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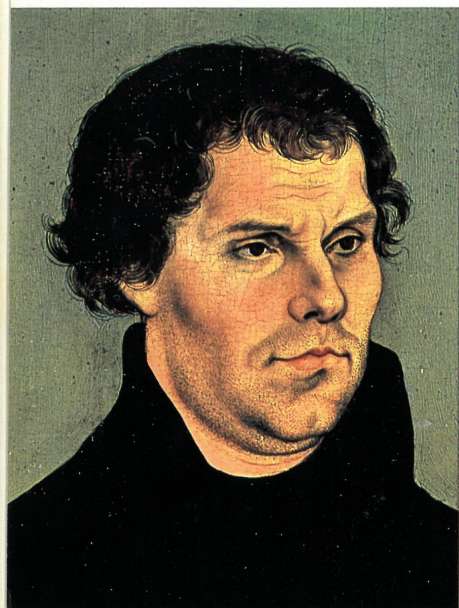
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The World of Luther



PAINTING BY MICHAEL A. HAMPSHIRE (RIGHT); LUCAS CRANACH D.A., KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN ZU WEIMAR (ABOVE)

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ACCLAIMED the Great Reformer, Martin Luther challenged the mightiest power on earth in his day, the Roman Catholic Church. With a call in 1517 for debate on 95 theses—posted, tradition has it, on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg (right)—the scholar and monk ignited an explosion that continues to this day. In the process he placed the Bible in the hands of the common people, in the language of their everyday speech. He offered European man a new notion of himself, preaching access to God without intercession of clergy. And by wrenching much of western Europe away from obedience to the Roman Church, he ended the social order of centuries—and sparked a century of bitter warfare. The tree of Protestant Christianity planted by Luther counts scores of branches with 350 million members, in this the 500th anniversary year of his birth.





ANTON VON WERNER, ARCHIV FÜR KUNST UND GESCHICHTE, BERLIN

“I cannot and will not recant.” Luther’s defense of his writings at the Diet of Worms in April 1521 sealed the enmity of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and earned Luther—already excommunicated by Pope Leo X—an imperial ban, making him an outlaw. Normally his words would have meant burning at the stake. But Luther traveled to Worms for examination before Charles and the diet—Germany’s ruling nobles, prelates, and magistrates—under a safe-conduct masterminded by the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise. Although the elector never met Luther, declaring the priest “much too bold,” he continued to protect him through the Reformation’s crucial early years after Luther’s triumphant appearance before the diet. In this turn-of-the-century painting, events and people of two days are combined in one dramatic scene.



- 1 Emperor Charles V on the throne
- 2 Aleander, Rome’s representative on religious affairs
- 3 Caracciolo, Rome’s representative on political affairs
- 4 Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony
- 5 Johann von der Ecken of Trier, Chief Inquisitor
- 6 Martin Luther
- 7 Kaspar Sturm, Imperial Herald
- 8 Dr. Jerome Schurff, Luther’s lawyer, of the Wittenberg University law faculty



Sundered faiths rejoin amid the lantern lights of children at an ecumenical celebration in Erfurt, East Germany, where Luther studied, entered a monastery, and was ordained a priest in the cathedral, at left. Annually on November 10, his

birthday, Protestants and Catholics gather here to honor both him and the Catholic St. Martin, whose name the infant was given on the saint's feast day, November 11. This year is officially proclaimed as Luther Year by the German Democratic Republic.

THE TORCH of Reformation was picked up and borne by men who modified Luther's teachings in ways he would never have condoned. Though he opposed naming any church Lutheran, such congregations spread, predominantly in northern Germany and Scandinavia, and still follow the creed distilled by Luther's friend and disciple Philipp Melanchthon.

In Zürich, Huldrych Zwingli simplified liturgy, stripped churches of ornaments, and proclaimed the doctrine of predestination. Moralistic John Calvin in Geneva drew from Luther and Zwingli and preached of a stern and demanding God. Disciples spread his tenets across Europe. One, John Knox, brought Calvin's Reformed Church to Scotland, where it evolved into the Presbyterian Church.

Henry VIII of England, denied a marriage annulment by Rome, appointed Thomas Cranmer the Archbishop of Canterbury and then had himself made head of the church in England in 1534.

Reformers showed scant tolerance for minority offshoots. From their start in Zürich in 1525, Anabaptists rejected formal organization. They and their leader Conrad Grebel, advocating a personal religion, were persecuted for belief in adult baptism and complete separation of church and state. Anabaptists in the Netherlands adopted the name Mennonites from leader Menno Simons.

Today's Baptist Church stems from John Smyth, who embraced these ideas and broke with the English Congregational Church in the early 1600s.

The Catholic Church responded with its own reformation, which purged abuses of power and renewed spiritual vigor. The ensuing battle for souls was intertwined with a struggle for political power. A century of fighting culminated in the Thirty Years' War, devastating Germany. The 1648 treaty eroded the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire and forced Catholic and Protestant to concede that both would continue to exist.

PAINTING BY ALLEN CARROLL



ALL CHURCH BELL rings eleven. I pull my jacket closer against the chill of a November evening—November 10—as I walk along the now quiet, darkened streets of Eisleben in East Germany. I pause before the house where Martin Luther was born, shortly before midnight, five centuries ago.

A light shines in a ground-floor room—perhaps left on by a workman restoring the house. It brings to mind lamps casting their fitful glow in that very room on a night of expectation, pain, and creative joy after which the world would never be the same again.

Because of high infant mortality (heaven must be full of little children, Luther later commented), babies were baptized as soon as possible—in his case about eleven the next morning in the church around the corner. The day was the feast of St. Martin of Tours, a charitable Roman soldier turned monkly bishop who took an ax to pagan shrines. So, following tradition in honoring the day's saint, Hans and Margaret Luther christened their son Martin.

Had Martin died in infancy would the Reformation have occurred? Would Europe have been racked by that convulsive transition between the medieval and modern eras whose effects we feel even today?

Many reformers had come before. Francis of Assisi, rebuking luxurious prelate and patrician alike, embraced poverty and was proclaimed a saint. Jan Hus of Bohemia attacked the clergy's moral conduct. He was burned at the stake. So was Savonarola, after being hanged. He preached against Florence's vanities and Rome's corruption while Martin was still a boy.

Luther's fate was different. Though excommunicated by the Church of Rome and declared an outlaw by the Holy Roman Empire, he lived to see his Reformation established. Though he risked martyrdom, he died peacefully in the fullness of his years only a few steps away from the house in

Eisleben where he was born 62 years earlier.

In village and city, in field and forest, monastery and castle, and through snowy Alpine passes from little Wittenberg on the Elbe to mighty Rome on the Tiber, I traced Luther's footsteps and his influence—in a Germany split by a wall, in a world severed by faith. Along the way I saw cracks in political and religious walls, and healthy signs of the healing of wounds.

I was amazed to see the tremendous effort that a Communist state was devoting to the 500th anniversary of a man of God, rebuilding his sites, rewriting its histories to stress his "positive social message." My heart warmed to join Roman Catholics and Protestants worshipping together, honoring both St. Martin of Tours and Martin Luther. I kept asking why Luther's Reformation took while others did not. His personality? The temper of the times? Historical accidents?

All three.

In the public mind Luther is the bold monk who rocked Rome by nailing 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg. And who defied the Holy Roman Emperor when ordered to recant at Worms—challenging the highest constituted powers of heaven and earth.

Ironically, he did not set out to divide the church, or to destroy the supposed unity of medieval civilization. To the last he considered himself a faithful restorer of the pristine purity of the universal church, more catholic than the Pope. A renovator, not an innovator. Nor did he see himself, as some do, as emancipator of the individual, contributor to the rise of the nation-state, or inaugurator of the modern world. His concern was with souls, not things of this world. He opened doors down corridors to human rights and freedoms he never condoned or envisioned. Once a wall is pierced, who knows what will pass through.

Magellan's ships were groping their way around the world during the years when Luther started his Reformation. But he likely

Descendants of Luther's family still live in Möhra, East Germany, where his statue dominates the village square. Luther's parents grew up here but left before his birth. His father rose from peasant farmer to mining entrepreneur and bought an advanced education for Luther, who disappointed the family by becoming a priest.



heard nothing about it, nor would he have cared. Though his concerns were cosmic and his message would transcend boundaries of denomination, nationality, and time, his world was small.

