

Contract between Hans Luder and Tile Rinck, Mansfeld, August 1, 1507

Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

Was Martin Luther born into humble circumstances, as he later claimed? Not according to this contract, which reveals the business success of Hans Luder, Martin Luther's father. Luder came to Mansfeld to profit from the area's substantial copper deposits and eventually partnered with Hans Lüttich, who was from an important family. This 1507 contract

between Luder and a representative of Lüttich's underage children states that business was to continue as usual despite Lüttich's death, and that both parties were to profit from a smelting furnace. Luder's income from three or more furnaces enabled him to pay for Martin to attend school in Mansfeld, Magdeburg, Eisenach, and later the university in Erfurt (1501–1505).

Marbles, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home,
Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Fired clay

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

Playing with marbles was a popular pastime for young and old in the late Middle Ages (c. 1300–1500). Whether the goal was striking a target marble, knocking others out of a circle, or sinking a marble in a hole, the winner always took all—everyone else would “lose their marbles.” Marbles were modeled by children at home using clay or soil and fired in the family's stove. The somewhat lopsided marbles found in Mansfeld were clearly handmade. Perhaps young Martin Luther himself helped make some of them.

Bone bowling pin, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home,
Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Bovine phalanx

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

This cow phalanx (toe bone) was cut to flatten its base, hollowed out, and filled with molten lead, allowing it to reliably stand up. All this was done to produce a tiny bowling pin. Of course, untreated phalanxes would also do the job, but they would be very wobbly, apt to fall down by themselves. Paintings from the 1500s show children bowling at pins lined up along walls. Presumably, a skillful bit of spin or bounce on the ball would knock them down.

Bird-shaped whistle, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500

White fired clay

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

The remains of a mouthpiece indicate that this hollow figure of a bird was a whistle similar to some used by children today. Partially filled with water and blown into, the whistle would warble like a songbird, hence the whistle's shape.

Female figurine, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home,
Lutherstraße 24–26, first half of the 16th century
Pipe clay

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

Figurines of saints were mass-produced by forming soft white clay with a mold and firing it. This draped statuette, despite a missing head, clearly represents a female holding an oversized rosary. It was probably bought during a pilgrimage as a souvenir or proof of participation and is an example of popular religious devotion. At home it may have served as a toy. Besides foreshadowing young Martin's life as a monk, this small figure represents his exposure to the practice of praying to saints, which he would later condemn.

Pilgrim's horn, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home,
Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Earthenware with reconstructions

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

This horn was a memento of a pilgrimage to Aachen in northwest Germany. The town's cathedral still holds what was once regarded as the most important collection of textile relics in Europe, including a dress reputedly worn by the Virgin Mary, baby Jesus' diapers, and Jesus' loincloth. Though no longer

considered genuine, they were wondrous objects to Martin Luther's contemporaries. The horns, or Aachhorns, were sold by the thousands at market stands in the town's main square, where the relics were shown. According to accounts of the time, the appearance of the holy garments precipitated pleas for God's grace and mercy—followed by a deafening roar when the crowds sounded their freshly bought Aachhorns.

Pupil of Veit Stoss

The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne, c 1515

Linden wood, polychrome

Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach

Veneration of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, grew in the late Middle Ages (c. 1300–1500), and depictions of the Virgin and Child with Mary's mother, Saint Anne, became especially popular in Germany. An altar dedicated to Anne was erected in the Church of Saint George in Mansfeld in 1503. Martin Luther called out to her when he was nearly struck by lightning on a stormy night in 1505: "Help me, Saint Anne, and I will become a monk." As both the patron saint of miners and a guardian against lightning strikes and sudden death, Anne was an obvious choice.

Club-shaped glasses, Naumburg Marketplace,
16th century
Forest glass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

Beer was big in Martin Luther's day, and so were the glasses used to drink it. Large, tapered, club-shaped beer glasses like these examples excavated from the Naumburg Marketplace frequently appear in depictions of beer drinking in Luther's time. They were often decorated with horizontal glass-thread hoops, giving feasting revelers a good grip no matter how greasy or unsteady their hands became. Similar if less intact glasses were found in the home of Luther's parents in Mansfeld, as well as in Luther's house in Wittenberg.

Earthenware bowl or basin, Mansfeld,
Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Earthenware, yellow glazing

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

This low bowl or basin, a type that was quite rare in households of the early 1500s, was found in the home of Luther's parents in Mansfeld. It may have been used for serving food, washing hands, or both.

Tripod pot with lid, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Earthenware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

This three-legged pot and a dozen like it were found at the home of Martin Luther's parents in a plague pit, a hole where household items that may have been infected with the plague were buried. As knock-off versions of cast-brass tripod kettles, they were popular in the later Middle Ages (c. 1300–1500):

cheap to buy, intensively used, and readily discarded. They turn up anywhere that soil is moved in old European towns. The three stubby, almost indestructible feet are the secret of their success—they never wobbled or tipped among the embers or burning logs on the hearth. Telltale soot and smudges on the pot's underbelly suggest that it provided Luther's family many meals before it was tossed in the pit.

Protective hood of a plague doctor,

presumably 17th century

Samite, leather, selenite

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

The eerie appearance of a plague doctor in his beaked hood, usually accompanied by a flat black hat and black full-length cloak, struck almost as much fear in people as the disease itself. Worn in the Early Modern era (c. 1500–c. 1800), the hood was intended to protect the doctor from infection; the beak was

filled with herbs or sponges soaked with fragrant oils, to ward off the putrid “miasma” thought to carry disease. The hood was tightly laced at the neck, and panes of translucent crystal covered the eyeholes. Ventilation holes in the beak allowed the doctor to breathe through his nose. Martin Luther frequently experienced plague epidemics and witnessed the death of two of his brothers in Mansfeld.

Mascaron mounts, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500

Brass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

These small, grotesque masks, known as mascarons, were punched out of brass sheets and riveted to the belt or choker of an elegant woman's outfit in the early 1500s, possibly one owned by Martin Luther's mother or sister. They are comically

monstrous, with wild shaggy hair or manes, googly eyes, puffed-up cheeks, bulbous noses, and leering mouths. Besides adding pizzazz to formal finery, the faces evoked the legendary “wild men,” uncivilized representatives of a rowdy otherworld—an evocative counterpoint to the prim and orderly domestic life of the late medieval period. No matter how much the owner liked her decorative dress, it was quickly tossed aside for fear of infection when plague struck the household.

Sequins and rosettes, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500

Brass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

These clothing appliqués—both the rosette mounts and the sequins with a leaf-shaped jingle pendant—were stitched onto stylish velvet jackets and gowns or spangled chokers worn by well-to-do, young, fashionable women at events and

parties. This costume jewelry was the property of Martin Luther's mother or another woman in the house where he grew up. If it was his mother's, it counters the image of a God-fearing, stern woman of humble means that Martin Luther later described. In fact, Margarethe (Martin's mother) was the wife of one of the richest men in town, and women in this position at the time felt free to show off their wealth.

Belt mount with letter appliqué, Mansfeld,
Luther's parents' home, Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500
Brass on leather

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory, Halle

Martin Luther's claim of humble origins doesn't match what archaeologists found when they excavated the yard of his parents' home. This ornate belt mount was one of many luxury items recovered from a pit filled with household goods.

They seem to have been hurriedly buried after being “contaminated” during a plague epidemic. This elaborate mount decorated the tip of a long belt that was part of a woman's outfit in the 1400s. The belts loosely gathered the woman's dress under her breasts, passed through the ornate buckle, and swept downward, with the decorated tip dangling just above the floor. This unique ornament shows the Gothic letter *D*. Since one of Martin's sisters was named Dorothea, this may have belonged to her.

Copper slag, Mansfeld, Luther's parents' home,
Lutherstraße 24–26, c. 1500

State Office of Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

Excavations at Martin Luther's childhood home turned up a remarkable amount of copper slag, the waste that remains after processing raw ore into metal. In Luther's youth, Mansfeld was an industrial wasteland. The surrounding hills were cleared of trees to satisfy the huge demand for timbers to shore up mine

shafts and even more for fuel to process ore. Wood became a luxury item. So as early as 1484 water was heated in Mansfeld by throwing in glowing hot slag. Glassy slag retains its stability even in the face of drastic temperature changes, while heated stones can easily explode. The large number of rusty iron nails found in the Luders'/Luthers' yard tells a similar story: used boards were being burned instead of scarce and expensive fresh timber.

Nappian and Neucke, the legendary founders of Mansfeld's copper shale mine, c. 1290

Sandstone

Lutherstadt Eisleben, Städtische Sammlungen

Mansfeld's copper shale mine dates back more than eight hundred years. According to legend, two miners (Nappian and Neucke) first mined and smelted copper shale at Kupferberg (Copper Mountain), about three miles from Mansfeld, in 1199. These sculptures of the pioneering miners were installed in a small

chapel built nearby in 1289 and were still there four hundred years later, before they were moved to a museum.

Nappian and Neucke, at work in the mine, hold irons and mallets. Their characteristic miners' clothing is easily recognizable. Their hooded cloaks protect their heads and necks from dripping water and falling stones. Their prone position is no surprise, since the mine shafts were only about sixteen inches high.

Imperial Eagle beaker, Bohemia (?), c. 1615
Glass, enamel painting

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

This ceremonial drinking vessel shows the continued popularity of a century-old symbol of the Holy Roman Empire, which you can see in a nearby print. The design became so popular, in fact, that glass painters during the second half of the 1600s were required to paint this particular subject as part of their master's examination.

Albrecht Dürer (designer)

German, 1471–1528

Hans Krafft the Elder (medal maker)

German, 1481–c. 1542

Nuremberg Medal of Honor for Emperor Charles V, 1521

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

The Nuremberg city council commissioned the Nuremberg Medal of Honor for Emperor Charles V and intended to give him one hundred copies when he visited the city for the Diet (governing assembly) in 1521. The Nuremberg council wanted to impress the emperor with the medals' material value and quality, excellent artistry, and technical craftsmanship. But the carefully planned Diet could not be held in Nuremberg because of an outbreak of the plague and was moved to the city of Worms—where Martin Luther refused to recant his beliefs. The medals were never given out and are quite rare today.

Lucas Cranach the Elder (designer)

German, 1472–1553

Hans Krafft the Elder (medal maker)

German, 1481–c. 1542

Medal (so-called Statthaltertaler) on the Governor-Generalship invested in Frederick the Wise in 1507, 1513 Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

During the Renaissance, propaganda and the rise of medal-making went hand in hand in Germany. This medal marks the elevation of Frederick the Wise, a supporter of Martin Luther, to higher office. Since they were made in quantity, medals helped spread the word of his new status. To ensure that the likeness would reflect his wishes, Frederick the Wise commissioned respected artist Lucas Cranach the

Elder to first create stone-cut models for the medal, which Frederick's die-cutters could follow. The front of the medal uses inscriptions and shields to proclaim Frederick's power, while the reverse asserts his loyalty to Emperor Maximilian. Such loyalty was crucial, for the governor-general's role was to keep order whenever Maximilian was absent from the empire.

Medal of Elector John and Duke John

Frederick of Saxony, 1530

Silver, fire-gilded

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

Upon the death of his brother Frederick the Wise in 1525, John became the Elector of Saxony, one of the elite who elected the Holy Roman emperor. A committed Lutheran, he decreed the introduction of Protestantism into his domains that same year. In 1527, he founded the Evangelical-Lutheran

Church of Saxony and became its first regional bishop. In 1531, he and another nobleman organized the Schmalkaldic League, a defense alliance of the Protestant imperial estates. He also supported the Reformation-influenced Wittenberg University, where Martin Luther taught. John's unwavering commitment to the Protestant denomination earned him the nickname "the Steadfast" the year this medal was made as part of an elaborate propaganda campaign. Here he is depicted with his son John Frederick, who was also an avid adherent of Luther and assumed the electorate when John died in 1532.

Wolf Milicz

**Medal of Elector John Frederick the
Magnanimous of Saxony, 1536**
Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha, Münzkabinett

John Frederick became Elector of Saxony upon the death of his father, John, in 1532. He led the Protestant princes in battle against the imperial forces of Charles V. The occasion for this medal was the reaffirmation of the princes' union, the

Schmalkaldic League, a defense alliance of the Protestant imperial estates. John Frederick's father had cofounded the league, and the medal represents his authority over church governance in his territories, which had a strongly Lutheran bent under his leadership. On the other side, a Bible verse from Paul's Letter to the Romans encircles a battle scene: "He [i.e., the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his [God's] wrath on the wrongdoer."

Saber with etched calendar blade, Holy Roman Empire, blade before 1535, hilt added around 1700
Iron and steel, etched

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

The blade of this saber is etched with a perpetual calendar for the years 1535 to 1551. This type of calendar could tell you which day of the week a particular date would fall on in the future. In the closing years of the Middle Ages, astronomy and astrology were increasingly popular in Europe,

particularly among the political elite, who believed in “the power of the stars.” In this context, sword blades with calendar inscriptions seem to have been a peculiarity of the Holy Roman Empire. They could be used to determine fixed and moveable religious holidays, especially the all-important date of Easter.

