his first trip to Italy.

Syphilis appears as a new disease in Naples.

1496

Michelangelo makes his first journey to Rome.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1497	Young Martin goes away to school, first to Magdeburg,	Philip Melanchthon is born. Leonardo da Vinci completes his fresco <i>The Last Supper</i> .	Pope Alexander confers the title of Catholic Majesty upon the Spanish crown. Tobacco is first reported in Europe. Savonarola is burned in Florence.
1498	then to Eisenach.		
1500		Emperor Charles V is born. Michelangelo completes the <i>Pietà</i> . Benvenuto Cellini, Italian sculptor, is born.	

1501 Enrolls at the University of  
Erfurt, takes the Bachelor  
of Arts degree.

1502

Erasmus publishes the  
*Enchiridion*.

The University of Wittenberg is  
founded.

Titian paints the *Gypsy Madonna*.

The first pocket watches are  
produced, in Nuremberg.

1503

Nostradamus, the French  
astrologer, is born.

Julius II is elected pope, known  
for his military prowess.

John Frederick of Saxony  
is born.

Construction begins on Canterbury  
Cathedral.

Michelangelo's *David* is  
completed.

1504

Philip of Hesse is born.  
Filippino Lippi dies.



## IMPORTANT EVENTS

LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1505 In January Luther takes the Master of Arts degree.	Raphael comes to Florence.	
On 17 July he enters the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt.	Götz von Berlichingen loses his right hand while besieging Nuremberg.	
	Michelangelo is called to Rome by Julius II.	
1506	Columbus dies in the belief he has discovered a sea route to India.	Julius II begins construction of Saint Peter's Cathedral, and the Dominican John Tetzel brings indulgence sales into German lands.

Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*  
is painted.

1507 Brother Martin a priest,  
says his first mass.

1508 Called to Wittenberg to  
teach for a semester.

Michelangelo begins the  
ceiling of the Sistine  
Chapel.

Andrea Palladio, Italian  
architect, is born.

1509 Returns to Erfurt in  
October.

John Calvin is born.  
Erasmus publishes his  
*Praise of Folly*.

Henry VIII becomes king, marries  
Catherine of Aragon, aunt of the  
future emperor.

Jacob Fugger lends Emperor  
Maximilian 170,000 ducats to wage his  
war against Venice.

1510 Journeys to Rome in  
the company of a fellow  
Augustinian, on business  
for the order.

Geiler von Kaisersberg,  
powerful reform  
preacher of Strasbourg,  
dies.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1511	Returns to Erfurt, is transferred to Wittenberg.	John Reuchlin, eminent Hebraicist, defends himself against charge of heresy.  Miguel Servetus, the antitrinitarian burned at the stake by John Calvin (1553), is born.	
1512	October 19, takes the degree of Doctor of Theology.	Gerhard Mercator, the cartographer, is born.	The last general council of the church, the Fifth Lateran, is convoked by Julius II.
1513	Begins his first lectures, on Psalms.	Dürer completes <i>Knight, Death, and the Devil</i> .	Leo X is elected pope. Balboa discovers the Pacific.

1514

Andreas Vesalius is born.  
Albert of Brandenburg is  
named archbishop of  
Mainz.

The financial house of Fugger in  
Augsburg acquires the German  
indulgence sales.

1515      Lectures on Romans.

Francis I succeeds to the French  
crown and begins his successful  
campaigns in Italy.

Baldung-Grien paints *Rest on the  
Flight into Egypt*.

Correggio paints the *Madonna of  
Saint Francis*.

1516      Lectures on Galatians.

Ariosto writes *Orlando  
furioso*.

Erasmus publishes his  
Greek New Testament.

Thomas More's *Utopia*  
appears.

Charles, later emperor, succeeds  
to the crown of Spain.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1517	Makes appeal to his bishops against the indulgence sales (95 Theses).	Hans Sachs writes his first Lenten farce.	Ulrich von Hutten is crowned poet laureate by Emperor Maximilian; publishes (anonymously) the <i>Letters of Obscure Men</i> , a satire in defense of John Reuchlin.  Cardinal Ximenes concludes the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic).
1518	Sylvester Prierias writes against Luther.  Luther is cited to Rome, but is permitted to come before Cardinal Cajetan instead, at the imperial diet in Augsburg. He makes appeal to a general council of the church.	Philip Melanchthon becomes professor in Wittenberg.	Albert of Mainz is elevated to cardinal.