Luther's Germany was not two Germanys as today but hundreds, a crazy quilt of territories nominally under the Holy Roman Emperor. The seven most powerful magnates in the realm—four secular princes and three archbishops—elected the emperor. Periodically he called these seven electors and other princes, prelates, and city magistrates to a diet, usually at an imperial city such as Regensburg, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Frankfurt, or Worms. In this assembly he heard petitions and grievances, and asked for money to war against the Turks.

Among Western European nations familiar to us today, only France, England, and Portugal had achieved some unity. Spain comprised Castile, Aragon, and other jealous kingdoms. Italy was diagonally sliced in two by the Papal States. Their prince—the Pope—seesawed as a power balance between French king and Habsburg emperor,

whose rival claims to Milan and Naples caught Rome in a pincers.

Across this mottled stage strode colorful giants: Henry VIII of England, Francis I of France, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V—and Suleiman the Magnificent, leading his Ottoman Turks, “the scourge of God,” to the gates of Vienna.

All these rulers were young when Luther stepped from the shadows. And for the rest of the Reformer's life they kept the pot boiling with their conflicting passions and ambitions—an incredible caldron of cross-purposes that saw troops of the Holy Roman Emperor sack Rome and hold the Pope prisoner; the Most Christian King of France allied with Protestant and Turk against the emperor—even basing the galleys of 30,000 Muslim corsairs in Toulon on the French Riviera, where they ran a lively market in Christian slaves. The Pope dubbed Henry VIII Defender of the Faith for writing a book against Luther. Later breaking with Rome over his desire to wed Anne Boleyn, Henry had Parliament declare him Supreme Head of the Church in England and brought

to that land, and subsequently to America, the Reformation he staunchly opposed.

A hurricane of forces flipped the pages of 16th-century history. And in the eye of the hurricane, an obscure friar in a remote university town planted the seeds of reform that took root and slowly grew sturdy as an oak until strong enough to withstand the tumult. Only after Luther's death did wars of religion ravage Europe. When they ended, after a century, denominational lines—Catholic and Protestant—were drawn that essentially remain to this day.

THE WORD did it all,” Luther claimed; truth to him was more potent than troops. The Word of Scripture, yes. But Luther's pungent words, too, magnified by the printing press that made the Reformation the first mass-media event. The printing press—“God's last and greatest gift,” he called it—launched Luther onto the international stage.

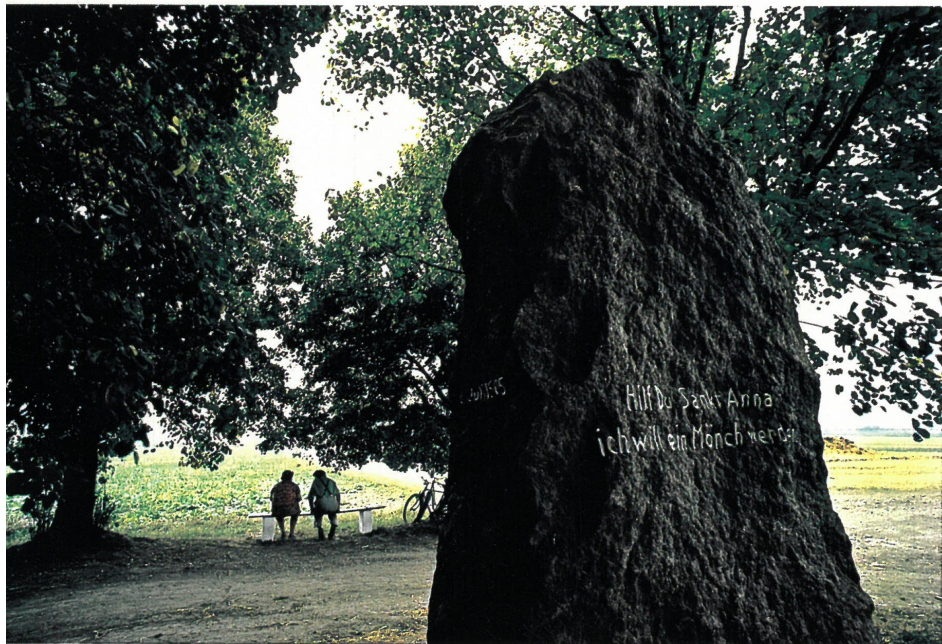
Today, dulled by the glut of print and picture, we can hardly imagine the bombshell effect of the pamphlets, broadsides, open

letters, satires, dialogues, sermons, and discourses that streamed from the newfangled presses printing from movable type. For the nine out of ten people who could not read, hearing them read aloud or scanning the accompanying woodcuts did the trick.

As early as 1523 Luther's tracts had romped through some 1,300 printings, perhaps a million copies. From 1516 to 1546 he averaged a treatise every two weeks—writing enough to fill 102 huge volumes of the famous Weimar edition, making him the most prolific religious figure in history, as well as the most written about since Christ.

We might never have heard of Luther had he taught 40 miles to the south, at Leipzig in the fervidly Catholic Duke George's domain. Luther's Reformation would have died with him at the stake. At Wittenberg three successive electors of Saxony gave him the state protection that enabled him to survive.

At Luther's ancestral village of Mōhra, a half-timbered cluster in the Thuringian Forest, I mulled another of the ifs that stud the Reformer's path. “I am a peasant's son,”



Summer lightning sent Luther from law school to cloister when a bolt struck nearby during a journey to Erfurt in 1505. Shaken, he uttered the vow seen on a commemorative stone erected near the spot (left): “Help, St. Anne! I will become a monk.” He embraced monastic life with ardor but suffered agonies of doubt over his spiritual fitness. At Wittenberg University, founded by Frederick the Wise, Luther taught the Scriptures and reached the pinnacle of academic distinction, with the right to wear the robes and beret of a doctor of theology (right). But doubts endured until, finally, his study of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul led him to a revelation known as the Tower Experience. He envisioned salvation by faith alone, achieved through God's mercy, in place of church belief that entrance into heaven depended upon both faith and good works—a spiritual balance sheet overseen by the clergy. His belief and his reliance on the Bible as the fountainhead of spiritual truth underpinned all his future thinking.



LUCAS CRANACH D. A. KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN DER VESTE COBURG



PHOTOGRAPHED AT HERZOG AUGUST BIBLIOTHEK, WOLFENBÜTTEL;
INDULGENCE FROM STÄDTISCHE MUSEUM, BRAUNSCHWEIG (ABOVE);
PAINTING BY MICHAEL A. HAMPSHIRE (LEFT)

Carnival air surrounds the business of soul saving in a marketplace sale of indulgences (left)—documents authorized by the Pope to insure purchasers against punishment in purgatory or to release souls already there. Sales were a chief form of church revenue: An indulgence (above) rests atop the strongbox of Friar Johann Tetzel, who became a Luther adversary. The purchase price, 20 silver coins. Sales by Tetzel near Wittenberg enraged Luther, who considered the assurances false and feared for the salvation of his parishioners. He preached against indulgences and questioned them in his theses.

Luther recalled. "I really ought to have become an elder, a village mayor or . . . farmhand." As eldest son of an eldest son, he would have inherited the farm—if primogeniture had been the custom.

But since the system was ultimogeniture, where the youngest son inherits, Luther's father headed north to Eisleben, became a copper miner, and a few months after Martin's birth moved to nearby Mansfeld. There, by dint of the hard work, thrift, prudence, and self-improvement that became hallmarks of the Protestant work ethic, Hans emerged from the bowels of the earth to become a self-made mining and smelting entrepreneur and town councillor. He bought a stone house that still stands on one of East Germany's many Luther Streets.

On my way to Mansfeld I gave a ride to

18-year-old Cornelia Semmler, who splits her time between vocational school and data processing in a factory.

Are her parents members of a church?

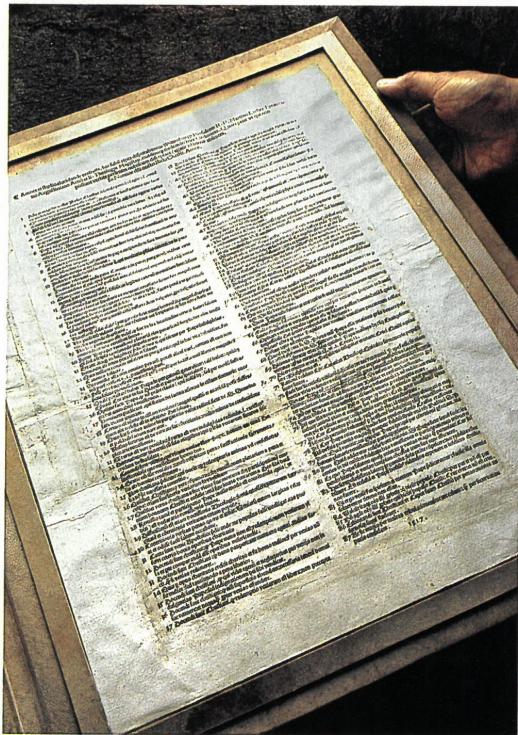
No, they're not interested. But her grandmother told her about God. Her boyfriend has taken her to church services, and she has learned about Luther's translating the Bible. She hoped to be baptized at Easter.