Hunting knife set of Elector Frederick the Wise, Saxony, first quarter of the 16th century
Iron, silver, antler, and leather

Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach

This set of hunting implements consists of a large chopping knife (*Praxe*), two smaller knives, and a knife and a two-pronged fork for eating. The *Praxe* could be worn and used both as a weapon and as a tool to cut large portions of meat. The pointed smaller knives could be used to kill wounded game with a quick, deliberate stab to the neck.

This set of knives belonged to Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony. Frederick was a strong supporter of Martin Luther, which put him out of favor with Emperor Charles V. The broad blade of the *Praxe* bears etched inscriptions on both sides. These texts celebrate Frederick's wise reign and his role in furthering the Lutheran doctrine, and they point to the many buildings erected under his patronage as well as his founding of the University in Wittenberg. Luther himself wrote these words of praise.

Emperor Maximilian I's pilgrim's garment,

Iberian Peninsula, late-14th/early-15th century

Linen, silk embroidery

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

This linen garment, presumably made at the court of Cordoba in the early 1400s, is adorned with intricate Islamic ornamental embroidery. There are fourteen slits with round toggle buttons in the seam, floor-length sleeves, and shoulders that can be opened or closed as needed.

This garment was previously held in the vault of the Benedictine Abbey of Echternach, in present-day Luxembourg. Emperor Maximilian I visited Echternach during a pilgrimage in 1512. He took part in a procession and worship service with the Benedictine monks, after which he donated the pilgrim's garment he was wearing to the monks.

Desiderius Helmschmid (armorer)

German, 1513–1579

Helmet made for Emperor Charles V,

c. 1536

Steel and iron, etched, fire gilt; brass

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

Emperor Charles V ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1519 to 1556. Because he inherited territories from both sides of his family, his kingdom was far bigger than the one governed by his grandfather and predecessor, Maximilian I. This finely decorated helmet was one of the most visible symbols of Charles' wealth and power.

Charles faced tremendous pressure from France and the Ottoman Empire of the Turks, and spent a lot of time defending his

borders. Protestant dukes took advantage of the Emperor's troubles by threatening to withhold military support unless he gave them the right to govern religious practice in their own territories. In the end, Charles went to war against the Schmalkaldic League, the defensive alliance of the Protestant territories.

Jörg Seusenhofer

Austrian, 1516–1580

Helmet made for King Francis I of France, 1539/40

Steel and iron, etched and fire gilt

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

King Francis I of France was the main political rival of Emperor Charles V. Francis worried that Charles would gain so much territory that France would be surrounded, cut off from trade routes. So he went on the offensive, even challenging Charles' right to become Emperor. To keep pressure on his foe, Francis would also form opportunistic alliances with the Sultan of the Muslim Ottoman Empire and the Protestant princes of Germany.

During a lull in hostilities in 1539, Charles' brother, Archduke Ferdinand I, decided to send Francis a spectacular diplomatic gift: two suits of armor made by the renowned Innsbruck armorer Jörg Seusenhofer. Seusenhofer traveled to Paris to take the king's measurements, and completed the suits of armor, including this helmet. But a renewal of hostilities prevented him from ever delivering this fine gift.

Dalmatic with the crest of Archbishop Ernest of Saxony, central Germany,

1480–1513

Fabric (northern Italy): violet silk satin, silk damask

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt,

Domschatz Halberstadt

This garment from Halberstadt Cathedral, worn by deacons during services, is remarkably intact. Due to the combination of violet warp thread (vertical threads) and golden-yellow weft thread (horizontal threads), the fabric alternates between a copper color and a golden luster in different lights.

Two crests are clearly visible on the back. On the left is a combination of the crests of the Dioceses of Magdeburg and Halberstadt. On the right is the Duchy of Saxony crest.

These crests point to Ernest II of Saxony (a younger brother of Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony). Ernest was made Archbishop of Magdeburg in 1476, and then named administrator of the Diocese of Halberstadt in 1479. In both of these positions, he immediately preceded Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg. Like Albert, he had to pay bribes to the Pope to get his additional position.

Silk brocade dalmatic, central Germany(?),
late 15th century/early 16th century

Silk fabric (northern Italy): red silk damask with brocades of
gilded silver strip-thread

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz
Halberstadt

This brocade dalmatic would only have been worn by clergy for special church services. The intense red silk, shimmering silver-wrapped threads, and floral pattern combine to produce a vibrant effect. The large amount of precious material in this piece indicates that it was quite expensive. We can assume that the material was donated by a high-ranking person, probably Archbishop Ernest of Saxony or another member of the Electoral House of Saxony.

Garment with gilded ornamental plates to adorn a statue, central Germany, late 14th century/
early 15th century

Green silk-satin, gilded silver plates

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz
Halberstadt

The size and form of this cape suggest that it was used to clothe a statue. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that images of saints carried the real spiritual presence of the people they represent. Thus, decorating a saint's image was considered an offering to the saint. The gilded plates sewn onto the cape refer to courtly, or chaste, love. They may have been jewelry that was donated to adorn the garment.

We do not know which sculpture this cape dressed, but it was likely an image of the Virgin Mary, because two of the badges are mementoes of Marian pilgrimage sites from around 1500.

Wall fountain with bronze spigot

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Earthenware, green glazing (with additions); bronze
State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

Fragments of twenty-two green-glazed, ceramic wall fountains were found during excavations in the courtyard of the Luther House. This one is the most complete. With bowls lying beneath them, such fountains were used for washing hands before and after meals, and for mixing ink for writing.

The decoration depicts Jesus on the Cross. A nude sinner gazes at Jesus and lifts his folded hands in prayer. John the Baptist rests one hand on the sinner's shoulder and

points to Jesus with the other. Nearby, Moses clutches the Ten Commandments and holds up his right hand in warning. Adam's skull emerges from the earth and will be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus' wounds. The whole scene is meant to prompt those washing their hands or preparing ink to meditate on the purifying blood of Jesus.

Golden chasuble with the crest of Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg

Central Germany, 1530–1535

Silk, gold, silver, pearls, parchment

Vereinigte Domstifter zu Merseburg und Naumburg und des
Kollegiatstifts Zeitz

We have to use our mind's eye to recover the original gleaming golden splendor of this garment. It was commissioned by Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg and bears his crest. In 1535, Albert consecrated a new bishop in Merseburg Cathedral and may have

worn this precious chasuble for the occasion, later donating it to the cathedral.

As one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Empire and the holder of multiple church offices, Albert was an extremely powerful and ambitious figure. When he paid an enormous bribe to the pope to add yet another office—archbishop of Mainz—to his list of titles, he became involved in a fund-raising scheme that triggered Martin Luther's critique of church practices.



Albrecht Dürer, Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg, 1519, engraving

Blue chasuble with embroidered cross and the crest of Albert of Brandenburg

Germany, 1513–1520s

Silk, silver, gold

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

Albert of Brandenburg was the most powerful German church ruler of his time. He held the positions of archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg and was the administrator for the Diocese of Halberstadt. He gave several donations to the Halberstadt Cathedral, including textiles bearing

his crest. Here, his crest appears at the bottom of the cross between Saint Paul, who holds a sword, and Saint Peter, who holds a key.

The embroidered cross was made separately and applied to the garment. In the center of the cross, Mary kneels before the enthroned figures of God the Father and Christ, who together hold a large crown over her head. The hovering dove of the Holy Spirit completes the representation of the Trinity. Beneath this ensemble is the Annunciation, the beginning event of Christian salvation. At the end of the arms of the cross are several apostles.

Dalmatic with the crest of Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg

Probably central Germany, 1513 (at the earliest) until
the 1520s

Fabric (northern Italy, late 15th/early 16th century):
white and red silk damask

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

This is a dalmatic, a sleeved tunic worn by bishops and deacons. The red and white fabric, accentuated by gold trimming, makes it an especially festive example. The crest on the back tells us that the garment was a donation from the powerful Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg. He gave it to the Diocese of Halberstadt, one of several regions under his control.

This and other priestly outfits from Halberstadt are in remarkably good condition because the parishioners eventually followed Luther and stopped using such regal textiles in church services.

Episcopal glove with the Lamb of God

Central Germany, 15th century

Knitted white linen; embroidery: silver strip-thread, gilded silver strip-thread, silk thread

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

Bishops and other high-ranking clergy had the privilege of wearing special clothing, including elaborate gloves. Gloves like these were worn only during Mass until the washing of hands before the Eucharist (the blessing of the bread and wine).

In the middle of the embroidered medallion are the Lamb of God with a golden flag of victory and a golden chalice, which collects the blood of the lamb. This motif corresponds to what happens during Mass, where the sacrifice of Christ takes place on the altar. In this context, the leafy twigs sprouting from the branch refer to the rebirth that comes through Christ's triumph over death on the cross.

Arm reliquary of the apostle James the Elder

Saxony, first half of the 14th century

Wood, gilded silver, quartz, amethyst, ruby, turquoise, sapphire, mother-of-pearl, glass

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

Is this the golden hand of God? For the faithful, it almost was. This shrine protects and presents a piece of bone said to be from the apostle James the Elder (James the Greater). The form of the container suggests its content: an arm relic. James was one

of the first followers of Jesus and the first to die for his beliefs when his head was cut off under the rule of Herod. According to legend, his body was brought to Spain. His supposed grave, at Santiago de Compostela, was one of the most popular destinations for pilgrims. Most believers could not afford such a journey, but portable relics like the one here enabled them to encounter the honored companion of Jesus without going far from home.

Warming ball

Meuse region or northern France, 1280–1300

Gilded copper; chiseled

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

In a cold church, this heavy object warmed the hands of the priest during Mass when he had to handle the sacred substances of the Catholic faith: the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. In the middle of the warming ball there was a device that could be filled with hot sand or a glowing piece of metal. The gilded copper ball is divided into eight fields engraved with depictions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (authors of the Gospels) and their symbols: the angel, lion, bull, and eagle.

Chalice and paten

Germany, 1501

Chalice: Silver, gilded; enamel

Paten: Silver, gilded; enamel

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

Chalices (cups) and patens (plates) come into contact with the transformed elements of the Eucharist. These elements are the host (bread) and wine that have been consecrated by a priest's blessing. The host was laid upon the paten and the wine was

poured into the chalice. According to the Roman Catholic faith, both are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus, a process called transubstantiation. Six reliefs encircle the foot of the chalice: the Crucifixion of Christ, Saint Benedict, Saint Lawrence, Mary Magdalene, Saint Stephen, and the crest of the Diocese of Gardar in Greenland. Gardar was the seat of the bishop who donated these objects to Halberstadt Cathedral.

Monstrance

Germany, second quarter of the 15th century

Silver, gilded

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Domschatz Halberstadt

A monstrance (from the Latin *monstrare*, to show) is a vessel for displaying the host, the bread or wafer blessed by a priest to make it sacred. Catholics consume an individual host during the ritual of Communion and, according to Church teaching, the host becomes the body of Jesus. A monstrance can be placed on the altar for worship or carried in processions.

This monstrance features miniature architectural motifs of the day: delicate buttresses, supporting arches, and pinnacles. Jesus on the Cross tops the spire. The center of the monstrance is a crescent-shaped bracket to hold the host. There would have been a cylinder of glass or rock crystal that presented and protected the host, but it has been lost. The architectural elements suggest an understanding of the monstrance as the Church of God, with Jesus at its center.

Probably Leipzig missal workshop

Choir book of Naumburg Cathedral,

1504–after 1506

Parchment, bound in wooden boards covered in pigskin

Vereinigte Domstifter zu Merseburg und Naumburg und des
Kollegiatstifts Zeitz

This choir book is one of the largest and finest manuscripts to survive from the Middle Ages. It belongs to a set of eight such volumes. These manuscripts contain abundant high-quality miniature paintings

and leafy designs. At least five different artists painted and gilded (decorated with gold) the miniatures that correspond to special festivals. While the miniatures contain representations of the Virgin Mary and the saints, a rich variety of forms and colors are present in the elaborate vine ornamentation. Alongside motifs from court culture and comical images, there are remarkably natural representations of plants and animals, with many species of birds.

Ars moriendi (The art of dying)

Leipzig: Konrad Kachelofen, around 1495

Evangelische Marktkirchengemeinde Halle (Saale), Marienbibliothek

The *Ars moriendi*, the art of dying, was a best seller in the late Middle Ages. Originally the booklet served as a manual for priests caring for the dying, aiding mental and spiritual preparation during a person's final hours. Later, in times of plague, when the priests could not keep up with the hordes of dying people, the books were also widely read by laypersons. They

could get cheap editions made available by the rise of the printing industry in the late 1400s.

The presence of saints and angels on one side of the deathbed and demons on the other symbolizes the contest for the soul of the dying person. The text contrasts temptation and strong faith, despair and hope, impatience and fortitude, vanity and humility, greed and abstinence. The conclusion presents a blessed death with the soul of the deceased being received by angels into heaven.