1519

A papal emissary is sent to Wittenberg to effect reconciliation.

At the celebrated debate with John Eck in Leipzig, Luther questions papal infallibility and is accused of Hussitism.

Leonardo da Vinci dies.

Ulrich Zwingli begins his reforms in Switzerland.

Maximilian dies. Charles V is elected emperor.

1520

The three great reform tracts appear: *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *Freedom of the Christian*.

Magellan reaches Cape Horn.

The papal bull *Exurge Domine*

threatens Luther with excommunication.

Luther burns canon law publicly, and a copy of the bull for good measure.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1521	<p>The bull <i>Decet Romanum</i> announces Luther's excommunication.</p> <p>In April, Luther makes his stand before the imperial diet at Worms, will not recant until refuted.</p> <p>In early May, Luther is taken covertly to the Fortress Wartburg in the Thuringian hills.</p> <p>The Edict of Worms outlaws Luther.</p> <p>In December, Luther makes a stealthy trip to Wittenberg to moderate the reforms there, returns to the Wartburg.</p>	<p>Sebastian Brant dies.</p> <p>Josquin Desprez, eminent French composer much admired by Luther, dies.</p>	<p>Radical church reforms begin while Luther is in hiding.</p> <p>Henry VIII writes an anti-Luther tract, for which the pope rewards him with the title Defender of the Faith.</p>

- 1522 At the Wartburg, the New Testament is translated into German, published in Wittenberg in September.
- 1523 Writes his first song, in commemoration of the martyrdom of two Augustinian brothers in Brussels.
- 1524
- 1525 Tracts against religious enthusiasts, against the rebellious peasants, and against Erasmus (*Concerning the Bondage of the Will*).
- Justus Jonas, priest at the castle church and Luther's old friend, marries.  
John Reuchlin dies.
- Adrian VI is elected pope. Favors reform.  
Remnants of Magellan's expedition complete the circumnavigation of the globe.
- Ulrich von Hutten dies.
- The Zurich City Council adopts Zwingli's reforms.  
Clement VII elected pope.
- Erasmus writes the anti-Luther tract *Concerning Free Will*.
- The Peasants' War begins.  
Zwingli abolishes the mass.
- Thomas Müntzer is executed.  
Jacob Fugger dies.
- Charles V defeats France at Pavia and captures Francis I.  
Frederick the Wise of Saxony dies, is succeeded by his brother, John.



# IMPORTANT EVENTS

FOR

HIS CONTEMPORARIES

EUROPE

LUTHER

In June, marriage with Catherine von Bora.

1526

The first son, Hans, is born in June.

The imperial diet at Speier decrees religious observance to be a matter determined on territorial basis pending a council.

1527

Luther's first severe illness (heart?) is accompanied by acute depression.

Machiavelli dies.

Lutheran reforms spread significantly, Hesse, Sweden.

In December a daughter is born, Elizabeth, who dies in the following summer.

1528

Albrecht Dürer dies.

1529

German protestants convene at Marburg, where their first attempt at concord fails—Luther's famous exchange with Zwingli.

Another daughter,

Magdalene, is born in May.

1530

Spends the spring and summer at the Fortress Coburg, to be nearer the diet at Augsburg.

1531

A second son, Martin, is born in November.

Ulrich Zwingli falls in battle.

Tillmann Riemenschneider, beloved German woodcarver, dies.

"Protestant" estates walk out of the (2nd) imperial diet at Speier, calling the territorial arrangements affecting church usage inequitable.

Turkish forces besiege Vienna.

The Augsburg Confession, a definitive formulation of Lutheran doctrine, is read at the imperial diet. It is rejected both by south German protestants and by delegates from Rome.

Philip of Hesse forms the League of Schmalkalden, powerful military alliance among the protestant principalities.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
1532	John Frederick, who grew up under the influence of Luther, becomes elector of Saxony.	<p>Halley's comet confirms approaching end of the world.</p> <p>Machiavelli's <i>The Prince</i> appears in print for the first time (written in 1513).</p> <p>The Peace of Nuremberg defers the Edict of Worms, establishes a tranquil Germany for more than a decade.</p>
1533	Ariosto dies.	Henry VIII marries Anne Boleyn, and a daughter is born, later Elizabeth I of England.
1534	<p>Another son, Paul, is born in January.</p> <p>The complete German Bible is published.</p> <p>The last child, Margaret, is born in December.</p>	Paul III is elected pope. Interested in a general council.