What do her classmates think?

Four or five in her class of 20 openly belong to a church. More would like to, she says, but parental pressure and uncertainty about how it would affect their careers inhibit them. Students fear church participation might lessen their chance of university.

Why is Cornelia willing to take the chance? "Because I believe in God." She wanted something more to hold on to.

Pilgrim fervor drove Luther on a frenzied round of holy sites when he visited Rome in 1510, his only trip outside Germany. Near the Basilica of St. John Lateran, in a ritual performed by the faithful (below right), he ascended on his



PHOTOGRAPHED AT MICHAELISKIRCHE, ZEITZ (ABOVE)

IN CORNELIA'S SOCIETY, where boys and girls receive state-supported education but the state's needs determine career choices, it is easy to overlook how special Martin's training was in an age when few got any schooling at all.

At seven Martin began Latin school in Mansfeld, where he learned the international language of scholarship, government, and the church. At 13 he first tasted city life, 40 miles north on the Elbe River in bustling commercial Magdeburg, and in his teachers, the lay Brethren of the Common Life, saw examples of simple unformalistic piety.

Then, in "my beloved city of Eisenach," he exulted in music as a choirboy and showed such scholastic aptitude that his father, "by his sweat and labor," sent him to one of Germany's oldest and most famous

universities—Erfurt, opened in 1392. In "many-towered Erfurt," a large, handsome city in his day and ours, "Martinus Ludher ex Mansfeld" matriculated in 1501, taking his bachelor's degree in the minimum 18 months. At 21, mind stimulated by the classics, rhetorical skills honed on scholastic debate, Martin received his master's degree amid torchlit academic splendor.

Clearly the father's investment had paid off. Now Martin would study law, prepare himself for a distinguished career, perhaps as jurist, city magistrate, prince's counselor. A favorable marriage would secure the family's future.

But a personal crisis impelled Martin to break off law studies in the first semester. Rebellion against parental ambitions? A son feeling forced into an uncongenial career?

kneels the Sacred Stairs believed to have been trod by Jesus in Jerusalem. This obeisance released a soul from purgatory. On October 31, 1517, Luther published his 95 theses; this misnumbered edition appeared only weeks later (below left).



We see Martin, head lowered in thought, trudging back from a brief visit home. No breeze ripples the golden fields of grain. Grapes swell on the vines. Lowing cattle lie down in the lush grass. Clouds loom in the July sky, dark and foreboding.

A blinding flash of lightning. A crash of thunder. A bolt strikes near, hurling him to the ground. "Walled about with the terror and agony of sudden death," he cries out, "Help, St. Anne!" And in propitiation promises to become a monk.



A power on earth and scion of the Medici family, Pope Leo X (above) first dismissed uproar over the theses as a "monkish squabble." Finally moved to act, he issued a papal bull, or decree, giving Luther 60 days to recant or be excommunicated. On its expiration Luther burned the bull at Wittenberg. Five centuries later a facsimile (right) is ignited there.

That Martin should invoke St. Anne was natural. She was his father's special patron, along with other miners of the region.

On the Luther stone that marks the thunderbolt spot in the fields near Stotternheim, I studied the engraved phrase, "*Ich will ein Mönch werden*—I will become a monk." It can also express the subconscious wish: "I want to become a monk." Taking a legitimate escape in late medieval society, Martin would become not only a monk, but a monk with a vengeance.

Yet, unconsciously, parental values exerted themselves. Erfurt, called a Little Rome because it brimmed with clerics, boasted monasteries of every major order. Of them, Martin chose that house highest in academic and ascetic standards. On July 17, 1505, the door of the great Augustinian cloister in Erfurt closed behind him.

VISITED Luther's Erfurt monastery. Upstairs I saw the tiny dormered cell from which he'd descend to gather with other friars in the calefactory, the only warm room in raw weather. I strolled the cloisters he strolled in silent contemplation, and in the Gothic Church of St. Augustine swept aside the litter of reconstruction to create a scene from his day.

A last ray of sunlight strikes the crucifix beyond the altar. Brother Martin slowly moves down the empty nave, eyes transfixed on the crucified Christ. He flings himself prostrate before the altar. Sobs wrack his emaciated body.

He has fasted days on end, extended vigils far beyond the rule, abased himself, performed noxious chores, confessed every sin he could imagine, then returned to confess again. Yet austerities bring him no peace, only terror of a judgmental God he cannot appease. "If ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery," he would later say, "I was that monk."

He turns his tansured head. I see Brother Martin's hollow cheeks, the pained look in his deep-set eyes. He tells of suffering punishments so much like purgatory that had they lasted even for one-tenth of an hour he would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time God seems terribly angry.

Another robed figure has entered the church and overhears Martin's anguish.





PHOTOGRAPHED AT STAATSARCHIV WEIMAR



ALBRECHT DÜRER, KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN DER VESTE COBURG



Christian prince and artful dodger: Although Frederick the Wise (**above right**) shielded Luther in his most vulnerable years, the ruler remained to his death a professed Catholic, outwardly loyal to Pope and emperor. As an elector—one of seven German princes charged with deciding succession to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire—Frederick was preeminent among rulers of the hundreds of German cities and principalities within the empire. Both Emperor Charles V and Pope Leo X courted his favor in the power politics of the day. Because of this and Charles's political preoccupations, the ban that the emperor laid on Luther

was never enforced. As successive German territories accepted Luther's evangelical teachings, Frederick's successor, John the Steadfast, joined other nobles to seal an alliance (**above left**) for mutual defense and support of the growing religious movement. In 1529 the term Protestant was coined when evangelical rulers protested a diet decision pushed through by a Catholic majority to prohibit practice of reformed faith in Catholic territories. In Torgau on the Elbe, where the Saxon electors maintained a seat at Hartenfels Castle (**facing page**), Luther in 1544 consecrated the first church built for Protestant worship in Germany.

"You are a fool!" he bursts out. "God is not angry with you. You are angry with God."

WHILE still an obedient friar of 27, three years after being ordained a priest, Luther made his single journey to Rome. On an errand for his order, he set out over the Alps in November of 1510. Finally, after some 40 days, some 800 foot-weary miles, Father Martin caught sight of the Eternal City. "Hail, Holy Rome!" he cried, prostrating himself on the ancient Via Cassia.

Martin's Rome was not the Rome we know, with the music of fountains and the baroque grandeur that bespeaks defiance of his Reformation. Pope Julius II had laid the cornerstone of the new St. Peter's less than five years before Martin arrived. Michelangelo still lay stretched on his back on a scaffolding creating a cosmos on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Martin's was a decayed medieval Rome. Cows grazed in the half-buried Forum; shops, taverns, huts huddled inside the Colosseum in squalid contrast to the palaces of cardinals; thieves infested the ancient baths and fetid alleys.

But Martin looked upon the Eternal City with the eyes of a pious pilgrim; he ran like "a mad saint through all the churches and crypts," and said Mass at every major altar he found open. "*Passa, passa*—hurry up!" Roman priests urged, eager to get on with the gabble of paid Masses—once seven in an hour, Martin noted. He was even sorry his father and mother still lived. Gladly would he have rescued them from purgatory with his good works.

We next look on Father Martin, now in his early 30s, risen in his Augustinian order. Elected district vicar, he has in his charge monasteries scattered throughout Saxony. We envision sandals trudging on Saxon paths. Monastery doors creak open. Ledger pages turn. Priors report on the conduct of the brothers. Martin also collects rents for a fishpond near Magdeburg, mediates monastic disputes, preaches in monastery and town, supervises the study of novices and friars—all this in addition to holding the university chair of professor of theology at Wittenberg.

He scarcely has time for prayers during the seven canonical hours. He makes up by

skipping meals and praying the whole day Saturday. "Besides all this," he writes a friend, "there are my own struggles with the flesh, the world, and the devil. See what a lazy man I am!"

For ten years he has been reading the Bible again and again. "If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant," he tells us.