Georg Spalatin

**Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder
(illustrations)**

**Dye zaigung des hochlobwirdigen hailigthums
der Stiff kirchen aller hailigen zu wittenburg
(The Wittenberg Relic Book)**

Wittenberg: Symphorian Reinhart, 1509

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, owned a spectacular collection of relics (bodily remains said to belong to saints) and exquisitely crafted reliquaries (elaborate containers to hold and display the relics). One day a year, pilgrims flocked to see the sacred objects. By visiting the relics and honoring them, they could receive more than half a million days of indulgence—a reduction of their punishment in the afterlife. By 1509, Frederick owned 5,005 pieces, and he saw fit to publish an illustrated catalogue of his collection. The book encouraged believers to come to the yearly presentation of the relics in Wittenberg

and guided them through the rooms, identifying the contents and location of each reliquary. Of course, it could also serve as a souvenir. The woodcut illustrations are based on drawings made by members of Lucas Cranach the Elder's workshop. Ten of the drawings are exhibited nearby.

The book shown here is printed on vellum, a very expensive material, which suggests that this copy was a gift from Frederick the Wise to someone important. The foreword characterizes Frederick as a God-given ruler, promoter of science, and religious patron of the arts.

Unknown artists at the Wittenberg Court

Drawings of the relic collection of

Frederick the Wise, c. 1509

Ink over graphite, watercolor

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

These drawings served as the basis for illustrations in the Wittenberg Relic Book, displayed in a nearby case. The book described the spectacular collection of relics (bodily remains and objects linked to saints or Jesus) and reliquaries (elaborate containers to hold and display the relics) owned by Frederick the Wise. Each of the drawings bears German and Latin inscriptions, here translated into English, describing the location and contents of the reliquary illustrated. Many of the reliquaries contained more than one relic.

Tower reliquary

Labeled top right: The second piece of the second row

Below left, crossed through: In this / gilded monstrance /
are these pieces / from / the grave of Christ /
tablecloth of the evening meal / the crib of our Lord /
the Son, Jesus

Verso: New monstrance in which there is a large part
of a nail with which Christ was crucified and a large
part of the tongue of the Lord etc, of Saint Macario and
Quriaqos, of Saint Habundo

Gothic architecture reliquary

Labeled top left: The eighth of the fourth row

Verso: Monstrance, large and precious containing the relics of the robe of the blessed virgin Mary, spotted with the blood of Christ, and of the sheet of the Lord with which he was girded when he washed the disciples' feet

Arm reliquary

Labeled top left: The twelfth piece of the fourth row

Verso: In this silver-plated large arm is a remarkable piece from Saint Kunigunde, who was Emperor Henry's former wife

Triptych with the Magi, Virgin of Mercy, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria

Labeled top left: The fourth piece of the fifth row

Below middle: The fourth piece of the fifth row

Verso: In these panels with the Holy Three Kings one finds these relics / of Saint Matthew the Apostle, Luke the Evangelist, Otto and Henry, kings, Felicitas the blessed virgin

Duke Rudolf brought this relic from Costewitz, where there was a general council

Statuette of Saint Wolfgang

Labeled top left: The third piece of the seventh row

Verso: In the picture of Saint Wolfgang: Wolfgang, Sebastian, Paul the Apostle, Anthony, Lawrence, Martin / Of Saint Barbara, Ludmilla, Marando, Gothardo, of the stone on which Christ stood when he ascended

Ostrich egg ciborium

Labeled top left: Saint Barbara / the eleventh
in the seventh row

Verso: Bishop Clement / of Saint Eustace /
Pangaian martyr

A ciborium is a container for holding consecrated hosts, the bread or wafer blessed by a priest and given to worshippers during Communion. This one was made from an ostrich egg, a rare and exotic object in Europe at the time.

Monstrance reliquary

Labeled top left: The eighth in the seventh row

Middle right: Next to the foot: is broken

Verso: In this gilded monstrance / from the tomb of
Christ / from the cloth of the last supper of Christ /
crib of David / of the image of Christ

Reliquary cross

Labeled above: The first piece of the third row

Middle right: In the middle of this crystal cross is large beautiful gem

Verso: In the middle of this crystal cross is a large gem /
of the sponge of the Lord / of the seamless garment /
from which Christ was beaten with rods / in the foot ten
relics / Saint Stephen the first martyr / and the stone on
which Christ shed his bloody sweat

Statuette of Saint Wenceslas

Labeled top right: The tenth piece of the fourth row

Verso: In this gilded image of Saint Wenceslas are many relics of his holy body

Madonna and Child with Saint Anne

Labeled top right: The fourth in the sixth row

Verso: In this image of Anne / the right thumb of
Saint Anne / the clothes of Mary the Virgin / the belt of
Mary the Virgin / from the grave of Mary the Virgin [...]

**Indulgence for the Construction
of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome
Leipzig: Melchior Lotter the Elder**

June 12, 1517

Printed on parchment with attached seal in
a wood capsule

Mühlhausen Town Archive

This example of an indulgence letter from the pope was issued on June 12, 1517, for all members of the Dominican priory—a religious community—in the city of Mühlhausen, about 120 miles southwest of Wittenberg, where Martin Luther lived at the time. The wax seal of the pope features Saint Peter's Basilica and Saint Peter himself with a key and a tiara, suggesting that the sale of indulgences would support the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica.

Indulgence chest, 16th century

(padlock from 20th century)

Iron plates studded with straps, forged lid lock with five bolts

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Buyers of indulgences put their contributions in chests, which became a flashpoint of the Reformation. They were encouraged by slogans, including this one attributed to Johannes Tetzel, Albert of Brandenburg's chief agent for the sale

of indulgences: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Agents could count the money in the iron dish around the coin slot before dropping it in. The locks sealing the chest required several keys held by different people, so that the chest couldn't be opened unless all the key holders were present. Local German officials were alarmed at how much wealth was leaving their territories—and headed for Rome—in these chests.

Lucas Cranach the Elder, workshop

German, 1472–1553

Frederick the Wise, 1532

Oil on copper beech

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

In 1502, Frederick the Wise of Saxony founded the University of Wittenberg. Six years later, Luther was invited to teach theology there, and he remained on staff for the rest of his life. The university became famous as the place where ideas of the Reformation

were discussed and disseminated. Even as serious controversies arose around Luther, Frederick remained his protector until his own death in 1525.

This is one of sixty nearly identical portraits of Frederick that his nephew John Frederick ordered from Lucas Cranach. John Frederick hoped that they would help solidify his claim to the office of elector when his father died in 1532. Texts praising Frederick were pasted onto the portraits, and the founding of the university was cited as one of his greatest achievements.

Missale Speciale (Special Missal)
Strasbourg: Reinhard Beck the Elder, 1518

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

In the 700s, in a manual called the missal, the Roman Catholic Church codified the church service of the Eucharist, in which bread and wine blessed by priests are consumed as Jesus' body and blood. A kind of script for priests, the missal contained Bible texts, prayers, and songs. The exact order of the service was fixed, and the ritual of the Mass minimized the amount of participation from the congregation. The *Missale Speciale*, first published in Basel in 1473, was a shorter form of the Mass for side altars and subsidiary churches.

**Luther's handwritten marginalia
on Saint Jerome**

**In: Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus,
Operum Omnium divi Eusebii Hieronymi
Stridonensis, Vol. 3/4**

Basel: Johann Froben, 1516

Ink on paper

Wittenberg Seminary, Lutherstadt Wittenberg

Martin Luther held early Christian authors in high regard because they were closer to Jesus in both time and place. Their writings preceded later theological biases that changed the interpretation of Jesus' teachings. Here, we can see Luther's appreciation of Saint Jerome's translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, in the 300s and 400s. The volume contains many notes in Luther's handwriting and in a variety of inks, revealing how intensely and frequently he consulted Jerome to hone his own theological reflections. The earliest entries date to 1516–1517.

This book unites the work of three prominent figures of the Early Modern era: Erasmus of Rotterdam, editor of the text; Johann Froben, an important printer and publisher; and Martin Luther, the diligent note-taking scholar.

Emperor Maximilian I

German, 1459–1519

Emperor Maximilian I's charter of foundation for the University of Wittenberg, Ulm, July 6, 1502

Parchment with attached wax seal

Archiv der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

King Maximilian I, who later became emperor, issued this charter for the University of Wittenberg at the request of its founder, Frederick the Wise,

Elector of Saxony. Maximilian approved the establishment of four schools with the usual rights to confer doctorates and authorized the elector to appoint faculty members. The University of Wittenberg opened on October 18, 1502, and Luther joined the faculty in 1512.

The charter bears King Maximilian's signature beneath the fold. The wax seal displays the imperial eagle of the king of the Germans and the arms of Hungary, Austria, Burgundy, Tyrol, and the House of Habsburg. The white and red strands of the seal's cord represent Austria; the blue stands for Burgundy.

Pope Julius II

Italian, 1443–1513

Pope Julius II's bull for the University of Wittenberg, Rome, June 20, 1507

Parchment with lead bulla attached on a red and yellow silk cord

Archiv der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Frederick the Wise didn't obtain the pope's approval before he established the University of Wittenberg in 1502—a first. At the same time, he seemed concerned that the secular King Maximilian I was authorizing

religious teaching. So, four months after his university opened, he had Maximilian's charter confirmed by a papal representative, who assured him that the university would be permitted to teach theology and church law.

The university did not receive the pope's official confirmation until four years after teaching had started. With this bull (papal decree), issued in Rome on June 20, 1507, Pope Julius II recognized the legitimacy of the university. The University of Wittenberg now enjoyed every privilege conferred by the pope, the emperor, the king, and the territorial sovereign.

Lucas Cranach the Elder (attributed to)

German, 1472–1553

Seal of the rector of the University of Wittenberg, 1514

Bronze

Zentrale Kustodie der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

The rectors of the University of Wittenberg authenticated official letters and documents with this seal until the university merged with the University of Halle in 1817. The seal's inner field displays

a half-length portrait of the university's founder, Elector Frederick the Wise, in his electoral hat and fur cape with the characters "FRI 3" (Frederick III) on the front. He crosses his arms and holds the electoral sword on his shoulder. A winding scroll with the inscription "VNIVERSIT. 1502" fills the rest of the field. The writing around the edge—"ME AUSPICE / CEPIT / WITE(N)BERG / DOCERE" (Wittenberg began teaching under my auspices)—is broken up by four crests representing the Electorate of Saxony, the Duchy of Saxony, the Landgraviate of Thuringia, and the Margravate of Meissen.

Martin Luther

The Ninety-Five Theses

**Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis
indulgentiarum (Disputation on the
power of indulgences)**

Basel: Adam Petri, 1517

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

The theses—Martin Luther’s complaints about the Catholic Church—became public and widely available soon after they were printed in 1517. No copy of the earliest printing survives, but several versions in the form of broadsides (posters) or books were quickly issued in several towns near Wittenberg. Initial readers needed to be highly educated, since the text was in Latin and involved complex arguments. They mostly paid little attention. Only the following year, when Luther published a summary in German, did his arguments reach a wider public—with tremendous effect.

The hostility of his theses doesn’t come across to modern readers. But when Luther argued that the entire life of a Christian should be one continuous penance, this was actually a revolutionary statement. Jesus’ exhortation to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” had always been understood as calling for the formal confession of sins, a ritual. Luther’s reading of the original Greek text led him to argue that Jesus had instead wanted his followers to change their entire life to one of repentance.

Martin Luther

**Resolutiones Disputationum de
Indulgentiarum Virtute**

[Wittenberg: Rhau-Grunenberg], 1518

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

The rapid dissemination of his Ninety-Five Theses, and the drastic misinterpretations that followed, shocked Luther. He soon published this point-by-point explanation of the theses to appease Pope Leo X, and sent him a copy along with a letter of apology. This open letter to the pope prefacing the book explains that Luther had written the theses to defend the good name of the papacy against the abuses of indulgence sellers. Luther claimed that he was just defending himself against the lies being spread about him. Instead of calming church authorities, however, Luther's explanation enraged them.

**Monogrammist H. G.,
based on a model by
Lucas Cranach the
Elder**

**Medal of Martin
Luther, 1521**

Lead; cast, pierced

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein
Gotha

This is the earliest medal portraying Luther and includes the inscription, “If Luther should be guilty of any heresies then Christ will also be guilty of such trespassing.” The high-quality picture of him as a scholar with a doctor’s cap and monk’s clothing is clearly related to Lucas Cranach’s engraving, also from 1521 and displayed nearby. It’s unclear whether Cranach was directly involved in making the medal.

The inscription clarifies that the medal appeared in the wake of Luther’s appearance at the imperial diet (official assembly) in the town

of Worms on April 17 and 18, 1521. There, before Emperor Charles V, he refused to retract his theological writings. As a result, Luther was branded a heretic and put under the imperial ban, meaning he lost all rights and possessions and was legally considered dead. What’s more, anyone was allowed to rob, injure, or kill him without legal consequences. This medal was thus extremely rebellious and intended as sharply pointed propaganda for circulation among the elite.

Wolf Milicz

German, active 1535–45

Medal of Martin Luther, 1537

Silver; cast, fire-gilded, looped

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

This 1537 medal depicts Luther in his cap and cassock (clergyman's clothing), holding the Bible in the style of a scholarly preacher. The inscription addresses him as "Prophet of Germania," underscoring his role as father of a new church. The image is based on a

portrait made by Lucas Cranach in 1532. This image would appear on medals for centuries to come.