Henry VIII, by his Act of Supremacy, dissolves English ties to the papacy.

Loyola forms the Society of Jesus (to become the Jesuit order in 1540).

The Kingdom of Zion is established in Münster, bloodily put down in the following year.

Michael Kohlhaas, later immortalized in the novella by Heinrich von Kleist, declares his private war against electoral Saxony.

In Paris, Vesalius performs public dissections (on four hanged criminals).

1535    Pietro Paolo Vergerio  
         seeks Luther's commitment  
         to a general council.

Thomas More is beheaded.

1536    South German  
         protestants visit Luther,  
         establish the Wittenberg  
         Concord.

Anne Boleyn beheaded.  
Erasmus dies.

Pope Paul III calls a council to be held in Mantua at Pentecost of 1537.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS

	LUTHER	FOR HIS CONTEMPORARIES	EUROPE
	Luther draws up that testament later known as the Articles of Schmalkalden.	John Bugenhagen carries the Lutheran reform to Denmark.	
1537	Attends the conference at Schmalkalden, where he suffers a severe attack of the stone.		Pope Paul III must defer the council because of disagreements with the duke of Mantua.
1539		George of Saxony dies.	
1540		Doctor Faustus said to be fetched away by the devil.	Protestantism loses its most powerful leader when Philip of Hesse commits bigamy.

1541

Paracelsus dies.

Michelangelo paints the Judgment Day fresco in the Sistine Chapel.

John Knox introduces the Calvinist reform into Scotland.

Conferences in Worms and Regensburg achieve extensive agreement between protestant and Roman theologians.

1543

Luther writes three terrible anti-Semitic tracts.

Osiander in Nuremberg publishes Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus*.

Vesalius's *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* appears.

1545

Luther's last revision of his Bible. His most vitriolic tract against the papacy.

The Council of Trent is convoked.

1546

Luther dies in February.

Shortly before Luther's death, the Council of Trent meets, no protestant delegates in attendance.

In the War of Schmalkalden, the emperor invades Saxony.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

FOR

HIS CONTEMPORARIES

LUTHER

EUROPE

Henry VIII dies.

Francis I dies.

Michelangelo assumes  
direction of construction  
at Saint Peter's.

In January, John Frederick is defeated  
at Muhlhausen, imprisoned for  
five years. Philip of Hesse suffers the  
same fate. The Saxon electoral crown  
is transferred to John Frederick's  
cousin Maurice.

To bring the dead to life  
Is no great magic.  
Few are wholly dead:  
Blow on a dead man's embers  
And a live flame will start.