Still tormented with a fierce and troubled conscience, fearing the righteous wrath of God, Father Martin, spent with care and study, meditating day and night, focuses on Paul's Epistle to the Romans 1:17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed . . . *The just shall live by faith.*"

"The whole Scripture revealed a different countenance to me," Father Martin explains. God's mercy is freely given. But the flesh must die that the spirit may live. Only when we are lowest will He reach down and raise us through His grace. Not by payments of alms or performing good works, but through faith alone. "This passage in Paul opened for me the gates of paradise. I felt I was born again."

Tradition calls this breakthrough the Tower Experience. The insight flooded him while alone in the tower of the Augustinian cloister at Wittenberg. Disputed studies claim it occurred not in the study but in the *cloaca*; that Father Martin, plagued all his life with constipation, found physical and spiritual release in the lonely chamber that the Latin denotes as latrine.

IN THE MEDIEVAL walled town of Münnertstadt, some 60 miles south of Luther's Erfurt, I found an Augustinian cloister with continuity from his day. And among its priests, novices, and lay brothers under their tall, bearded prior, Father Wilfried Balling, I sought insights into Martin's monastic experience.

Changes, of course. While Martin froze, we had steam heat. And conversation at meals, a less ascetic regimen, freer reading, more spirited exchange of ideas. But the focus remains the same—inward. A contemplative, studious life of service and prayer.

A bell summoned us for 6 a.m. responsive readings, Gregorian chants, and prayers in

the chapel. Then we silently filed down the stairs to sing hymns and celebrate Mass in the ornately beautiful monastic church, Father Wilfried's rich voice ringing out as sonorously as Martin's must have done. Other services followed at noon and at 6 p.m.—three instead of Martin's seven canonical hours. A communal meal followed each service, with a midday reading from the order's constitution or the Scriptures.

Learning of my quest for Luther, the monks showed me *their* books on Luther. And in the monastery's 80,000-volume library, I browsed early printed books that Luther knew. I was unprepared to find two large collections of pamphlets by Luther himself, including blasts against the Pope as Antichrist that brought blushes to my 20th-century cheeks—also to learn that today's monks read books by Hans Küng, stormy petrel of the Catholic Church, called a modern Martin Luther for his stands against papal infallibility, and in favor of ordaining women, a married clergy, permitting birth control, and allowing divorced persons to take the sacraments again ("The Reformation was necessary," Küng says).

"You should read Luther to know whether he is right or wrong," explained Brother Anselm, at 21 about Martin's age as a novice. "We read everything. The day of the *Index of Forbidden Books* is over."

I scrutinized the novices carefully. Could one of them be building up a head of steam like young Martin Luther? No. Too many escape valves. "We have four stages where we can back away from eternal vows if we choose," Brother Anselm said.

At breakfast on my last day the prior told me: "You can approach theology in different ways—the scientific way or with the heart, the Augustinian way. If you see Luther with the heart, you have no problem. Luther still inspires the Catholics and shows them what they are."

I commented on the relaxed dress—sometimes novices wore slacks and sweaters, certainly not the clerical pattern in Rome.

"Münnertstadt," the prior said with a smile, "is far from Rome."

So was Luther's Germany.

We get no respect, grumbled the Germans; we're just milk cows for the rapacious Roman Curia. Commoners resented the

centralizing Roman law, which trampled local custom. Disgusted at laxity, abuses, and oppression by clergy who fleeced rather than fed their sheep, pinched by the drain of German gold into the bottomless coffers of Rome, Germans suffered social and economic distress and were stalked by plague, famine, and strife.

With life "nasty, brutish, and short," the *Ars Moriendi*—*Art of Dying*—made even more morbid by macabre woodcuts, was a best-seller. Albrecht Dürer's "Melancholia" and "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," the creepy horrors of Hieronymus Bosch, and the ubiquitous dances of death etched the desperate temper of the times. Luther's world reeled toward the Last Judgment.

THE CHARMING medieval town of Jüterbog lies 25 miles northeast of Wittenberg, a day by foot in Luther's time, less than an hour by car in ours. Meandering through the serene village-dotted countryside, I pondered the anxieties and fears of Luther's parishioners. The flames of purgatory, where the dead expiated their sins before passing to paradise, blazed fiercely in the medieval mind.

In the sacrament of penance, the contrite sinner, seeking forgiveness through confession, received absolution. The priest then imposed works of satisfaction: special prayers, fasts, vigils, almsgiving, or a pilgrimage, even a hair shirt and flagellation.

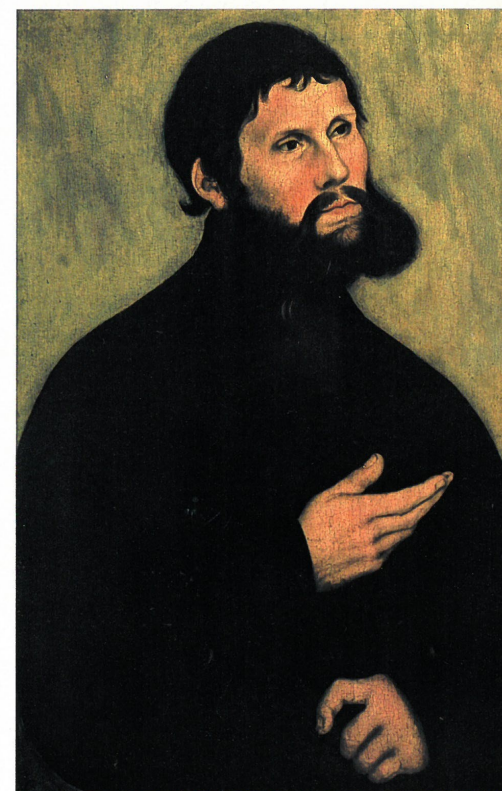
Indulgences offered a popular palliative. Christ, mankind's Redeemer, and His saints had built up an infinite reservoir of merits, church doctrine declared. The Pope at his discretion could draw upon this treasury and award these credits to a sinner in return for a good work such as giving alms. A papal bull extended this so that the living could also procure indulgences for the dead.

Indulgences served many a useful purpose. Luther's university at Wittenberg, even his own salary, was partly funded from offerings of the pious who flocked to pray before Elector Frederick the Wise's famous relic collection displayed periodically in Wittenberg's Castle Church.

I had leafed through a 1509 catalog of it with Dr. Ernst Müller, a state archivist in Weimar. Woodcuts from the workshop of Lucas Cranach showed a wondrous variety



“Land of the birds” was a name Luther gave to lonely Wartburg Castle (above), where he was hidden after an “abduction” stage-managed by Frederick for Luther’s protection after the Diet of Worms. Disguised as a bearded squire (bottom right), with only feathered companions (top right), Luther immersed



LUCAS CRANACH D. A., KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN ZU WEIMAR (ABOVE)

himself in writing, translating the New Testament from Greek into a masterpiece of vernacular German. His stay lasted almost a year, broken only by a brief trip to Wittenberg. During this time his colleagues at the university there spread his thoughts and launched the Reformation, but radicals went too far for Luther.

of reliquaries encasing with the jeweler's art such marvels as "five particles of the milk of the Virgin Mary. . . . one piece of the diaper in which He was wrapped. . . . one piece of the bread of which Christ ate with his disciples during the Last Supper. . . . one piece of the burning bush which Moses saw. . . ."

"*Lieber Gott!*" exclaimed the archivist as he tabulated the time off from purgatory a pilgrim could earn who prayed before every relic: "2,112,151 years and 205 days!"

Because Frederick forbade competing indulgence sales in his territory, Luther's flock went over the border into Brandenburg for the St. Peter's indulgence, one of the biggest campaigns, authorized by Pope Leo X for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica. Hired for it was papal pitchman Johann Tetzel.

As I drove into walled and triple-gated Jüterbog and parked in the market square before the centuries-old brick-gabled town hall, I conjured the carnival atmosphere in October of 1517.

Tetzel parades into town to the pealing of bells, plants the papal banner in the square, displays the bull of the pontiff on scarlet and gold velvet, stacks the printed letters of indulgence, and begins to wring the hearts of hearers. Groans rise as he evokes the piteous wailing of dead parents in purgatory pleading for the release that their children's alms could bring. "As the coin in the coffer rings, so the soul from purgatory springs."

WITTENBERG, October 31, the day Protestants mark as Reformation Day. Worshipers overflow the Castle Church. In the pulpit above Luther's grave, the East German pastor takes his theme from a Luther text, "Freedom of the Christian." Telling of a man freed from prison having difficulty accepting rehabilitation and becoming a repeater, he asks: Is it the essence of our time to move from one prison to another? Have we Christians, to have privileges in the state, not returned to the bondage of a state religion?