Luther called the symbols on the reverse side of the medal a summary of his theology. The white rose symbolizes the joy, comfort, and love of faith. The cross stands for Christ's sacrificial death and is a token of faith in Christ. The heart represents the overcoming of death and stands for new life. These symbols are surrounded by Luther's personal motto, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

Pope Leo X (Italian, 1475–1521), Papal bull against Martin Luther in three editions

**Bulla Contra Errores Martini Lutheri
et Sequacium**

Rome: Giacomo Mazzocchi, 1520

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

Ulrich von Hutten, editor

**Bulla Decimi Leonis, Contra Errores
Martini Lutheri, & Sequacium**

Strasbourg: Johann Schott, 1520

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

**First German edition of the papal bull against
Martin Luther**

Cologne: Peter Quentel, 1520

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

Pope Leo X was slow to respond to Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. But when he did, his judgment was harsh. Six months passed before Vatican authorities recommended inviting Luther to Rome so that he could recant his theses in the presence of the pope. The death of Emperor Maximilian I in 1519 caused further delay, as the pope became embroiled in imperial politics. In that sphere, he needed the support of Elector Frederick of Saxony. Because Frederick supported Luther, the pope chose not to pursue the "Luther affair" for the time being.

In 1520 the pope issued this bull (decree) demanding that Luther recant forty-one propositions from his writings that were at odds with Catholic Church teaching. If he didn't, Luther faced excommunication (expulsion from the church). This bull arrived in Germany in different versions—three of which are shown here; the pope's representatives gave printed copies to government officials and many dioceses to be read from the pulpits.

Luther personally ensured a final break with the Catholic Church when he not only refused to recant the forty-one propositions but also publicly burned a copy of the bull and other works of church law on December 10, 1520.

Habit of an Augustinian hermit, as Luther would have worn, central Germany, around the first quarter of the 16th century
Black woolen twill

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Luther entered the Order of Augustinian Hermits (monks) at Erfurt in September 1505. Augustinian hermits had to wear the habit (monk's robes) of the order during daily prayers, church services, and in public. Luther claimed to have had his habit repaired

many times and to have worn it until it was no longer wearable. In 1524, he finally abandoned his monk's habit. From then on, he dressed in the clothing of a secular academic.

The habit displayed here can be traced to Luther's house in the 1500s, but its traditional reputation as being "Luther's habit" cannot be confirmed.

Martin Luther

Letter to Georg Spalatin, March 30, 1522

Ink on paper

Landeshauptarchiv in Sachsen-Anhalt

Luther held himself to exacting standards as he translated the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into German. In this letter to his learned colleague Georg Spalatin, he requests help in finding the correct names for precious stones mentioned in the book of Revelations. Luther wanted the language of the New Testament to remain clear and simple and warns Spalatin against using lofty language.

But Luther had something else on his mind. He opened and closed the letter with references to a controversy about receiving the sacrament of the

Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. Andreas Karlstadt, one of Luther's most zealous followers, was pushing for the congregation to receive both bread and wine; until then, the wine was for priests only. Although Luther agreed with the change, he argued that it should come slowly because it was so shocking for the ordinary person to receive what had long been reserved for priests.

Matriculation register of Wittenberg University with Luther's entry, 1502–1552 Manuscript on parchment

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt

This is the first volume of the student registers of the University of Wittenberg, covering the years 1502 to 1552. A colored illustration decorates the title page for each semester. On this page, we find the scribe's entry recording Luther's enrollment in 1508. The entry notes that he belonged to a group of Augustinian monks and that his hometown was Mansfeld. Luther arrived as a trained scholar: within a year, he had completed his bachelor's degree and was ready to begin teaching. He earned his doctorate and became a professor in 1512.



Unknown artist, monogram “MB”

Evangelical eucharistic chalice, southern Germany (?), second half of the 15th century, and 1636
Silver, gold-plated

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Inscriptions: (on cup) The blood of Jesus Christ,
God’s Son makes us clean from all our sins. 1 John 1;
(on the bosses around the stem) “I H E S V S”

Before the Reformation, churches served the bread or wafer of the Eucharist to everyone, but

only priests were permitted to drink the wine. When both bread and wine began to be served to all adult worshippers, eucharistic vessels changed to suit the new practice. The base of this chalice was made in the 1400s and almost certainly had a smaller cup. After the Reformation, a bigger cup was substituted to serve wine to more people.

Martin Luther

Lucas Cranach the Elder (illustrator)

German, 1472–1553

**Das Neue Testament Deutsch
(The New Testament in German)**

“September Testament”

Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter the Younger,

September 21, 1522

Scheide Library, Princeton University Library

Martin Luther

Lucas Cranach the Elder (illustrator)

German, 1472–1553

**Das Neue Testament Deutsch
(The New Testament in German)**

“December Testament”

Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter the Younger,

December 1522

Scheide Library, Princeton University Library

While hiding out in Wartburg Castle, from May 1521 to March 1522, Luther translated the New Testament into German. The books shown here are the earliest editions of Luther's translation. He worked from the original Greek text, printed for the first time in 1516, based on his conviction that the Bible alone—not church doctrine that influenced later translations—is decisive in matters of faith.

With help from friends who were familiar with Greek, Luther completed the entire translation of the New Testament in just eleven weeks. The first edition,

printed in Wittenberg in September 1522, featured twenty-one full-page woodcuts from Lucas Cranach the Elder's workshop illustrating the book of Revelations. The work quickly became known as the September Testament, after its date of publication, and was followed in December by a second edition, the December Testament.

The December Testament included numerous changes to the text and images. Some of the woodcuts in the September Testament are overtly antipapal, associating the end of times foreseen in

Revelations with the end of the Roman Church. This provocative imagery encountered considerable resistance. Duke George of Saxony persuaded Luther's protector Frederick the Wise to decree that, in the second edition, the papal tiara would be removed from the head of the dragon in the temple (Revelation 11), the beast from Chapter 16, and the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17).

Martin Luther

**Autograph fragments of Martin Luther's
German translation of Ecclesiasticus
(Ecclus. 33:13–34:4, 36:9–37:5), 1531**

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Luther cherished the pre-Christian book of Ecclesiasticus, also called the Wisdom of Sirach, as a guide to spiritual ethics at church, school, and home. He commented on the difficulty of translating this seemingly random and easily misinterpreted compilation of proverbs, comparing the challenge to reassembling and cleaning the scattered pieces of a torn-up and trampled-on letter. Ironically, Luther's final draft of the translation is scattered in fragments due to the common practice of dismembering manuscripts at the printing presses in order to facilitate the typesetting.

Georg Rörer (editor)

**Der Erste Teil aller Bücher und Schrifften
Martin Luthers (The Complete Books
and Writings of Martin Luther, Part I)
Jena: Christian Röding the Elder, 1555**

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

As a result of military defeats, John Frederick of Saxony lost authority over electoral Saxony, including Wittenberg and its university. In an effort to reclaim cultural, political, and religious

prestige, he sponsored a new edition of Luther's writings.

The Jena edition, completed in 1558, comprised eight volumes of German material and four of Latin, all arranged chronologically to focus on the historical development of Luther's theology. The books also included carefully edited material from Luther's colleagues and opponents. The first German volume, seen here, covers material from 1517 to 1522. Half of the 1,500 copies printed had sold by the following year, but subsequent volumes did not fare so well.

Martin Luther

Biblia: das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift Deudsch (Bible: This is the Complete Holy Scripture in German) Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1534

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

After publication of the New Testament in German in 1522, Luther was fully aware that the translation of the Old Testament could only be completed by

a team and would have to be published in several volumes due to its size and linguistic complexity. The edition was a great success, and 253 full or partial editions of Luther's Bible were available by 1546.

Despite the collaboration of companions like Philip Melanchthon, Luther's leading role is acknowledged in the common name of the work: the Luther Bible. The German language is shaped to this day by Luther's translation of the Bible.

Martin Luther

**Lucas Cranach the Elder, workshop
(illustrations)**

German, 1472–1553

The Zerbst “Cranach Bible” (Volumes 1 and 3)

Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1541

Parchment, colored woodcuts, gold leaf

City of Zerbst/Anhalt

Volume 1 Original title: Biblia: das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift Deutdsch, Auffß neuw zugericht. D. Mart. Luth (Bible: This is the Complete Holy Scripture in German)

Volume 3 Original title: Die Propheten / alle Deudsch. / D. Mart. Luth (The Book of Prophets, German)

These volumes of the Zerbst “Cranach Bible” were specially printed on expensive parchment in the autumn of 1541 for Prince George III of Anhalt-Dessau. The only prince to hold office as a Lutheran cleric, he had a close friendship with Luther. The town of Zerbst, where the Bible is kept, is about a day’s walk west of Wittenberg and was an important center in the principality of Anhalt.

The Protestant princes of Anhalt would stock their libraries with Luther Bibles featuring extraordinarily intricate decorations. Lucas Cranach the

Elder was responsible for the richly illustrated volumes and gilded copy seen here. A total of one hundred woodcuts adorn the large-format Bible.

George had this Bible bound in three volumes, which were taken to Wittenberg in 1544 so that Luther and his associates could inscribe German, Latin, and Greek messages in them.

Hans Reinhart the Elder

German, about 1510–1581

Trinity Medal, 1544

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

The Trinity Medal is the highest achievement of goldsmith Hans Reinhart the Elder and is a highlight of German Renaissance art. With unparalleled mastery, he combined casting and artful goldsmith soldering, including three-dimensional miniature sculptures and decorations.

The motif shows God the Father sitting on a richly ornamented throne with Jesus on the Cross and the dove of the Holy Spirit before him. It is likely that Elector Maurice of Saxony commissioned the medal. Maurice had converted to Protestantism in 1539, and he tried to bring peace and reconciliation between the Protestant and Catholic factions. Both parties recognized the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed, which established the Trinity as an article of faith and is partly inscribed on the reverse of the medal.

Hans Reinhart the Elder

German, about 1510–1581

Medal with the Fall of Man and Salvation, 1536

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

Similar to Lucas Cranach the Elder's painting *Law and Grace* (also in this gallery), Hans Reinhart's medal strictly separates aspects of the Old and New Testaments. The Fall of Adam and Eve is on the front, and the Crucifixion is on the back. Sin

and redemption are literally shown as the opposite sides of the same coin—every believer has the capacity for both.

Tiny supporting scenes fill the spaces: on the front, the creation of Eve and the expulsion from Paradise; on the back, a church and the risen Jesus with a victory banner.

Saxon elector John Frederick the Magnanimous commissioned the medal as a statement of his Protestant faith. The reverse carries his personal motto, "My hope is in God."

Johann Eberlin von Günzburg

How Dangerous It Is When a Priest Has No Wife

Augsburg: Melchior Ramminger, 1522

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Johann Eberlin von Günzburg (c. 1470–1533) was a preacher who moved to Wittenberg to study with Luther and other reformers. On his way there, he wrote his first pamphlet. Its full title: “How dangerous it is when a priest has no wife.

How un-Christian and harmful for the common good are those people who hinder the priests from the state of marriage.”

Eberlin attacked mandatory celibacy (no marriage or sexual relations) for priests and called on all unwed priests to marry. He wrote that priests who are not allowed to have normal marriages often give themselves over to prostitutes and therefore cannot function as role models for ordinary peasants.

The critique of celibacy was an important theme for all the reformers, and Eberlin’s tract sold well.

Martin Luther

Letter to Georg Spalatin, Wittenberg,
April 10, 1523

Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

Luther's critique of the isolation and monotonous regimen of monastic life held true for women as well as men. With his assistance, nine nuns escaped from their convent in the village of Nimbschen, about fifty miles south of Wittenberg, the day before Easter Sunday, 1523. The young women slipped out by hiding in empty herring barrels that were being hauled away.

Unable to support the nuns from his own pocket, Luther wrote this letter to Frederick

the Wise's chaplain, Georg Spalatin, asking that money be collected at the electoral court for their care and housing.

The women's families shunned them, so Luther assured Spalatin that he would help arrange marriages with former clergymen and professors. One of the nuns, Katharina von Bora, would not settle for his first choice for her. She waited for Luther himself, and two years later they wed.



Ruins of Cistercian cloister at Nimbschen

Golden ring

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Gold

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-
Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

This gold ring, which originally sported a gem, turned up during the archaeological excavation of Luther's garden. If it came from Luther's household it must have graced the finger of a distinguished woman, probably Katharina von Bora herself. Indeed, she is shown wearing a nearly identical ring with a blue stone in a portrait from 1526.

It is tempting to relate this ring to a small domestic drama that Luther told to a onetime ally, Wolfgang Capito, who was trying to

resolve escalating disputes between Luther and western European reformers. Capito sent a golden ring to Katharina during negotiations in 1536, but it went missing. In 1537 an aggravated Luther wrote to Capito about Katharina's sadness over the ring's disappearance. He advised Capito to abstain from giving lavish gifts to his wife in order to prevent more disappointments. Had a jealous Luther tossed away the ring?