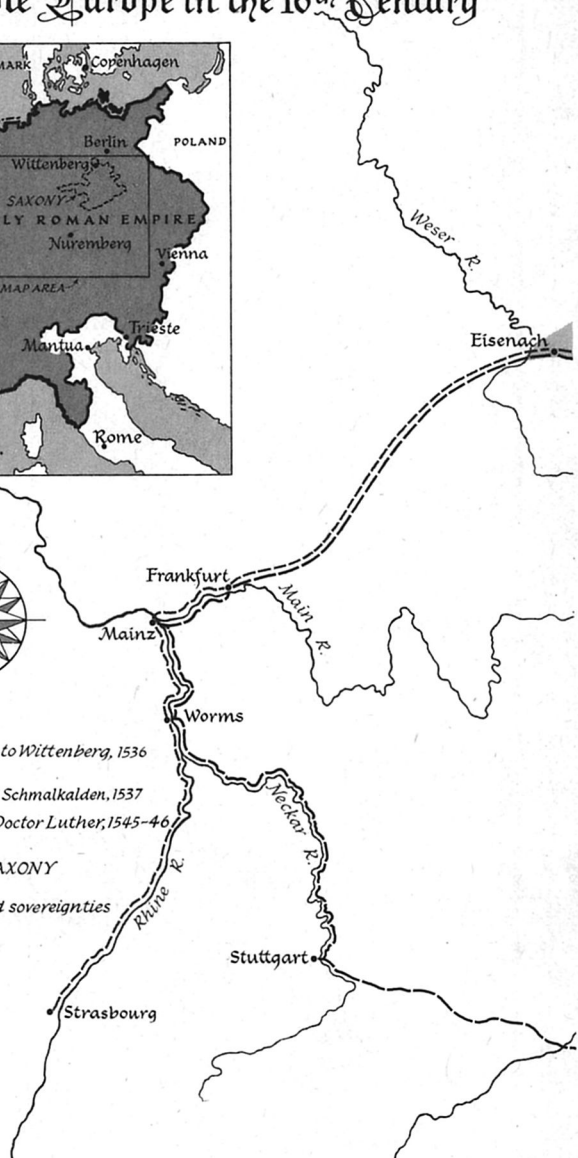
ROBERT GRAVES



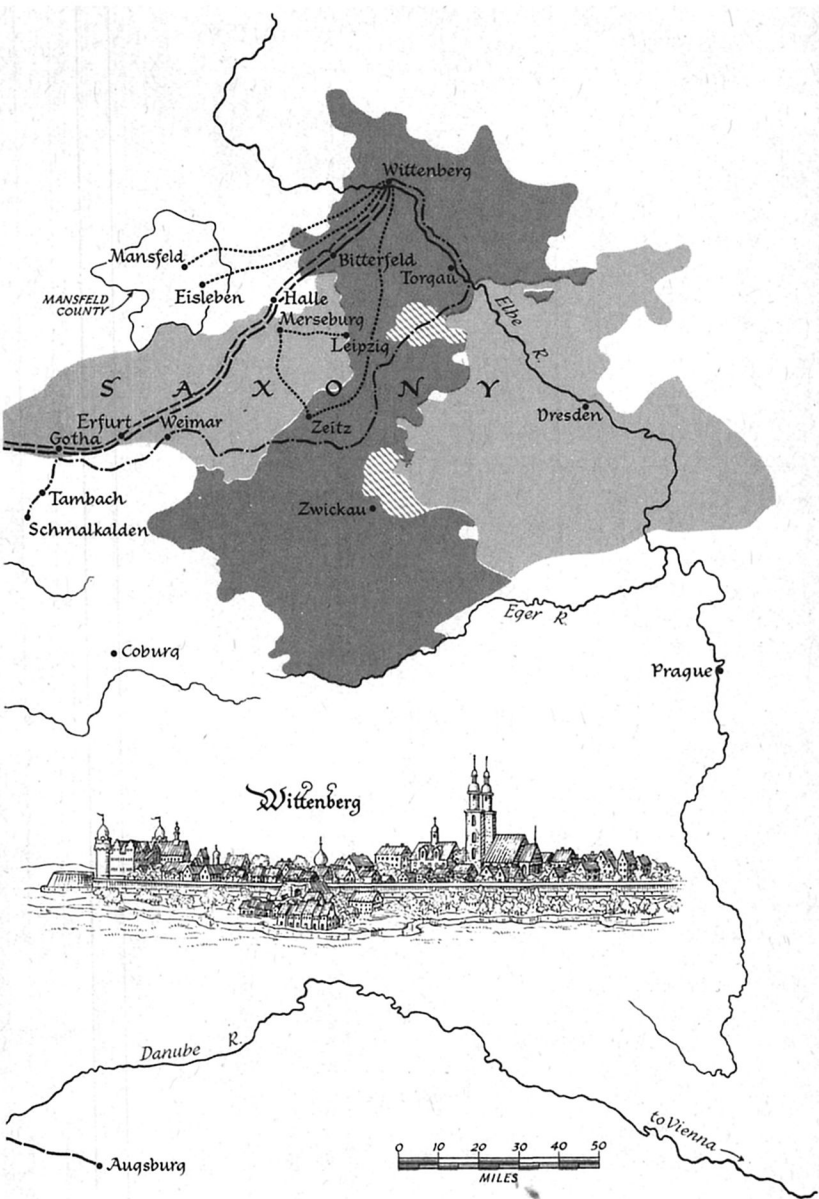
# Middle Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century