"Not permissible before the thaw of 1978," whispers a friend.

Reformation Day. Yet 465 years earlier, crowds streaming into town on the eve of All Saints' Day, when the elector's thousands of relics would go on display, barely noticed, if at all, a black-robed friar posting, so

tradition has it, a printed notice on the door of All Saints' Church, the Castle Church. If they paused, and could read its Latin, they saw it was an invitation, "out of love and zeal for the elucidation of truth," to a debate on a number of propositions at Wittenberg, "the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, presiding."

Luther was in no festive mood. When his parishioners returned from Jüterbog joyfully brandishing letters of indulgence, he was outraged: Instead of preaching penitence, Tetzel peddled pardons. "I'll knock a hole in his drum," Luther vowed, little realizing he'd also shatter the unity of his church.

But why choose the north portal of the Castle Church? Why not the Town Church where Luther preached?

"That's where the university bulletin board was," Professor Ernest Schwiebert explained to me. "The Castle Church was the university chapel. Assemblies, graduations, promotions, and disputations took place here. A professor inviting his fellow scholars to debate would naturally post the notice here."

Disputation sharpened dialectical skills and memory, clarified issues—and occasionally bloodied noses in fistfights. Coming up with a hundred arguments on a theme was a standard student exercise. Wittenberg paid bonuses to faculty who took part—even fined those who did not.

"So it was in the normal pattern of university life that Luther, on October 31, 1517, posted his invitation to debate the doctrine of indulgences," concluded Schwiebert.

Heard round the world in the hammerblows of hindsight, the 95 theses drew little notice at the time. But if the fuse was long, Luther had struck a momentous spark. Translated without his knowledge, printed copies of the theses spread through Christendom in four weeks, a contemporary notes, "as if the angels themselves were messengers." And in the vernacular, Luther played a tune Germans liked to dance to.

Starting low-keyed, as was his wont, he rose in a crescendo of indignation to the trumpet blasts: If the Pope knew the sharp practices of the indulgence purveyors, "he would prefer to have St. Peter's collapse in ruins rather than build it with the skin and flesh and bones of his sheep." If for the sake

of money the Pope can free suffering souls from purgatory, why not for the sake of love empty out purgatory altogether?

That Luther set Germany by the ears astonished him. He did not pretend to pronounce dogma but to discuss, nor to inflame but to enlighten. In the unexpected clamor that rose from a debate that never took place, he feared "the song threatened to become too high for my voice."

When Luther sent the theses to Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz, unwittingly he stepped into a hornet's nest. Humbly reminding the archbishop that the true treasure of the church is the Gospel and urging him to curb the misleading teaching of his agent Tetzel, Luther knew nothing of the scandal behind this campaign.

Albrecht was deeply in debt to the Fuggers of Augsburg, the papal bankers who had advanced him the fortune needed to speed his highly irregular rise to power. Canonically underage, and holding not one but three sees, he had to pay steep papal fees and fines. Pope Leo X helped out by proclaiming an indulgence—half the proceeds to go toward St. Peter's Basilica, half to the Fuggers to retire the archbishop's debt. Albrecht sent the 95 theses to Rome, urging that the Curia initiate the time-honored process to quash "the rash monk of Wittenberg."

LUTHER was an Augustinian friar; Tetzel, a Dominican. Wittenberg's Augustinians stood for the *via moderna* and reform. Tetzel's Dominicans defended the *via antiqua*, guarded the traditional faith, hounded heretics. Dominican hands had fed fagots onto Jan Hus's pyre at Constance. In Luther they perceived a foe far more dangerous. Hus attacked abuses in church practice. Luther attacked church doctrine, striking at the very roots of the sacramental system.

In Germany and Rome, the Dominicans swung into battle. At a hearing in Augsburg, Luther faced the general of the Dominican Order himself, Cardinal Cajetan, the papal legate in Germany. Then the most formidable of Luther's Dominican foes, Johann Eck, theology professor from Ingolstadt in Bavaria, turned fiercely on Luther and pursued him like the Greek Furies the rest of his life. In a grueling debate spanning 11 days in

July 1519 before hostile Duke George's court and university in Leipzig, the inexorable, huge-voiced Eck got Luther to deny the divine origin of papal supremacy and to assert that the heretical Hus was correct and the council that condemned him in error.

Branding Luther "a heathen," Eck went to Rome, helped prepare the bull *Exsurge Domine*, condemning Luther's "errors," and returned to publish it in German cities.

Like a prizefighter at the bell, Luther leaped to each challenge. He felt "more acted upon than acting." "I cannot control my own life," he confessed. "I am driven into the middle of the storm." Asserting, "It was the love of truth that drove me to enter this labyrinth and stir up six hundred Minotaurs," he little realized the explosive power of the anger bottled up since childhood—first directed against his own severe, unapproving father, then against a judgmental Father in heaven. Now he vented it on his Holy Father in the hierarchical church, who he felt had failed to feed the faithful the indispensable Word of God.

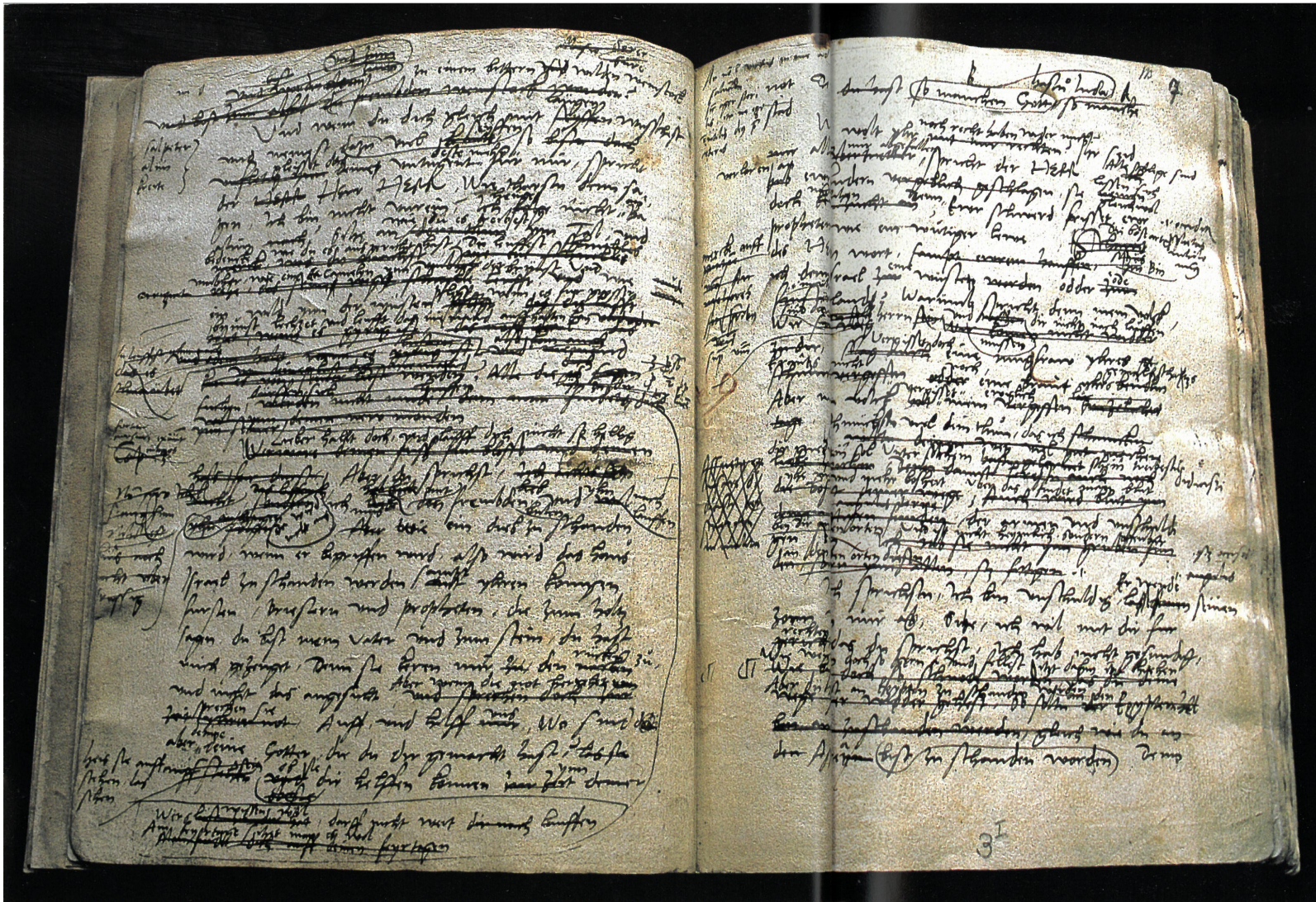
In the crucible of confrontation, Luther forged his creed: *sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide*. Only through Holy Scripture, only from God's grace, only through faith in Christ does the Christian receive salvation. The clarity of his teaching packaged a hundred years of Europe's religious yearnings into simple, hard-hitting concepts that could be pounded home from countless pulpits and printing presses, spreading the Reformation far and wide.