**Rosary, reputedly owned by Katharina
von Bora**, 16th century (?)

Turned wood

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

These prayer beads reputedly belonged to Luther's wife, Katharina, though this can't be proven. Used for the systematic repetition of prayers, a rosary would seem out of place in Luther's household—he had little regard for such religious practices, considering them attempts to earn salvation rather than faithfully accept God's forgiveness. These beads, though, might have been a memento of Katharina's time as a nun. The von Bora family, impoverished rural nobles, had committed Katharina to a convent for her education and care, but in 1523 she fled.

Wall fountain with bronze spigot

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Earthenware, green glazing (with additions);
bronze

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

Fragments of twenty-two green-glazed ceramic wall fountains were found during excavations in the courtyard of the Luther House, this one being the most complete. With bowls lying beneath them, they were used to wash hands before and after meals, and to mix ink for writing.

The decoration on this fountain shows a crowded scene of Jesus on the Cross. A nude sinner gazes at Jesus and lifts his folded hands in prayer. John the Baptist looks down at him,

resting a hand on the youth's shoulder and pointing to Jesus with the other. In the background, Moses clutches the Commandments and holds up his right hand in admonition. Adam's skull emerges from the earth at the foot of the cross and will be sprinkled with blood from the Savior's wounds. The whole scene is meant to prompt users washing their hands or preparing ink to meditate on the purifying blood of Jesus.

Inkstand

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, first half of the 16th century

Earthenware, green glazing (with additions)

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

This green-glazed ceramic inkstand includes the inkwell itself, a small bowl for the fine sand used to soak up excess ink, and an oval tub to hold quill pens. All are attached to a circular tray to keep them from tipping, spilling, or dripping. Archaeologists recovered many fragments of such writing sets from the rubbish pit in Luther's garden, including this well-preserved example. Some may well have been used by Luther himself. Such inkstands were made by local potters and sold for pennies in the marketplace.

Handle of a penknife

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Bone

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State
Museum of Prehistory

This piece of bone, found in a pit in the yard of the Luther House in Wittenberg, is most likely the handle of a penknife. These knives were used to cut pens made from feather quills or reeds. It is, in a sense, equivalent to a modern pencil sharpener. Scratches indicate that this example was well used.

Fittings and clasps from book covers

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Bronze

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

To protect big, valuable books, bronze fittings were nailed to the corners of their covers. These helped to raise books off of damp or dirty surfaces. Clasps kept the books from opening by accident.

Unguentaria (medicine containers)

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Stoneware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

These five small vessels were found in the yard of the Luther House in Wittenberg. Their limited capacity indicates that the medicines inside were dispensed in small quantities, as they were either perishable or very costly. The jars are well preserved, possibly because of a reluctance to reuse containers that had held medicine. The unusually large quantity found at Luther's house may reflect his many illnesses.

Fragments of glass goblets (*nodi*)

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century
Colored and discolored glass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum for Prehistory

These three fragments are from the stems of colored glass goblets. Due to their knot-like appearance, these fragments are called *nodi* (knots, in Latin). All three were found during excavations at the Luther House in Wittenberg. It is impossible to reconstruct the appearance of the original goblets from the fragments, but they do tell us that the Luther household possessed locally produced imitations of luxury glassware from Venice. Though not as expensive as the real thing, such goblets were by no means cheap and would probably not have been used as everyday tableware.

Latticino goblet, Venetian, c. 1530
Glass, with filigree ornament

Minneapolis Institute of Art, gift of Chichi Steiner and Tom Rassieur
in memory of Mary Orear Terry 2013.39.2

Excavations at Luther's Wittenberg home turned up fragments of luxury vessels similar to this goblet made around 1530 in Venice. The fine white line decoration was newly introduced and became a cutting-edge fashion in Luther's lifetime.

Fragments of filigree glass

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, first half of the 16th century

Glass, with filigree ornament

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

These fragments are from tall glass beakers, in which beer or wine would have been served. Unlike ceramic vessels, which were basic household goods in Luther's time, glass vessels were indicators of their owner's wealth. Three different varieties of glass can

be identified in the period. Rustic greenish forest glass was used for everyday vessels. Colorless glass was mainly reserved for tableware or window panes. The fragments here are so-called filigree glass made by fusing glass threads of various colors between layers of clear glass. The high quality of the work seen in these fragments suggests that Luther received gifts of glassware made in Venice or by Venetian-trained craftsmen.

Faience bowl

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century
Faience with cobalt blue decoration

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

Faience pottery, originally produced in Faenza, Italy, was common in upper-middle-class Italian households of the 1500s. However, archaeological discoveries of faience north of the Alps were unheard of until this small bowl was found at the Luther House in Wittenberg.

Polychrome stove tile with the Palatinate's coat of arms

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, first half of the 16th century

Glazed earthenware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

The coat of arms on this stove tile, with blue and white diamond fields and ferocious lions, represents Electoral Palatinate, a territory southwest of Saxony.

Otto Henry, Elector of the Palatinate (1502–1559) visited Wittenberg in 1536 and became interested in the Reformation. He converted to Lutheranism in 1542, and upon becoming Elector of the Palatinate in 1556, he introduced Lutheranism to his domains. The presence of his coat of arms on Luther's stove demonstrates both the highly political nature of the Reformation and the surprising fact that political imagery was integrated into Luther's domestic environment.

Polychrome stove tile depicting Eve

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, first half of the 16th century

Glazed earthenware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

This tile shows Eve, the biblical first woman, holding an apple and a skull. It was part of the ornamentation of an extravagant stove that would have been a centerpiece of Luther's household. Only three

homes in Wittenberg were rich enough to have stoves made from multicolored tiles: the elector's, Lucas Cranach's, and Luther's.

The tile shows Eve after her loss of innocence. The apple represents her introduction of sin into the world, which subjected mankind to the dominion of death, symbolized by Adam's skull. Though the skull points to the brevity of life, it also points to salvation, because Adam's skull would eventually lie beneath the cross, where it would be purified by the blood of Jesus.

Polychrome stove tile depicting Rebecca

Bad Schmiedeberg, c. 1530–1540

Glazed earthenware

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Kunstmuseum
Moritzburg Halle (Saale)

Like the tile depicting Eve (displayed nearby), this one showing Rebecca belongs to a group of twelve half-length portraits based on popular woodcuts of Twelve Famous Women of the Old Testament. Though comparable to the Eve tile, the Rebecca tile does not come from Luther's house. It was found at the home of Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg, Luther's enemy. The reformer and the cardinal at least saw eye to eye on matters of stove decoration. Similar tiles have been found at other sites in central Germany, indicating that Old Testament motifs were popular.

Polychrome stove tile depicting a dancing couple

Bad Schmiedeberg, “Alte Gärtnerei,” after 1535
Glazed earthenware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

The 1500s offered more than religious fervor and armed conflict: people also had fun, like this couple decked out for a dance. Unlike many other reformers, Luther had nothing against dancing and loved music, good food, and drink. His followers felt no pangs of conscience about enjoying festive occasions.

Drill

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Wrought iron

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State
Museum of Prehistory

This turning tool was found during excavations at the Luther House. Each of the arms ends in a different drilling head, and two arms serve as handles no matter which head is in use.

Strap buckle

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, first half of the 16th century

Brass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

This clothing accessory was cut out of a larger brass sheet, which had been stamped with floral ornaments. After being wrapped around the buckle, it was bent back and riveted onto a leather strap that could have been used as a belt or shoe fastener. Although Luther himself sometimes complained about female laziness and luxury, he had no problems with ladies getting dressed up for a wedding dance. The archaeological finds made in the garden of the Luther House confirm that the women of his household probably did just that.

Strap buckle

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54,
first half of the 16th century

Brass

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State
Museum of Prehistory

This clothing accessory was used as a belt or shoe fastener. Although Luther sometimes complained about female laziness and luxury, he had no problems with women dressing up for a wedding dance. This buckle, found in his garden, suggests that the women of his household did just that.

Luther cup

Southern or central Germany, June 25, 1530

Turned pearwood, gilt silver mount

HMB, Historisches Museum Basel

Benefactors and admirers gave Luther many exquisite gifts, which were adored much like Catholic relics soon after his death. The precious “cup collection,” as Luther called it, included this masterpiece of woodworking.

Elector John the Steadfast of Saxony gave this ceremonial cup to Luther on June 25, 1530. On that day, the Lutheran rulers and representatives of free cities confessed their faith before Emperor Charles V at the Diet (official gathering) of Augsburg. They presented the Augsburg Confession, a fundamental statement of Protestant belief. The cup’s detachable papal tiara and the inscription “post nubila Phoebus” (“sunshine follows rain”) allude to the Protestants’ rejection of “papism.”

House clock, first half of the 16th century

Iron

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

When Luther was a boy, clocks were usually big public timekeepers, but technological advances brought them into many urban households by the time he was an adult. Luther appreciated this development: “The invention of the clock is a truly outstanding thing because it keeps time so precisely

that one cannot even express it in words. It is clearly one of the most important human inventions.”

Clocks like this were mounted on walls or set on shelves during the early 1500s. The mechanism was left exposed so that the observer could see it in action. On the face of the clock, one has to imagine the dial and hands, which are no longer present.

Ceramic fanfare horn

Wittenberg, Collegienstraße 90/91, 16th century

Earthenware, red slip painting

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

This earthenware horn is painted with red slip glaze. Only traces of the green-glazed mouthpiece remain. Nonetheless, it is exceptionally rare for having survived in such a complete state. Archaeological finds suggest that such horns were widely used in urban contexts, probably to make noise during gatherings or pageants.

Tally stick

Wittenberg, Arsenalplatz, 1558

Wood

State Office for Heritage and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State
Museum of Prehistory

Tally sticks served as financial statements, particularly for debt. This one records a substantial debt of twenty-three guilders, roughly half the annual income of a skilled worker. The sum was recorded by carving numerals and notches. The date of the

transaction, 1558, is given on the reverse side. The other party to the transaction would have held the other part of the stick, which was split away.

Only a handful of tally sticks from the 1500s have been found in Germany. Substantial debts would usually be documented in writing. When tally sticks were used, the normal practice upon repayment of the debt was to break the sticks and throw them away. This one discovered in a Wittenberg latrine appears to have been at least partially broken, although the parts are still connected.

Stove tile depicting the Last Judgment

Wittenberg, Arsenalplatz, end of the 16th century

Glazed earthenware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

A Protestant depiction of the Last Judgment (when God assigns the human race its final destiny) adorns this large tile. At the center, Jesus sits enthroned on a rainbow, in his role as ultimate authority of the world. His right hand is raised in a gesture of

blessing. Near his head are the lily of mercy and the sword of justice. The Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist kneel prayerfully, and two angels blow their trumpets.

Below, Saint Peter (identified by his keys) admits a woman to paradise, while the devil uses a fork to torment the pope—identified by his tiara. Surrounded by flames, the pope raises his arms, futilely begging for help.

Stoneware canteen

Wittenberg, so-called Cranachhöfe, Markt 4

Waldenburg, 16th century

Stoneware (with additions)

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

Stoneware canteens turn up frequently in archaeological excavations of town centers all over central Germany. This vessel was discovered in a house sometimes occupied by Lucas Cranach the Elder and his family, and it resembles those found in digs at Luther's house.

Bellarmino jug

Wernigerode, Klinthügel, first half of the 16th century

Stoneware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State
Museum of Prehistory

The wild-man face on this jug stood for drunken mirth and
bodily pleasures. Appropriately enough, such jugs were used to
store, transport, and serve beer and wine.

Albrecht Dürer

German, 1471–1528

Portrait of Philip Melanchthon, 1526

Copper engraving plate

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

Germany's leading artist, Albrecht Dürer, probably met Philip Melanchthon in 1524, when the educator was opening a new grammar school in Nuremberg. The copper plate for the portrait of Melanchthon is the only plate engraved by Dürer known to survive. Dürer was the best engraver of the time, and many believe that he has never been equaled.

Friedrich Hagenauer

German, about 1499–after 1546

Medal of Philip Melanchthon, 1543

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

Philip Melanchthon was Luther's closest associate. His theological works culminated in the Augsburg Confession, still the core statement of Lutheran belief.

Melanchthon defended Luther in public debates and developed a Protestant school system,

contributing school regulations and textbooks. His comprehensive knowledge of the classical languages made Melanchthon one of the era's greatest experts on ancient texts.

Friedrich Hagenauer's medal presents the sensitive and intelligent Melanchthon as the model of a scholar ennobled by thought. The psalm on the reverse side, "Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him," was adapted by Melanchthon into his motto as "Be subject to God and worship Him."

Martin Luther

Transcription of Luther's Testament, with annotations in Philip

Melanchthon's hand, January 6, 1542

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

Few documents more fully express Luther's capacity for unconventional thought, personal devotion, and determination to prevail than this, his last will and testament. Here, he sets

aside legal convention, which would have divided most of his assets among his children, leaving little to his wife, Katharina. Instead Luther made Katharina sole heir to his entire property, including a manor home, a house, jewelry, and eight thousand guilders—a large sum of money. He also made her the sole legal guardian of their children, as he believed that the mother was the person best suited to this role. Luther expresses the greatest respect for this woman who had “held him dear, worthy

and fine as his devout and faithful marital spouse throughout his lifetime.”

To ensure that his unorthodox plan would be carried out, he asked John Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, and his friends Philip Melanchthon, Caspar Cruciger, and Johannes Bugenhagen to enforce the will. He also had the document entered into the official court records of the town of Wittenberg a year before his death. With John Frederick's confirmation, the testament became valid.