- Capito } routes to Wittenberg, 1536
- Bucer } routes to Wittenberg, 1536
- Luther's route to Schmalkalden, 1537
- ..... Wanderings of Doctor Luther, 1545-46
- Ernestine } SAXONY
- Albertine } SAXONY
- ▨ Joint and mixed sovereignties



morris





# PROLOGUE

What does the typical, educated reader know about Martin Luther? The child of harsh circumstances and tensions with a severe father, he experienced a crisis in young manhood. Caught in a thunderstorm, at a critical juncture in his university studies, he was so terrified by a lightning bolt that he uttered a compulsive vow to become a monk. His years in the monastery were fraught with brooding about how he might become justified in the eyes of an angry God. At last came his evangelical breakthrough, the Tower Experience, when he discovered his doctrine of salvation by grace alone. On All Saints' Eve in 1517, Martin Luther nailed upon the door of the castle church in Wittenberg his 95 Theses against papal indulgences, thus initiating the Protestant Reformation. When called before the Diet of Worms in April of 1521, he held steadfast in his faith, declaring before emperor and the assembled imperial estates, "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

Every one of the statements above may well be false. Most of them almost surely are. None can be proved by contemporary documents (or disproved).

How can this be? No man's life has been more thoroughly documented by contemporaries than was Martin Luther's. Yet documents give testimony, first of all, to the attitudes of those who produced them; our reading of the documents is profoundly influenced by those who pass them down to us. Reformation history was long dominated by rigid denominationalism. In our own day a new zealotry has been added to those ancient partisanships, the Marxist image of Luther as helpless or cynical

instrument in the hands of feudal and capitalist powers. Successive vogues in history writing have seldom returned to the original documentation at all, but prefer to reshape and reapply the commonplaces of earlier interpretations.

In Luther's case, even the original evidence wants skeptical, loving evaluation. Largely, it stems from the older man himself, as he looked back on that heroic legend I recounted in the first paragraph. A great mass of most persuasive records, his *Table Talks*, was taken down by pupils who had better understanding, naturally, for Luther's ever shifting irony and raucous humor than did later, staid and stolid church historians. While these writers have been at pains to extract details of Luther's thoughts and actions in his middle thirties (1517-21), they shunned and were frequently embarrassed by the man in his forties, fifties, and sixties whom they had to thank for most of their information. What is a biographer to do?

Shall I patiently set forth my reexamination of that "Protestant Revolt"—a colorful phrase historians apply to events which occurred a dozen years before the term "protestant" emerged, and to some events which may never have occurred at all? To do so would hopelessly encumber my Luther portrait with learned banter, and defeat the greatest service biography can provide Luther scholars: an authentic impression of that man who is their main source, but who remains little known or understood, the mature and aging Martin Luther. As biographer, I have tried to present no more than the character of the man in his later years.

Focus on one particular time in a subject's life is nothing new in biography, and it is certainly not new in Luther studies. Much of our present-day Luther image—as in the Luther movie or in the play *Luther* by John Osborne—goes back to a book by a psychiatrist of the 1950s, Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*. Erikson was rightly skeptical about chief Luther interpretations before him, but not a historian himself, much less a philologist, he was not inclined to be very critical of the documents, or of the well-accepted "factual" account of Luther's career. Naturally, he was taken to task by the professionals, no doubt justifiably. To the art of biography, however, Erikson and his pupils have made a major contribution.

By calling attention to the phases of adult life, how "each man

in his time plays many parts," they have shown that we must approach the unique character and problems of each time of life on its own terms. I am introducing my reader to Martin Luther in his fifties, a grand personality in its own right, one of the most pungently alive in all history. Without quibbling over the legends surrounding the younger man (or otherwise departing into the intellectual history of ages *after* Luther's), I would go straight to the Wittenberg of 1535, where the source of those legends, an articulate and prolific professor, was probably the most influential figure in Renaissance Europe.

It is quite impossible for any of us to approach this Doctor Luther without our preconceptions. Rather, however, than going with our minds full of the ideas developed by Protestant and Catholic (denominations which arose only after his death), let us seek out the viewpoint of one of his informed contemporaries. Perhaps my reader will be patient with me as we try to glimpse Renaissance Europe through the eyes of a churchman as he approaches Wittenberg.



*ONE*

WITTENBERG





# Approach from the South

The Renaissance church was corrupt. An organization with a very long history, however, it had been able to rediscover its essential justification in earlier epochs and still nurtured the germ for its self-renewal. A reform was under way. The growing concern with reform in the 1520s and 1530s was apparent in successive meetings between high officials of the church and Doctor Martin Luther of Wittenberg, Augustinian and professor.