The torrent of words pouring from Luther's lips and pen climaxed in three Reformation manifestos in 1520:

In the "Freedom of the Christian," he envisions a personal relationship with God instead of reliance on works, elaborate ritual, and dogma he found tyrannical.

"On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church" rejects the sacramental system as having no basis in Scripture except for baptism and the Eucharist.

In his "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," Luther urges abolishing or curtailing pilgrimages, privately endowed Masses, the veneration of saints, mendicancy, indulgences, interdicts, festival days. Heretics are to be refuted with arguments, not with fire. Priests should marry



"That all may understand" was Luther's aim in translating the Bible. He completed the Old Testament (left) in 1529. The printing press helped diffuse his works throughout Europe. Pastor Otto Kammer of Worms (below) here studies some of the 60,000 pages penned by Luther, who wished that "all my books would disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone be read."



PHOTOGRAPHED AT FORSCHUNGSBIBLIOTHEK GOTHA (ABOVE)

or not as they choose. Leaving a housekeeper and man alone is "like bringing fire and straw together, and trying to forbid blaze or smoke."

From the friar who would rather die than show disrespect for the Pope, Luther moved on to claim the Pope was fallible, had no power to establish new articles of faith, was not above, but under, the Word of God. Now he concluded the papacy was a human invention of which God knew nothing.

TETZEL and his cohorts had crowded: Within three weeks Luther will be burned. Three years passed. Not until January 3, 1521, was the final bull of excommunication, *Decret Romanum Pontificem*, issued. In Rome's Piazza Navona, Luther was burned in effigy along with his writings to efface all memory of this heretic. Sacramentally, Luther was dead. Why so long?

Papal procrastination and politics.

Giovanni de' Medici, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence, was tonsured at seven, abbot at eight, cardinal at 13. Crowned with the jeweled triple tiara as Leo X at 37, four days after becoming a priest, he was a blithe spirit: "Let us enjoy the papacy, since God has given it to us."

Enjoy it he did, partying, pushing his family's fortunes, patronizing poets, artists, scholars who flocked to his largess in Rome's golden age. He also kept a Machiavellian

eye on the political scene. In an effort to keep a too powerful Habsburg, Charles, from ascending the imperial throne, he sought support from Frederick the Wise. Naturally the Pope would not smite Luther while he needed the goodwill of Luther's protector.

Nor could the pleasure-loving pontiff comprehend the moral fervor or menace in the "monkish squabble" in remote Saxony. Far simpler to remove the critic than correct the abuse. And what captious cleric couldn't



Heart and hearth blessed Luther after he denounced clerical celibacy and married former nun Katherine von Bora (**top right**). Wedding celebrants danced in Wittenberg's Town Hall, used for civil ceremonies by present-day newlyweds



LUCAS CRANACH D.A., KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN ZU WEIMAR



(**above**). Luther and his bride settled in his former monastery (**bottom right**) and lived there for 20 years. Luther elevated wifely status from housekeeper to helpmate, finding marriage a "delight, love, and joy without ceasing."

be bought off with a fat benefice? Perhaps a cardinal's hat for Frederick's star professor. Or brought into line with a little force? Leo exhorted Frederick to induce Luther "to return to sanity and receive our clemency. If he persists in this madness, seize him."

"The problem is, in Rome they basically did not understand Luther."

Hans Küng, the craggily handsome Catholic reformer, spoke in his spacious study looking over Tübingen to the Swabian Alps in southwestern Germany. "If Rome had given on three points, probably the breach would not have occurred."

"Which three?"

"First, vernacular language. To sing, to hear the Scriptures. This was a big thing, real piety. And indicates how long it takes to achieve change. In the Catholic Church we needed 450 years to grasp that it is legitimate to talk in my own tongue to God.

"Secondly, the chalice for the laity. Luther was never invited to a council, but I was—to Vatican II, which adopted the principle that the Communion cup was no longer restricted to the clergy.

"The third, still not realized, is the marriage of priests. Here the church is in deep trouble. We have lost thousands of our clergy. Hundreds of parishes have no priest. Of a thousand Catholic theology students at the university, perhaps one out of seven intends to go into the priesthood. Many will no longer make the sacrifice of celibacy."

NOT everything on the Reformation is in a shoebox labeled 'Luther, M.,' chuckled Monsignor Charles Burns in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano—Secret Archives of the Vatican.

But he ferreted out large leather-bound volumes of documents from the 25 miles of shelves and placed key pieces of the story in my hands: reports of the Papal Nuncio Aleander on his efforts to get Luther condemned by the emperor; an original of the Edict of Worms, drafted by Aleander and signed and sealed by Charles V, imposing the imperial ban and branding Luther the devil incarnate whose "teaching makes for rebellion, division, war, murder, robbery, arson, and the collapse of Christendom"; a report to Leo from Henry VIII on steps he is taking against Lutheran heretics in his realm.

Finally *Exsurge Domine*—"Arise, Lord! Judge your cause. . . . A wild boar is destroying your vineyard. . . ." In this bull Leo X gave Luther 60 days to recant or suffer excommunication.

"Of course, this is only our copy," commented Monsignor Burns. "You know what Luther did with his!"

Indeed, I had stood outside Wittenberg's old Elster Gate where Luther and his students lit a bonfire when the 60th day had passed. Burning volumes of the canon law as symbols of man's shackles on the spirit of Gospel Christianity, Luther also tossed the bull on the flames. Thus defying the Pope, Luther set the seal on what he had already written: "Farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The wrath of God has come upon you as you deserved."

ROME HAD SPOKEN. Luther had answered. Now it was time for the emperor to act. Pressured by the senior elector, Frederick the Wise, to give Luther a hearing before condemnation, Charles summoned the Reformer under safe-conduct to Worms.

Aleander was alarmed at the temper of Germany. Nine-tenths of the people are shouting "Luther!" and the other tenth "Death to the Roman Court!" he reports. "In such a manner does the Saxon dragon raise his head; in such a manner do the Lutheran serpents multiply and hiss far and wide."

The bishop's residence, where the imperial hearing was held, is now a garden near the cathedral. The house where Luther stayed has given way to a shopping mall. Warfare destroyed the gateway through which Luther rode, his wagon, surrounded by supporters, making a triumphal procession. But Fritz Reuter, director of the city archives, helped me flesh out scenes.

April 17, 1521, late afternoon, a room filled with princes, prelates, nobles, gentry, burghers, doctors of law. The 21-year-old emperor leans forward in the throne to scrutinize the intense 37-year-old friar before him: "This man will never make me a heretic!" Aleander reports Charles saying.

Raised on the chivalric lore of Burgundy amid the tapestries and tourneys of Ghent, Charles saw himself as a knight-errant leading a united Christendom in glorious

crusade against enemies of the faith. "God's standard-bearer," he called himself. How ironic that this lowborn prophet of a revolutionary age would thwart his chivalric dream of a lifetime—to sit on Constantine's throne in a reconquered Constantinople.

At Worms, Luther was asked two questions. Were these his books? And was he ready to revoke the heresies they contained? To the first he replied: They were his. The second required time to consider.

At 6 p.m. the following day Luther was led into a larger, torchlit room packed to suffocation with the empire's notables. To disown some of his books would be to condemn simple Christian morality, Luther said. In others, though he apologized for the vehemence of his attacks, he could not deny that Rome and its canon law had enslaved Christians, body and soul, lest he open his countrymen to further oppression.

Dark eyes flashing, voice clear and strong, he ended with ringing defiance: "Unless proved wrong by Scripture and plain reason . . . my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant. . . . God help me. Amen." Here he stood. Being Luther, he could do no other.

The next morning Charles rendered his decision: "I am descended from a long line of Christian emperors. . . . a single friar who goes counter to all Christianity for a thousand years must be wrong. . . . I will have no more to do with him."

Other business took over, and the edict outlawing Luther in the empire was not issued until May 26, long after Luther had departed homeward under safe-conduct.