Moveable lead printing type

Wittenberg, Bürgermeisterstraße 5, fourth quarter
of the 16th century

Lead alloy

State Office for Heritage and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

The Reformation was a media revolution. Luther understood the power of the printing press to bring his ideas to a vast audience. Printed books had been made since the 1450s, but Luther drove rapid acceleration of book production. Wittenberg became one

of the leading printing centers in Europe during the 1500s.

The huge quantity of lead type unearthed during excavations in Wittenberg surpasses the comparable material from any other European city. Shown here are more than five hundred pieces of type, discovered beneath one of Wittenberg's main streets. The type was used by the Krafft family, publishers whose output included the works of Luther and Philip Melanchthon.

Common Chest of the City of Wittenberg,

c. 1520

Iron

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

The Common Chest of the City of Wittenberg was the opposite of the indulgence chest. Instead of removing money from the community, it was the focal point of the municipal welfare system. Luther's new theology broke the tie between doing good works and going to heaven. With less incentive for individuals to give to the poor, the community had to step in.

In 1521, this chest was placed in a highly visible position in Wittenberg's church. It held valuable objects and money. At first the money came from the sale of Catholic Church property, both land and treasure. As those sources dried up, individual philanthropy had to be reestablished. The money had many uses. It funded schools, churches, and health care. Anyone who wanted could borrow money from the common chest. Such a loan enabled Luther to buy a property in 1532.

Martin Luther
A Request Submitted to Elector
Frederick III of Saxony for the
Confirmation of the Regulations
made by the Town of Leisnig for their
Common Chest, August 11, 1523

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

This letter bears witness to Luther's support of his followers and to the consequences when his enthusiasm caused him to exceed his authority. Leisnig was one of the first towns to join the Reformation. The local inhabitants hoped to govern their own religious and civic affairs. They informed Luther of their intention to finance their activities by appropriating church and lay income and property.

Luther was so impressed with Leisnig's new regulations that he soon had them printed

with a preface he wrote. Unfortunately, he failed to ask permission of the town council and Elector Frederick the Wise. The council responded by blocking the takeover of the various foundations and donations.

Luther penned the letter shown here in a belated attempt to secure the elector's permission. Frederick declined to respond. The dispute between the town council and the congregation would drag on for six years.

Martin Luther and Paul Speratus

Etlich Cristlich lider Lobgesang, von Psalm, dem rainen wort Gottes gemeß (Book of Eight Songs)

[Nuremberg: Jobst Gutknecht], 1524

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Songs based on familiar tunes helped teach the messages of the Reformation. This small hymnal is the earliest prototype of the modern Lutheran hymnal. It contains songs by Martin Luther and his

follower Paul Speratus (1484–1551). Underscoring their adherence to scripture, Speratus' lyrics are annotated with biblical references. The book also contains poetic versions of the Psalms in German. In this way, Latin prayers were translated for German-speaking worshippers.

Luther and Speratus neither requested nor authorized the printing of this and other early collections of songs. These were simply profit-oriented ventures of publishers and booksellers, a strong indication of their popularity. Another indicator is their extreme rarity; they were used until completely worn out.

Martin Luther

**Geistliche Lieder, aufs neue gebessert zu
Wittenberg (Sacred Hymns Revised in
Wittenberg) The “Klug Hymnal”
Wittenberg: Joseph Klug, 1533**

Luther Memorials Foundations of Saxony-Anhalt

This is the earliest surviving copy of Luther’s famous hymn, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God). It debuted in the first edition of Joseph Klug’s hymnal, but no copy of that

1529 edition is known to survive. This is the only known copy of the second edition. Here the hymn, adapted from Psalm 46, appears under the title *Deus noster refugium et virtus* (God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength).

Luther contributed two forewords to the Klug Hymnal. There he pointed out the importance of music in raising children, as well as the need to give reformers clear guidance in a time of upheaval.

Johann Friedrich Petsch
Ein schoen Christlich Lied von dem
Ehrwürdigen Herren Doctor Martino Luther
und seiner Lere (A Fine Christian Song on the
Worthy Dr. Martin Luther and His Teaching)
Wittenberg: Georg Rhau, 1546

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Johann Friedrich Petsch published this song in 1546, shortly after Luther's death. The music and lyrics attempt to sum up and acknowledge the teachings as well as the significance of Martin Luther for the Christian world.

To Petsch, Luther was a prophet who prepared the way for Christians to attain salvation: "Therefore you, dear Christendom [...] Stay on the true path / Which Luther has shown. Thus you will not go to ruin." The song calls upon us to follow Luther's teachings.

Equipment from alchemist's laboratory

Wittenberg, former Franciscan convent, second half of the 16th century

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

Alembic and separate spout

Green tinted glass

Partially melted fragment of a retort

Turquoise tinted glass

Triangular crucible

Ceramic

These glass and ceramic objects are from recently unearthed remains of an alchemist's workshop in Wittenberg. In the 1500s, alchemy had its skeptics. Still, it had not yet been reduced to the status of a pseudoscience by the advent of modern chemistry, and it did not focus solely on transformation of base metals into gold. Chemical residues in these vessels indicate a connection with the production of pharmaceuticals.

The equipment shown here is a small sample from a large discovery. The vessels were mostly fragmented, but painstaking work has allowed

reconstruction of a variety of distillation tubes and condensation receptacles.



Hans Weidtiz the Younger, *The Alchemist in His Workshop*, woodcut

Astronomy and Geometry, stove tiles from a series of the Seven Liberal Arts

Wittenberg, Bürgermeisterstraße 5, c. 1530s–1550s

Earthenware, green glazing

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

These stove tiles come from a series of female representations of the liberal arts. They show young women in fashionable attire of the 1530s. Examples found so far represent grammar, rhetoric

(persuasion), philosophy, dialectic (logic), geometry, music, and astronomy.

The female representation of Geometry holds tools of this mathematical discipline. Astronomy holds an armillary sphere, a ball-shaped instrument with diagonal bands that describe the movement of stars and planets around the Earth. It enabled prediction of astronomical events, mostly for astrological purposes. These devices were based on an Earth-centered universe, in which Martin Luther firmly believed.

Philip Melanchthon

Horoscope for Eusebius Menius

Wittenberg, September 9, 1545

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Luther regarded astrology as “ridiculous speculation,” but his friend and colleague Philip Melanchthon included it in the university curriculum. To Luther’s dismay, interest in horoscopes increased during the Reformation as certainties provided by the Roman Catholic Church were lost.

Melanchthon generated numerous horoscopes for prominent political figures, friends, and family, but very few have survived. He made the one shown here when advising a religious official, Justus Menius, on the education of his sons Justinus and Eusebius in 1545. Beneath the diagram, Melanchthon confirmed what he had earlier told Menius: Eusebius showed signs of becoming a good academic scholar, but Justinus’s affinity to Mars made him more suited to a military career.

Wolff Christoff Ritter

Coconut cup

Nuremberg, c. 1560

Coconut; gilded silver

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

While coconuts are common today, in the 1500s they were especially precious objects. Not only did these exotic fruits come from distant lands, they were also thought to be capable of detecting poison, which made them even more valuable. German goldsmiths would make luxurious mounts for the shells, transforming them into cups. The rich and powerful owners of such vessels, such as the dukes of Saxony, used them to welcome special guests on festive occasions.

Stove tile with a depiction of Saint Dorothy

Wittenberg, Luther House, Collegienstraße 54, early 16th century

Earthenware, green and yellow glazing

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt,
State Museum of Prehistory

This stove tile once decorated an ornate oven that warmed a large room in the Wittenberg Augustinian monastery. It was probably still in use when Frederick the Wise gave the property to Luther.

The tile depicts Saint Dorothy of Caesarea, who was tortured and sentenced to death for refusing to sacrifice to the Roman emperor. She wears a martyr's crown and holds a basket and a flower, because her execution occasioned the miraculous appearance of a basketful of fruit and roses on a cold winter day. People prayed to her for help with familial and agricultural fertility.

Luther apparently had the old stove removed to make way for one with less Catholic imagery and made from more prestigious multicolored tiles.

Martin Luther

Letter to the Christians in the Netherlands

Wittenberg, late July/early August 1523

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Luther wrote this public letter to his followers in the Netherlands. He was reacting to the persecution of Augustinian monks who had come from Antwerp to Wittenberg to study with him. Theologians in the Netherlands had condemned Luther's writings; yet, even so, the monks continued to distribute them. On July 1, 1523,

the governor of the Spanish Netherlands declared two of the monks heretics and publicly burned them at the stake in Brussels.

In his letter, Luther tried to put a positive spin on events, thanking God for sending the first Protestant martyrs. In the published version of the letter, he described the execution as murder, but that passage and other criticisms are absent here. Knowing that his manuscript would be censored even by his protector Frederick the Wise, who tried to minimize political tensions with the emperor and the pope, Luther added the harsher words when the letter was set in type at the printer's workshop.

Archduke Ferdinand of Austria
Mandate against the Propagation of the
Lutheran Doctrine, 1527

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, governor of the Habsburg family territories, had to balance two big threats: Turks invading his eastern territories and Protestants wanting change. Protestant dukes pressed for concessions in exchange for their help fighting the Turks.

In an attempt to overcome the deepening rift in the church, Ferdinand issued this sweeping decree in the Hungarian city of Ofen. He threatened to punish anyone who would “print, offer, buy, sell, read, or possess reformatory books and other unseemly images and letters.”

Leonhard Reynmann

**Ein neue Prophecey von diesem kegewertigem
Jare, MDXXVI, plus XVII (A New Prophecy
of This Present Year, 1526, plus 17 [years])**

Leipzig: Wolfgang Stöckel, 1526

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Leonhard Reynmann's pamphlet was one of many widely read astrological prediction books, forerunners of modern-day almanacs. The title page shows the emperor, who here still looks like Maximilian I (who had died in 1519), and the pope. They face Saturn, identified by the scythe and flag, and a group of peasants. In the center are three so-called sun dogs (phantom suns), phenomena that recur in astrological literature and here seem to foretell the tensions between rulers and peasants. Under the woodcut illustration is the self-confident claim: "A prophecy over all prophecies."

Albrecht Dürer

German, 1471–1528

Peasants' War Memorial

In: *Lehrbuch für Messung und Perspektive*
(*Textbook for Measurement and Perspective*)

Nuremberg: Hieronymus Andreae, 1525

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

This design for a monument is Albrecht Dürer's response to the Peasants' War of 1524–1525. He wrote that he devised this and three other pillars as an “adventure,” suggesting that it was a bit of a whim. The pillar is built out of objects from

peasant life, including a basket of oats, a kettle, a bowl of cheese, a butter churn, grain stalks, farm tools, and a basket of chickens. At the very top, sitting on an overturned tub of lard, is a peasant pierced by a sword.

Dürer wrote, “Someone who wishes to erect a victory monument for vanquishing the rebellious peasants should use such items.” This statement, coupled with the unusual idea of putting a defeated figure at the top of a monument, invites the question of Dürer's intention: does his design express sympathy for the peasants or does it mock them?

Jörg Gastel

**Die Gründlichen und Rechten
Hauptartikel aller Bauernschaft (The
Fundamental and Correct Chief
Articles of All the Peasants, the
“Twelve Articles”)**

Zwickau: Johann Schönsperger the Younger, 1525

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Reformation ideas added fuel to the flames of social and economic discontent. This tract, published in 1525, commonly known as the Twelve Articles, attempted to speak for all peasants and laid out their demands. They called for what might strike modern observers as a mix of left- and right-wing demands: abolition of serfdom, payment for labor, pay for preachers, fair access to lands for hunting and agriculture, contractual and legal rights, and abolition of the death tax. During

previous uprisings, peasants had appealed for the restoration of old laws; now, in the Twelve Articles, they asserted their rights under “divine law.” By associating themselves with the Reformation, the peasants gained many sympathizers. The Twelve Articles appeared anonymously, became a best seller, and was reprinted twenty-eight times.

Martin Luther

**Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die Zwölf
Artikel der Bauernschaft in Schwaben
(Admonition to Peace on the Twelve Articles
of the Peasants of Swabia)**

Wittenberg: Joseph Klug, 1525

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Though the peasants engaged in the Peasants' War had adopted Lutheran theology in the Twelve Articles (shown nearby), Luther opposed their rebellion. In this tract, *Admonition to Peace*, he argued that rebellion is contrary to divinely ordained order. Though he partly blamed the tyranny of the ruling class, he assigned far greater blame to the peasants. In his view, tyranny did not justify rebellion, and equality was impossible: Christian peasants simply had to suffer.

Luther soon took an even harsher stance, the start of a new authoritarian streak in his conduct. He

blamed the unrest on the peasants alone and accused them of disobedience, rebellion, and blasphemy. If prayer would not stop the rebellion, he urged the nobles to "take action." About seventy-five thousand peasants died, and Luther's remarks drew criticism. Erasmus of Rotterdam charged that Luther had called for rebellion and then sided with the nobles. Luther never publicly expressed regret over the bloodshed.