They had handled him first in that offhand, brutalizing fashion of mammoth bureaucracies, later—as political expediency dictated—with generous condescension. But his reform writings became so trenchant (and popular) as to bring down his excommunication, a rash measure which quickly polarized sentiments. When neither harsh nor friendly persuasion would budge him from his anti-papal stand, a general council of the church became inevitable. For some years the papacy resisted it as diminishing supreme Roman authority, but eventually a papal legate came to Wittenberg to obtain Doctor Luther's cooperation.

This last meeting of a high Roman emissary with the reform advocate was remarkable enough in itself. In the life of the papal nuncio it had a mysteriously symbolic quality. Pietro Paolo Vergerio had felt Luther's influence while still a student in Padua, but his career placed him in the service of Rome. The meeting with Luther affected him little at the time. Yet his later career was sucked up entirely into furthering the cause of that man whom he never saw again.

Vergerio came from the Capo d'Istria on the Gulf of Trieste, a part of the Republic of Venice. He had been a student when Luther first disputed papal commercialization of the church. Since his own ancient university of Padua was popular with law students from the north, he naturally heard about the new university at Wittenberg and its refractory professor. Nevertheless, it was somewhat surprising that he resolved to forsake one of Europe's most prestigious institutions in favor of continuing his studies in that remote German corner.

Had this youth somehow sensed Europe's intellectual center of gravity shifting northward? Would a young Venetian applaud any or every dissent with rival Rome? Our only sure knowledge is that he obtained a recommendation from a Venetian merchant to George Spalatin, the influential confessor to Frederick the Wise of Saxony, who had protected Luther during the early, dangerous defiance of Rome. The letter was dated 29 October 1521, or just about a year after Luther had become—and been officially declared—notorious for a ceremonious public burning of canon law (intriguing for a Padua law graduate). If it was Luther's activity attracting the young Vergerio, it was precisely Luther's teachings that also frustrated his ambition to study in Wittenberg.

His sponsor, with whom he planned to make his journey north, and the author of his letter of recommendation, was one of the suppliers of relics to Frederick the Wise, whose collection was famous throughout the world. Unfortunately, by the time the company was prepared to depart Venice, the reform spirit had radically damaged Saxony's relic market.

I am returning herewith the relics [Spalatin wrote to the merchant] as well as the crucifix, in hopes you will sell them as advantageously as possible, for in Venice they probably cost more and are valued more highly than here. Here the common man is so well instructed that he thinks (and rightly so) only faith and confidence toward God, and brotherly love, are enough.<sup>1</sup>

The trip was canceled and the young Capodistrian's wish to visit Wittenberg would not be fulfilled for many years yet, not until the faculty there had become illustrious in the north and infa-

mous in his own land. Nor would he at last go there as a student to learn, but as a negotiator to interpret and to persuade.

Vergerio's career became that of a routine, ambitious Italian. He toured France, became established in the legal profession in Verona and Padua, taught a bit of law at the university (which also crowned him *poeta laureatus*), went on to serve the Republic of Venice, Europe's principal maritime force and one of its most powerful governments. A grander court was to be found only in Rome. Pietro Paolo's brother Aurelio, secretary to Pope Clement VII, obtained an audience for him. The magnetism of the young man's personality, no doubt his vigorous presence as well, won him the pope's trust. In 1533, Vergerio was appointed nuncio to the court of King Ferdinand in Vienna and dispatched there so promptly his credentials had to be prepared and sent along after him. One of his prime responsibilities in the empire would be to help Clement avoid the council the Germans were demanding.

Upon Clement's death the next year, one might have expected Vergerio to be replaced, because Paul III wished to pursue a different line toward the church in the north and was prepared to accept a council. But Paul settled on the same proud, intensely ambitious, good-natured and winning young Venetian for a second and quite different mission to Germany. This time he was to visit the principal courts with an ambiguous task. He must arouse interest in a council where German national issues were not to be paramount, and which was not to be held in Germany. His diplomacy would be complicated by the lack of any clear council agenda to offer his suspicious hosts. It was thus in a salesman's role, though with nothing very specific to sell, that Pietro Paolo Vergerio at last came to Wittenberg.