WHY DIDN'T Charles burn this excommunicated heretic and stamp out Luther's Reformation in its weak early stages? I put this question to a scholar working on Charles V's letters in Constance, where Jan Hus was burned despite an imperial safe-conduct.

"He didn't want to stain his knightly honor, and he had a lot of pots bubbling on the stove," Professor Horst Rabe told me. "The Protestant matter usually had to take a back burner to crises in Italy or Spain, or to the Turkish threat."

At Worms, Luther's life had hung in the balance of Charles's chivalry. Now he was

an outlaw, and his life hung on a ruse. On his return from Worms, he vanished. Rumors spread he had been slain. "O God, if Luther is dead," lamented the artist Dürer, "who will explain to us the Gospel?"

High in the Thuringian Forest I sought out the spot where Luther's wagon was set upon by horsemen. In a mock abduction Luther (foresightedly grabbing Greek and Hebrew Scriptures) was spirited off to the Wartburg, a castle commanding a ridge over Eisenach and a superb sweep of fell and forest. Here, tonsure grown out into unruly dark hair, disguised as a bearded squire—Junker Georg—Luther lived ten months alone with God and the devil under the protective custody of Frederick the Wise.

"Did Luther actually throw an inkwell at the devil?" I was discussing the castle's best known legend with its director, Werner Noth. Luther's Bible lay open on a table in Luther's room, which looks out over sylvan serenity toward the formidable border with West Germany. Relic hunters carried off the original, splinter by splinter, like fragments of the True Cross. A 16th-century table from ancestral Möhra replaces it.

"Luther drove himself hard," Noth told me. "He wrote 14 works here. He was working at a feverish pace on his New Testament, which he translated from Erasmus's Greek in an incredibly short 11 weeks. He was frustrated, lonely, often sick, anxious as an outlaw. In his 50 letters, he mentions being troubled by evil spirits. Yes, the inkwell episode is entirely possible. Why not? People throw vases at walls today."

Disquieting news from Wittenberg intruded on Luther's solitude. Reformers were pushing ahead at a reckless pace. "Good Lord!" Luther wrote. "Will our people at Wittenberg give wives even to the monks? They will not push a wife on me!"

Frederick sent word that "so many sects arose among them that everybody was at sea and none knew who was the cook and who the ladle." But that Luther should not risk his life by returning.

Trusting in "a far higher protection" than the sword, Luther boldly mounted the pulpit in Wittenberg's Town Church and held forth for a week until he had turned the raging torrent of religious revolt. How rash to smash images, strip away comforting

trappings in a heedless rush. He preached what he wrote from Wartburg Castle in "A Faithful Exhortation for all Christians to Shun Riot and Rebellion": Public order and inner faith should go hand in hand.

"The Bible is our vineyard, and there we should all labor and toil," Luther declared. No Pope, no dogma, rather a priesthood of all believers. The trouble was, scrutiny of Scriptures produced as many contradictory interpretations as Luther's writings themselves. He now found himself a checkrein on the Reformation he had unleashed.

Not that attacks let up outside the reformers' camp. A German cleric, Dr. Johannes Cochlaeus, wished to see this "infamous, blaspheming, heretical scamp," Luther, exterminated. This is the Cochlaeus whose venomous biography of Luther would poison the wells of Catholic opinion for 400 years. But opposition only spurs Luther to herculean action. "My wrath is God's wrath," he claims. "God has used my enemies to compel me to raise my voice even more insistently. I must speak, shout, shriek, and write till they have had enough."

Sometimes his wrath is chilling. Luther condemns a woman accused of trying to kill her husband by witchcraft. Witches should be burned: "An example should be made of them to terrify others." Nor should any mercy be shown to Anabaptists, who deny the validity of infant baptism. This dark streak surfaces later when he turns viciously on the Jews, whom earlier he had championed. He urges authorities to burn their synagogues, schools, homes, confiscate their books and money, ship them off to Palestine.

In 1525 Luther urges moderation on peasants, who had taken his sympathy for their just grievances as a call to violence. Then, furious at them for almost ruining his Reformation, he exhorts the princes: "Smite, slay, and stab the murderous and thieving hordes." God will punish princes in His own time. Meanwhile subjects must suffer, obey, and pray. Luther, the archconservative, condemns riot and rebellion as always wrong, and backs secular authority so long as it preserves divine law and order.

"Luther found it easier to make a revolution than to consolidate one," Professor Helmar Junghans told me in Leipzig. He serves on both the state's and the Evangelical



Medieval Marburg, its modern buildings veiled in fog, appears as it did in 1529 when Luther and the Swiss reformer Zwingli debated the meaning of the

Lord's Supper in the castle of Philip of Hesse. The body and blood of Christ are present in the bread and wine, argued Luther. They symbolize His sacrifice, countered Zwingli. Thus the meeting failed to mend the rift that divided the strength of the Reformation and weakened efforts of Protestant rulers to gain autonomy.

Churches' Martin Luther committees. And he is professor of theology at Karl Marx University, the famous 1409 Leipzig University renamed.

"Earlier research concentrated on the young Luther. The older Luther interests us more," continued Professor Junghans, whose two volumes on Luther's last 20 years are among the 100 publications the German Democratic Republic is issuing on Luther subjects and sites this year.

More and more Luther's Reformation became involved with the political maneuvering of the German princes. During the 1530

Diet of Augsburg, he fretted and fumed and fired off missives of rebuke and counsel from Coburg, his protector's southernmost castle 130 miles away, as near as the outlawed Luther could come.

His mild and moderate lieutenant, Philipp Melancthon, drafted the Augsburg Confession, a move toward reconciling Luther's and Rome's views. After Charles rejected that, with Luther's archfoe Eck helping write the refutation, Luther gave up hope in the emperor. The Protestant princes leagued in defense, and Luther finally conceded it fitting "to be ready to meet force."

When it came, the year he died, it plunged Europe into a century of religious wars.

Though Luther continued to speak of the invisible church, the visible church rose before his eyes to seek guidance in organization, liturgy, and Gospel interpretation, thrusting upon him the unwilling role of "Protestant Pope."

When church visitations in Saxony revealed appalling conditions—avowedly celibate clergy living in "wild wedlock" and open fornication, frequenting taverns, unable to recite the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer—Luther undertook to train

replacements and prepared simple sermons that could be read from the pulpit. When his followers, banned by the Roman Church, formed into congregations of German territorial churches, he compiled a book of devotions, a songbook, two catechisms—questions and answers providing a clear summary of principles of the faith.

Unlike John Calvin, whose Reformed Church of Geneva inspired congregations far and wide, today vastly outnumbering Lutherans in America, Luther was not a systematic theologian or church builder. When students treated Luther's word as law, he



PHOTOGRAPHED AT MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE, HAMBURG (ABOVE)

A new soul enters the Evangelical Church through baptism at the font in Wittenberg's Town Church (left), where Luther baptized his son Johann, the first of six children. A gold medallion given to the infant bears his birth year and name in Latin (above). Of seven sacraments central to Roman Catholicism, Luther kept baptism and Communion. Preaching the "priesthood of all believers"—that is, the individual's direct relationship with God—he stressed the congregation's participation in the worship service. In the Town Church, Luther conducted German-language services, including Communion wherein the congregation as well as the pastor partook of wine and received bread in their own hands.

objected: "They are trying to make me into a fixed star. I am an irregular planet."

During most of these years, when Luther's name reverberated across Europe, he remained a stay-at-home professor in the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. When the friars left, he stayed on, the cloister assigned to him as a university residence by the elector.

In 1524, three years after the Pope had excommunicated him, Friar Martin, "with pain and difficulty," laid aside his monkly cowl. A year later, convinced there was no scriptural basis for clerical celibacy and that their vows were wrong and void, Doctor Luther and the former nun Katherine von Bora married, shocking Catholic Europe while, as the 42-year-old bridegroom put it, "the angels laughed, and the devils wept."

Here in the cloister, where their six children were born, they made their home for 20 years of domestic happiness. Here they

housed poor relatives, boarded needy students. And with open hearts they welcomed scholars, exiled clerics, and dignitaries from near and far visiting this upstart frontier university now made so famous by the Reformer that Shakespeare would enroll Prince Hamlet of Denmark here and Christopher Marlowe would make his Doctor Faustus a doctor of theology at Wittenberg.

VISITED this handsome brick-gabled Luther House. One flight up, a large oak-paneled room, with table and benches and a great porcelain stove rising in tiers of allegorical scenes to the beamed ceiling, is Luther's living room.