Johannes Cochlaeus

The Seven Heads of Martin Luther

Leipzig: Valentin Schumann, 1529

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

Johannes Cochlaeus, a conservative theologian, launched a direct assault on the Reformation movement in his diatribe *The Seven Heads of Martin Luther*, first printed in 1529. The title page, with a woodcut by Hans Brosamer, reflects the subject of the work.

Seven labeled heads describe Luther as changing from a servant of God on the left to a criminal revolutionary on the right. From left to right are: a scholar (*Doctor*), monk (*Martin*), heathen in a turban (*Luther*), preacher (*Ecclesiast*); fanatic in a swarm of hornets

(*Schwirmer*), church visitor who sees himself equal to the pope (*Visitirer*), and finally murderer (*Barabbas*). The spiked weapon near the murderer was an attempt to implicate Luther in the Peasants' War.

The choice of seven heads is a direct reference to the seven-headed beast of the Apocalypse in the book of Revelations. Cochlaeus wanted to brand Luther and his teachings as the road to hell.

Martin Luther

Letter to Georg Spalatin

Wittenberg, February 24, 1520

Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

This letter to Luther's friend and adviser Georg Spalatin focuses on severe student unrest in Wittenberg in February 1520. University students clashed with workers from Lucas Cranach the Elder's workshop. It appears that the students were willing to resort to violence during the swift spread of the Reformation. Moreover, a rapid increase in university enrollment had made Wittenberg an uncomfortably crowded place.

Luther labeled the unrest as the devil's work. Elector Frederick the Wise placed a ban on weapons, threatened fines, and imposed a citywide curfew. Luther criticized Frederick's actions, saying they would heighten tensions. He was proven right: the conflict only continued to grow, reaching its peak in the summer of 1520.

**Philip Melanchthon and Johannes
Schwertfeger**

**Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder
(illustrations)**

**Passional Christi und Antichristi
(Passional of Christ and the
Antichrist)**

Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, 1521

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt and
Thrivent Financial Collection of Religious Art

A passional is a book, often illustrated, presenting the suffering of Jesus as told in the Bible. When Luther concluded that the papacy in Rome, not the person who was the pope, was the Antichrist, his followers produced a biting passional comparing the conduct and teaching of Jesus with that of the papacy—a *Passional of Christ and the Antichrist*. Lucas Cranach's workshop created thirteen pairs of contrasting pictures.

Two copies of the book are shown here. One pairing of images contrasts Jesus' expulsion of the money changers from the temple with the banking business of the pope—referring to Leo X of the powerful Medici family of Florence. Another pairing contrasts the ascension of Christ with the pope descending to hell.

Antipapal Satirical Medals

Wolf Milicz

Topsy-turvy satire, 1543

Silver

Hans Reinhart the Elder

German, c. 1510–1581

Topsy-turvy satire, 1544

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

Satirical medals were very popular in the Reformation period. Both parties used them against the other. About 1543, a new type emerged that combined images of a cardinal and a fool in one design. (It should be noted that the fool was no idiot; he was a jester who exposed the idiocy and hypocrisy of others.) In one direction you see the cardinal; rotate the medal and you see the fool. The idea was so popular that more than a hundred different topsy-turvy satires were produced. The two shown here are among the earliest and were made by highly skilled

medalists Wolf Milicz and Hans Reinhart the Elder. On the back of Milicz's is another topsy-turvy image, this time combining a bishop performing Mass and the Whore of Babylon, a figure from the book of Revelations who represents false religions.

Peter Flötner

German, 1485–1546

Antipapal satirical medal

Nuremberg, 1540s

Lead

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

This satirical medal shows on one side Jesus attended by the dove of the Holy Spirit, and on the other the pope with a devil snatching his tiara. The tiara is decorated with rows of donkey ears and piles of excrement.

Martin Luther

The Ortenburg Bible

Augsburg: Heinrich Steiner for Peter Aprell, 1535

Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum

Original title: **Biblia: Das ist die gantze heilige Schrift Deudsch. D. Mart. Luth. (Bible: This is the Complete Holy Scripture in German, Dr. Martin Luther)**

This is a luxury copy of the Luther Bible printed on parchment (prepared animal skin). It belonged to Count Joachim of Ortenburg, who in 1563 introduced the Reformation to his territory over the bitter resistance of his overlords, the dukes of Bavaria.

These two volumes were separated as they descended through different branches of Joachim's family. One of the heirs was a strict Calvinist who considered images of God blasphemous; consequently, he had depictions

of God erased from his volume. The second volume survives intact and is open to the New Testament title page where Count Joachim signed his name.

Medal on the constitution and renewal of the Schmalkaldic League, 1535

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

The medal shows the portraits of the two founders of the Schmalkaldic League, Landgrave Philip I of Hesse and Elector John Frederick of Saxony. The loop means it was intended to be worn as a public declaration of commitment to the league, an alliance of Protestant leaders. It was made to mark a new ten-year mutual defense agreement.

Medallion of the capture of Duke Henry the

Younger of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in the Battle of Bockenem, 1545

Silver

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

When the city of Brunswick committed to the Reformation, Duke Henry the Younger, a Catholic, took military action. The city called on Schmalkaldic League troops, who besieged Henry's castle.

This medallion depicts the victorious Protestant leaders. The reverse shows the capture of Henry and his son.

Wolf Milicz

Medal of Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous of Saxony, 1536

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

This medal, made to mark the reaffirmation of the Schmalkaldic League in 1536, appears to represent Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous of Saxony in his role as sovereign over matters of Protestant church governance.

Elizabeth, Duchess of Rochlitz

**A coded message to John Frederick,
Elector of Saxony, February 7, 1547**

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar

This is a coded message from a secret agent.

Elizabeth, the Duchess of Rochlitz, ran a spy network for the Schmalkaldic League, the defensive alliance of Protestant territories, and risked her life to do so. She was the only female member of the league.

When war broke out in 1546, Elizabeth collected information on the imperial forces. She developed a code to encrypt her communications. In the letter displayed here, she informs Elector John Frederick about shipments of salt for imperial troops. She also reports that some five hundred horses were stabled at her castle, gives the emperor's current location, and warns of approaching reinforcements.

In the end, she was forced to leave her castle when the enemy approached. This deprived John Frederick of vital intelligence, leading to his defeat and capture within a few weeks at the Battle of Mühlberg.

Matthes Gebel

German, c. 1500–1574

Medal of Elector John Frederick of Saxony,

1532

Silver

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

This medal portrait shows the young John Frederick, who assumed the office of Elector of Saxony after the death of his father, Elector John the Steadfast, in 1532. The medal was part of John Frederick's campaign to gather support, in part because his father had opposed the election of the new German king. The back bears John Frederick's motto, "My hope is in God" (Proverbs 22:19), a pledge of his unshakable Protestant faith.

The refined details of the elector's facial features, clothing, and hair exemplify Matthes Gebel's great skill as a medal maker.

Charles V

Emperor Charles V Imposes the Imperial Ban on Magdeburg

Augsburg, July 27, 1547

Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

After his victory over the Schmalkaldic League at the Battle of Mühlberg, Emperor Charles V pressed his advantage. He demanded unconditional submission from every member of the league. Only the city of Magdeburg refused to swear loyalty to both the

reinstated Catholic archbishop and the emperor himself. The citizens of Magdeburg would yield neither their Protestant faith nor their rights.

With this document, Charles V expelled Magdeburg from the Holy Roman Empire's community of public peace. This had far-reaching consequences for the people of Magdeburg. Imperial estates could no longer make alliances or treaties with the city. The city and its residents could be attacked and plundered with impunity. Despite the punishment, Magdeburg remained independent and became a stronghold of Protestant resistance against the emperor.

Martin Luther

Lucas Cranach the Elder (illustrator)

German, 1472–1553

**Daß Jhesus Christus eyn geborner
Jude sey (That Jesus Christ Was Born
a Jew)**

Wittenberg: Christian Döring (?), 1523

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

A big question for Luther was “how to treat Jews.” Before becoming a reformer, Luther saw no future for the Jewish people, but here he expresses the hope that he will “attract many Jews to the Christian faith.” Using biblical citations, he attempts to prove that Jesus is the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible, which he calls the “Old Testament.” He argues that waiting for the Messiah was pointless, since he had already arrived and that Jews’ only option was conversion to Christianity to receive salvation.

What makes this 1523 work unique is its call for tolerance toward Jewish people and their dignified and nonviolent treatment, which was unusual for the time. Because the Jewish Christians in the era of the apostles were peacefully able to convert the heathens, Luther states that this should be the rule for the contemporary mission toward Jewish people as well.

Lead Type with the Hebrew Letter מ (Mem)

Wittenberg, Bürgermeisterstr. 5 (formerly
Jüdenviertel 25), late 16th/early 17th century

Lead

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

This little slug of lead is a remarkable discovery. It is a piece of printer's type for the Hebrew letter מ (mem), and it is currently the only archaeological find of Hebrew type in all of Europe. It was among the numerous pieces of lead type recovered from the backfill of an old latrine in the former Jewish quarter of Wittenberg. The property was at one time the print shop of Johann Krafft the Younger.

Scholars at Wittenberg University fueled an increase in the printing of Hebrew texts. The Krafft family turned out hundreds of

books, including many in Hebrew. Johann worked together with a Jewish proofreader on Hebrew editions of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) in 1586, followed the next year by a complete Hebrew edition of the Old Testament.

Biblia Hebraica (Hebrew Bible)

Venice: Daniel Bomberg, 1518

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Luther believed that understanding of the Holy Scripture required knowledge of its original languages—Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament. In 1506 he bought a copy of the Hebrew grammar book shown nearby. By 1519 he acquired a Hebrew Bible printed in Italy in 1494, which would accompany him all his life.

The Bible displayed here is one of the first printed masterpieces of Daniel Bomberg. Although Christian, he specialized in Hebrew printing, which he did with unprecedented precision and elegance.

Martin Luther

Ein Sermon von dem Wucher (A Treatise on Usury)

Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grünenberg, 1520

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

The significance of economic questions for Luther has often been overlooked. He repeatedly argued, however, for economic change. Beginning with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Luther viewed every form of money trading with suspicion and placed it in the category

of usury. He denounced the payment of interest, tried to abolish overseas trade in luxury goods, and sought ways to loosen the grip of large trading companies. Luther's ideas, however, proved to be impractical and were not followed.

The title page illustration is problematic. It shows a caricature of a Jewish person with the caption, "Pay or give interest, for I long for profit." Luther probably did not select the design, but, even so, it hints at his later animosity toward Jewish people.

Martin Luther

Von den Juden und ihren Lügen (On the Jews and Their Lies)

Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1543

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Late in life, Luther abandoned his hope that the Reformation would spark mass conversion of Jewish people to Christianity. In quick succession, he produced three publications against them. The one displayed here is the most hateful. He calls for

banishment of Jewish people, or at least destruction of their synagogues, and confiscation of their property. He also wanted them to be forced to do manual labor. He would not, however, allow their killing.

Today most Lutherans disavow Luther's agitation against Jewish people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Missouri Synod have issued statements denouncing discrimination against Jewish people.

Johannes Reuchlin

De Rudimentis Hebraicis (The Rudiments of Hebrew)

Pforzheim: Thomas Anshelm, 1506

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

Johannes Reuchlin pioneered Christian Hebrew

studies north of the Alps. His folio volume of more than 620 pages served Luther and many others as their introduction to the original language of the Old Testament. Because Hebrew is written from right to left, the front of the book is also at the right. Reuchlin would go on to play an important role in preserving Hebrew books from destruction at the hands of radical Christians.

Qur'an
Twelfth-century Latin translation
by Robert of Ketton, with preface by
Martin Luther

Basel: Johann Oporinus, 1543

Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Saint John's
University

Luther spearheaded this first printing of the Qur'an in Latin. He also provided a scathing preface. For years prior to 1543, he had hoped to obtain a Qur'an so that he could have

direct understanding of Islam. He knew that previous authors had given unreliable, biased accounts of the religion. His own writings earlier had used Muslim charity, magnificence, and fervor as a means of making shaming arguments against the Catholic Church. Discussions of Islam carried a sense of urgency, because Suleiman the Magnificent and the forces of his Ottoman Empire frequently invaded Europe in the 1520s to 1540s.

Luther's preface opens with a fierce attack on Judaism and blames the devil for other

pre-Christian religions. He then describes the Crucifixion and Resurrection as God's "novel and awesome" testimony of Jesus' divinity. Stating his main purpose for publishing the Qur'an, Luther says he did it so that "all pious persons will more easily comprehend the insanity and wiles of the devil and will be more easily able to refute them." After outlining his complaint with Islam, he defines Muslims as the enemy.

Chalice from Saint Andrew's Church, Eisleben,

Saxony or Thuringia, 15th century

Silver, gilded

Evangelische Kirchengemeinde St. Andreas-Nicolai-Petri Eisleben

Martin Luther celebrated Mass in Eisleben many times, and not just at the end of his life. This chalice was one of the ceremonial objects used on the altar at Saint Andrew's Church in Luther's day. Today it has become a symbol of the Reform practice of offering Communion wine to Luther's lay followers and for his final Mass, which took place in Saint Andrew's Church on February 15, 1546.