Was his mission successful? Upon his return to Italy he received an ambivalent reward, the bishop's miter in his home town. When we consider proposals he had made for his own future—that he be sent to Constantinople to sue for peace with the Turk, or that he be dispatched to the court of Henry VIII to resolve that schism—together with the fact that his correspondence with Rome had never failed to mention diplomatic advancement, we recognize that pastoral duties were not entirely in accord with the dynamic fellow's estimate of his abilities. Yet

here on the Gulf of Trieste he remained during those years while the church struggled to hold itself together, and failed.

The council toward which he had worked was still to be a catholic one in the sense that it included representatives from the whole empire. As the 1530s drew to a close, the Inquisition was waxing in power; even in Italy reform doctrines were spreading, especially in Vergerio's own northeast. For the first time in his life the bishop began to read Lutheran tracts, began to acquire some first authentic intellectual acquaintance with the man he had met face to face in Wittenberg. These reform works constituted the bishop's first introduction to theology.

At the same time, he was being deeply touched by victims of the Inquisition. One especially moving case constituted a kind of turning point in his career. By the end of the 1540s Bishop Vergerio was openly sympathizing with protestants in his diocese. In 1549 he was himself excommunicated and fled into German-speaking lands. He became a vigorous anti-Romanist. In the service of the duke of Württemberg during the last dozen years of his life, he remained an active and articulate traveler and writer, operating his own printing press against Rome.

Thus the career of Pietro Paolo Vergerio, born on the Istrian cape which shelters Trieste from the Adriatic Sea, had begun like that of any gifted and ambitious jurist. As a compass senses a powerful though distant magnet, it was affected early by the energies of Martin Luther. His confrontation with Luther at mid-career brought no immediate religious awakening. The young man in his thirties returned from Germany convinced the only way to bring the Germans to heel was by force of arms. Yet his subsequent life was profoundly influenced by the protestant problem, eventually all his efforts being drawn up into the cause. His confrontation in Wittenberg in 1535 became symbolic, a kind of figure for his entire life. Perhaps he came to think so himself—after Luther's death.

At the time it appeared a young diplomat's dream. From his permanent base in Vienna the papal nuncio had undertaken a tour up the Danube, down the Main and Rhine, then back across the quiltwork of sovereign fiefdoms in the middle of the Holy Roman Empire, from Cologne through Paderborn to Halle and thus into the Lutheran heartland, calling on major courts and at-

tempting to extract individual commitments, but satisfied if he could establish good will and a communality of interest. The protestant princes preferred to put him off until their conference, scheduled to begin in Schmalkalden at the end of the year. Vergerio suspected he might, prior to that conference, pluck in Wittenberg a most brilliant feather for his diplomatic cap.

The king of France had a delegation in Schmalkalden at the moment. Robert Barnes and others from London were in Wittenberg, and Vergerio was intensely curious about their mission. Luther stood practically alone among theologians outside Rome in firm refusal to declare the sixteen-year-old marriage between Henry VIII and Catherine, the emperor's aunt, invalid (and therewith Catherine's daughter, Mary, illegitimate). He had been unmoved, so the rumor, by Henry's substantial bribe.<sup>2</sup> Here Vergerio glimpsed one point of agreement. The desire for a council was presumably another. What a tremendous diplomatic coup if on the eve of the Schmalkalden meeting, where the northern powers sought a common front against Rome, he could obtain the agreement of Luther himself on the point his pope considered most important: the location of the council!

His troop arrived in Halle, the seat of Germany's most powerful prince and Luther's most irresolute archbishop, Cardinal Albert of Mainz, on 2 November. Perhaps it was in conversations here that Vergerio had hit upon the stratagem of approaching Luther directly (the nuncio was so devious in his communications that his authorization for doing so, if any, remains as obscure as the foggy time and place of their meeting). His letter requesting passage to Wittenberg was not sent off to that city until the fourth. It announced his departure for the next day, the fifth.

He knew Elector John Frederick of Saxony was absent from Wittenberg at the moment, but addressed the letter to him anyway. He said he was confident he would not be denied safe-conduct, "since, with the permission and protection of both his imperial and his royal majesties, I bring such business and affairs as are pleasing to all pious people."<sup>3</sup> The missive was delivered to that prefect of Wittenberg whom Luther constantly scolded for notorious adultery, Hans Metzsch. The messenger could inform Metzsch that the papal party consisted of twenty members.