One can imagine a scene from his day:

The door swings open, and filling the carved doorway stands Doctor Luther himself, moonfaced, heavy-jowled, a big man with tousled dark hair, in academic robes. Wearyed from a day that began at dawn, he



had supped at five. Now follows conversation around the table, then reading before bedtime at nine.

Warmed by genial company and drafts of beer, Doctor Luther taps a cask of conversation: current events, astrology, dreams, nature, lust and love. One-liners from Cicero, Horace, or Ovid, coarse Thuringian jests, *Aesop's Fables*, all laced with homey recollections of student days. He recalls his journey to Rome, how he "knocked a hole" in Tetzels drum, "put the squeeze on" Eck at Leipzig, made a great stand at Worms. "Had I desired to foment trouble, I could have started such a little game that the emperor would not have been safe."

He hears a nightingale sing beautifully. But the croaking of frogs in the Elbe drowns it out. "That's the way it is in the world. This nightingale is Christ, who proclaims the Gospel. He's drowned out by the clamor of the heretics [as Luther called his Roman opponents], who shout with great might. But let these windbags come! I'll grease their stilts so they'll fall."

Even peace-loving Erasmus, the celebrated humanist who "laid the egg that Luther hatched," reaps scorn—though Luther is glad he exposed "monks and priests, snoring in their deep-rooted ignorance."

In Luther, teacher and preacher are one. Rare is the anecdote without its moral. Exulting at the beauty of the nighttime sky, he comments: "He who has built such a vault without pillars must be a master workman." Fond of his dog Töpel (Blockhead), he notes the dog eyeing a piece of meat he expects from his master's hand, gaze riveted, unflickering. "Ah," says Luther, "if only I could pray the way that dog watches that morsel, all his thoughts concentrated on it!"

He talks of love: "The first love is ardent, an intoxicated love which dazzles us and leads us on." But remember, "there's more to it than a union of the flesh. There must be harmony in patterns of life and ways of thinking. The bonds of matrimony alone won't do it."

Then, perhaps reflecting on a trifling row with his Katie (whom he wouldn't give up for all France and Venice too), he speculates how Adam and Eve must have scolded: "You ate the apple," Eve would chide. "But you gave it to me!" retorts Adam.

He snorts at Copernicus's astonishing theory that the earth goes around the sun. "The fool wants to turn the whole of astronomy upside down. I believe the Holy Scriptures, where Joshua commanded the sun, not the earth, to stand still."

He grumbles at the newfangled money economy, inflation, and men's greed. Five or 6 percent interest Luther will concede. But 20 percent, 30, 40, 60 percent! "The devil is in that game." Damnation to usurers, unless they repent and return what they stole.

He deplores the arms race and its deadly devices, firearms and cannon. "I think these things were invented by Satan himself."

To calm his cholera, the doctor picks up his lute and plucks from its strings a soothing melody. He begins to sing; others at the table join in. He exclaims, "Music is the greatest gift, indeed it is divine. It puts to flight all sad thoughts." He adds that music should

.....A MIGHTY Fortress IS OUR GOD.....

SING FESTE BURG

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546), DR. FREDERICK H. HERZOG MARTIN LUTHER

1. A might-y for-tress is our God, A bul-wark nev-er fail-ing;

2. And though this world, with dev-ils filled, Should threat-en to un-do us;

3. That word a-bove all earth-ly powers, No thanks to them, a-void-eth;

Our help-er He a-mid the flood Of mor-tal ills pre-vail-ing;

Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choos-ing;

We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (ABOVE)

"The devil doesn't stay where there's music." Luther's words reflect a musical bent strong since childhood. In music he found solace, inspiration, and entertainment. A strong singer, he also played flute and lute. Today master lutenist Roland Zimmer (*facing page*), who performs professionally in East Germany, has recorded Reformation compositions. Luther established congregational singing as a regular part of worship, wrote hymns, and helped compile a Protestant hymnal. One of his works, known as the "battle hymn of the Reformation," is familiar to millions in many languages and arrangements (*above*).



be supported by the state, responsible for preserving the arts as well as laws.

We see him a child among his children. As little Martin is being taken to bed, he says: "Go to sleep, dear little boy. I have no gold to leave you, but a rich God." Then with mock seriousness: "If you become a lawyer, I will hang you on the gallows," and adds: "Because some lawyers are greedy and rob their clients blind, it is almost impossible for lawyers to be saved. It's difficult enough for theologians."

Then one day in 1542, we feel Luther's heartrending grief when, after a brief illness, his 13-year-old daughter Magdalene dies in his arms. "Darling Lena, it is well with you. You will rise and shine like a star, yes, like the sun," he chokes out. "I have sent a saint to heaven."

Luther will survive his daughter by little more than three years. He speaks for God in an age when every divine claims to, yet is often racked with self-doubts. "You alone know everything? What if you should lead all these people into error and into eternal damnation? *What if you are wrong?*"

Though ill and often plunged into depression, Luther worked with demonic energy to the end. Some weeks after celebrating his 62nd birthday, he traveled through winter's misery to mediate between quarreling counts of Mansfeld. By the time he reached Eisleben, he was seriously ill. Yet in his last few days Luther not only settled the dispute but also preached four sermons, ordained two pastors, founded a school, wrote bantering letters to his concerned Katie, and jotted notes perhaps for another treatise.

Despite doses of ground "unicorn" horn in wine and other wondrous medications, he died peacefully at three o'clock in the morning of February 18, 1546.

TWO MONTHS EARLIER the Council of Trent opened in northern Italy. By the time the third and last phase concluded in 1563, the Church of Rome had committed to rid itself of gross abuses, clarified and reaffirmed Catholic dogma, made provision for a new catechism, and stamped Reformation teachings as heresy. The Catholic Reformation, in full swing, armed with the rack and fire of the Inquisition and the mind-shackling *Index of*



The Reformer sleeps in a tomb at the foot of the pulpit in Wittenberg's Castle Church (facing page). In keeping with his conviction that the Word of God should be accessible to all, he made the sermon central to the worship service and himself preached thousands in his lifetime.

Luther's ministry ended on February 18, 1546. Asked on his deathbed, "Are you willing to die in the name of the Christ and the doctrine that you have preached?" he answered, "Yes." Katherine died six years later in Torgau, where her tombstone effigy (above) stands in the Town Church.

Praising the Reformation and decrying the Catholic Church, this 1569 painting by Lucas Cranach the Younger takes its theme from Christ's parable of the laborers in the vineyard: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:43.

At center, Luther wields a rake, cultivating healthy grapevines with other reformers. To the left, the Catholic hierarchy destroys vines and chokes a well with stones. Apparently led by the Pope, ecclesiastics file through the gate as laborers, seeking wages from Christ and receiving none.

Cranach painted this as an epitaph for Paul Eber, a Wittenberg University professor and a pastor, who is pictured to the left of Luther. His family appears as pious Protestants at lower right. Eber is the German word for boar, and Cranach's allegory may also play on the words of Pope Leo X, who branded Luther a boar in the vineyards of the Lord.

Such memorial paintings filled Lutheran churches during the 16th century. While Protestant liturgical art declined in favor of austere church interiors, the Catholic Church became a leading patron of the 17th-century baroque artists. Their elaborate style promoted the image of a revitalized church, successful in stemming the spread of Protestantism in Italy, France, Spain, and Poland.

ADN BEREICH ZENTRALBILD, DDR





Forbidden Books, put Jesuit shock troops in the front lines of the struggle for men's bodies and souls.

Rome demanded unquestioning obedience. "I will believe that the white object I see is black if that should be the decision of the hierarchical church," asserted Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola. "Even if my own father were a heretic, I would gather wood to burn him," affirmed the pitiless inquisitor

Pope Paul IV. While Calvinists stripped their chapels to bare essentials, monumental baroque churches, filled with theatrically pious art, proclaimed the power and prestige of the resurgent Church of Rome.

As men hardened their hearts against those across the battle lines of faith, Protestants entrenched behind an ossified orthodoxy. Meanwhile, admirers and detractors rarefied Luther into a two-dimensional

caricature—saint on one side of the doctrinal fence, Satan on the other. Tolerance and mutual understanding had to wait 400 years, until our century had spent itself in two World Wars.

The vigorous Church of Rome of today incorporates more of Luther's reforms than most laymen realize. And it actively engages in ecumenical dialogue with Protestant as well as Eastern Orthodox churches.

Spontaneous dancing whirls young participants in a Church Day celebration in Erfurt, one of seven church rallies sanctioned by East Germany for Luther Year. Though seldom in church, young adults are increasingly drawn to Christianity. Like Luther, they seek new forms of worship. And, like Luther, they may defy the state in doing so.