Velvet chasuble with embroidered cross and depiction of Saint Andrew, central Germany,

first quarter of the 16th century

Woven fabric: silk-velvet (northern Italy); embroidery: silver leaf, silk (central Germany?)

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

A chasuble is the outermost garment worn by the celebrating priest during Mass. This well-worn velvet chasuble comes from Eisleben and was in use when Luther frequently visited to preach. The embroidered cross on the back is made of threads wrapped in

sheets of silver. The figures, including Jesus, were made separately and then attached. The human heads are delicately rendered, with the hair made from silk threads wrapped around thin wires.

The crucified Jesus is surrounded by four winged animals representing the four evangelists: the eagle stands for John (above), the lion for Mark (left), the bull for Luke (right), and the angel for Matthew (below). The apostle Andrew is below with his X-shaped cross, connecting this chasuble to the Church of Saint Andrew in Eisleben, where it was likely worn during Mass on the main altar.

Pulpit hourglass, Germany, 18th century

Wood, carved and painted; glass, sand

Foundation Schloss Friedenstein Gotha

The sermon took on great significance in the Protestant church when the Reformation began. By preaching the Word of God as found in the Bible, the sermon became the means of receiving grace, God's divine forgiveness.

The problem was that sermons could go on too long. The use of hourglasses such as this one helped limit their length. They would be mounted on

the pulpit, enabling pastors to time their sermons. Following the classical four-part scheme of rhetoric—introduction, statement of facts, application, and conclusion—quadruple hourglasses were used. Each sand-filled glass bulb emptied fifteen minutes after it was turned over.

House sign of Luther's death place, 1506

Wood, carved, polychrome painting

Lutherstadt Eisleben (on loan to Luther's death house in Eisleben)

After Luther's final sermon at Saint Andrew's Church, he went to a nearby house, where he died three days later, on February 18, 1546. This sign marked that house. The symbols on house signs were the middle-class version of noble family crests, but they were simpler, much like the cattle brands used by ranchers in the United States. As families rose in

importance, they often embellished their signs, as is the case with this one. It consists of a man holding a shield bearing a geometric family sign with the letters *T* and *R*. Below the shield is the date 1506.

The initials and the date point to Tile Rinck, whose business contract with Luther's father, Hans Luder, is displayed in the first room of this exhibition. The house had changed hands by 1546 and was occupied by town clerk Johann Albert. The house was torn down in 1570. This sign is all that remains.

Cylindrical jug, reputedly from Luther's death house, late 16th century

Stoneware

Lutherstadt Eisleben (on loan to Luther's birth house in Eisleben)

This jug has long been regarded as the only household object to come from Luther's death place, which no longer exists apart from the house sign displayed in this room. New research casts doubt on that belief.

The form and design of the glazed jug date it to

after 1580. Until recently, this made sense, since the house was thought to have burned down in the early 1600s. A newly discovered document, however, states that the house was destroyed in 1570, meaning this jug was likely never in the house where Luther died. Though a sad fate for this beer stein, the discovery underscores the widespread desire to have some tangible connection to Luther.

Martin Luther

Der Neüntzigst Psalm. Ein Gepet Mosi was sterben sey und wie man dem todt entpfliehe (Psalm 90. Moses' Prayer on Dying and How One Can Escape Death)

Nuremberg: Christoph Gutknecht, 1543

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Luther's lectures on Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, were among the final ones he gave at the University of Wittenberg on a topic other than the book of Genesis. He delivered the lectures in 1534–1535. His followers

transcribed them, and they appeared in print years later.

Luther's commentary on Psalm 90 forms one of his most significant statements on death, a topic with which he was preoccupied. In his view, plants and animals die in a natural order, but a person's death follows from original sin. Luther interprets Moses' dual conception of God as wrathful punisher and merciful source of grace. Thus, he describes death as a divine punishment, and through grace—accepted in baptism—the believer is offered redemption.

Handle from Luther's coffin, 1546

Iron

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

On May 16, 1913, the Wittenberg Castle Church's gravedigger reluctantly handed over this iron coffin handle. During renovations of the church in 1892, he and an accomplice had secretly—and contrary to the express prohibition by the emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II—opened Luther's crypt to see whether the grave was empty. After all, there had been a rumor since the 1500s that Luther's corpse had been

removed shortly after his funeral to keep it away from the advancing troops of Emperor Charles V. Only after the two men had resealed the crypt did they realize they had neglected to rebury the handle, and they decided to keep it. If the handle really came from Luther's crypt instead of another nearby burial site, it must have come from the internal wooden coffin, which was enclosed by a tin coffin.

**Unknown sculptor, after Lucas Cranach
the Elder**

Wooden model for Luther's tombstone, 1548

Linden, painted

Evangelische Andreaskirche Erfurt

This is the oldest known Luther monument. It is the model for a bronze plate intended to cover Luther's grave in the Castle Church of Wittenberg. Elector John Frederick honored Luther by allowing him to be buried near the royal family. He also ordered a bronze plate with a life-size full-length portrait, a

type usually reserved for rulers. The figure is based on the design used for a 1546 memorial woodcut of Luther, also displayed in this room.

The bronze was cast by a bell maker in the city of Erfurt, but due to John Frederick's loss of territory after his capture at the Battle of Mühlberg, the plate never reached Luther's grave. This wooden model remained in Erfurt, where it has been on public display since 1727. The lower inscription was cut out and remounted for upright display.

Martin Luther's folding traveling spoon,

Germany, first quarter of the 16th century

Gilded silver

Wartburg-Stiftung Eisenach

Luther gave this elaborately decorated traveling spoon as a personal gift to Johannes Caspar Aquila (Adler), his good friend and an expert on Hebrew. Aquila collaborated with Luther in the translation of the Old Testament from 1524 to 1527. Aquila died in 1560, and centuries later the spoon came into the possession of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941), the last

German emperor, who donated it to the collection of Wartburg Castle.

In the 1600s, it was customary to carry one's own eating utensils. Unlike today, the spoon's short handle would have been held in a closed fist. The handle can be folded toward the bowl, and the hinge can be secured by a pin in the shape of a devil's head. The knob is hollow, perhaps to hold perfumed substances. The bowl is engraved with a Crucifixion scene. A square piece of horn fitted into the bowl was believed to come from a unicorn and protect against poisoning. Elsewhere are religious inscriptions in Hebrew and Latin.

Luther's beer mug, first half of the 16th century
Root wood, with silver mounts from 1694

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

This ordinary wooden mug was transformed into a “relic” in 1694 by the addition of silver mounts. Regardless of whether Luther really held this mug, the inscription on the lid says, “The late Mr. Luther used this jug at his table in Eisleben.” Despite his criticism of degenerate alcohol consumption in the ruling houses, Luther would every now and then

partake of beer, which was brewed by his wife, as he felt it had health benefits.

Luther could have made this mug himself. In 1527, he ordered wood-turning tools and set up a workshop in his home. Though the mug's connection to Luther is uncertain, the idea that Luther might have held this mug in his own hands, or actually made it himself, helps us understand why this object was valued as a relic through the years.

Swan figurine, Eisleben, Hallesche Straße 4,

17th century

Pipe clay

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

This small, damaged figure of a swan was found during excavations in the courtyard of the house next to Martin Luther's birthplace in Eisleben. Clay figures were mass-produced as cheap souvenirs for Catholic pilgrims or as children's toys, but here we have a new use. This swan is a tribute to Luther.

According to legend, in 1415 Czech reformer Jan Hus (literally John Goose)—whose ideas anticipated those of Luther—mocked his executioners on his way to the stake: “Today you will roast a lean goose, but a hundred years from now you will hear a swan sing, whom you will leave unroasted.” Luther's disciples soon associated the swan with their leader, and Luther adopted it too. After his death, the swan played an increasingly important role in Protestant imagery as Luther's symbol.

Unknown artist

Wooden chalice, so-called Luther

Chalice, Altenstein, Thuringia, 19th century
Beechwood, partially painted

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology
Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

Inscription: From Luther's spring I drank
at length. Now you from his words draw
strength.

Below: Altenstein, 18 July 1841

This covered cup is made of wood from the so-called Luther Beech Tree, which supposedly “witnessed” the staged kidnapping of Luther in 1521 when he was taken to Wartburg Castle. By the 1800s, the tree had become a popular vacation destination for Protestants. However, the beech tree was torn apart by a violent storm during a solar eclipse on July 18, 1841. A Saxon duke donated the tree's wood to a nearby church and decreed that it not be used for firewood, but rather to commemorate Luther.

“Luther tree items” from this wood were disseminated all over Europe: cups, boxes, thimbles, inkwells, napkin stands, and other knickknacks. Even the leaves from the tree were framed and displayed. Few of these Luther mementoes have been preserved.

**Wood chip from plank of the Luther Room,
and accompanying note**, 16th century; early

20th-century paper

Wood, paper, yarn

Luther Memorials Foundation of Saxony-Anhalt

The demand for Luther memorabilia, satisfied by a large number of objects both genuine and fake, recalls the Catholic veneration of relics of saints. Even the smallest objects enjoyed great popularity, including splinters of wood from the furniture, walls, and floors of places associated with Luther.

This wood chip recently came back to Wittenberg a century after it was taken. Apparently, a teacher at the Ogontz School for Young Ladies in Philadelphia took this bit of wood during a visit to Europe and brought it home as a treasured souvenir. She sewed it into a homemade envelope on which she wrote, “From floor near Luther’s table Wittenberg.” Her family’s preservation of the souvenir demonstrates the enduring interest in items connected to Luther.

Stove tile with a portrait of Martin Luther,

central Germany, c. 1546–1560

Earthenware, green lead glaze

Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, Kunstmuseum
Moritzburg Halle (Saale)

Reverence for Luther soon began to influence even the decoration of homes and everyday articles, such as this surface stove tile. It depicts Luther in half profile and was probably made after his death. The mold maker probably based the design on one of the many printed portraits of Luther.

This tile was long thought to be from the 1800s and merely in the style of the mid-1500s, but a closer inspection of technical details dates it to the sixteenth century. Identical tiles have turned up during archaeological excavations. It now appears that these tiles went into production shortly after Luther's death in 1546, placing them among the earliest images artisans made to commemorate him.

Martin Luther

**HaußPostilla. Uber die Sontags
und der fürnemesten Feste Evangelie,
durchs gantze jar (Sermons for Home)**

Wittenberg: Johann Krafft the Younger, 1591

Paper, gold-embossed leather binding (probably by
Hans Krüger)

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

This volume contains a collection of Luther's most beloved sermons interpreting the Gospel and the letters of the apostles. Luther began composing the sermons during his stay at Wartburg Castle in 1521–1522. The book served pastors as a basis for their own sermons and was popularly used for private meditations at home until the 1600s. Luther himself considered it his “very best book.”

Duke Frederick William of Saxe-Weimar ordered this copy for his ten-year-old daughter, Dorothea Sophia. The gold-embossed leather

binding has full-length portraits of Luther on the front and Luther's friend Philip Melanchthon on the back. Dorothea Sophia grew up to become the administrator of Quedlinburg Abbey, where the daughters of royalty and greater nobility were sent to live pure lives until they were married.

Bartholomaeus Rosinus

Confessionsschrift (Confessional Writing)

Jena: Tobias Steinmann, 1599

Paper, gold-embossed leather binding (by Lucas Weischner)

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

Luther's portrait was one of the most widespread motifs in Protestant German bookbinding of the 1500s. Even if he did not write a given book, his likeness might be used on the cover to indicate the author's and the reader's allegiance to him.

Count Henry of Reuss supported a break from

the Habsburg imperial family. As part of that push for separation, he commissioned this reprinting of a text that outlined a set of Protestant beliefs and ordered special copies of the book as gifts. A coat of arms in this copy indicates that it was made for Duchess Anna Maria of Saxe-Weimar.

The inscription says, "If you wish to become familiar with Luther's countenance, then view this picture; if you wish to know his thoughts, then consult his books."

Luther tankard from Merseburg, Merseburg,
Große Ritterstraße, second half of the 16th century
Stoneware

State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-
Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

After Luther's death, his image became part of daily life. The reliefs flanking the handle of this beer mug depict Luther and a figure thought to be his friend Philip Melanchthon. On the front, Eve offers her apple to Adam while the satanic, smirking serpent slithers up the Tree of Knowledge. The goose probably refers to Jan Hus (whose name meant goose), a reformer who came before Luther. The cat, whose bent foreleg echoes Eve's arm, may refer to the motif of women's wiles.

Caspar Güttel, introduction by Martin Luther

Ein Sermon auf dem Gottesacker zu Eisleben (Sermon at the Cemetery of Eisleben)

Wittenberg: Nickel Schirlentz, 1541

Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt

The shifting religious landscape made for some difficult transitions, and few were as fraught as the preparations for death and final burial. Eisleben, Luther's birthplace, had a small community that still adhered to the Catholic Church. They were referred to as "Expectants," because they awaited guidance from Rome on the proper course of faith. This community, however, had been without a priest since 1538. When one of the Expectants died before he could receive final confession

and last rites, Caspar Güttel's sermon at the cemetery demanded an end to the town's religious divide: if the Expectants wanted Christian burial in Eisleben, they needed to follow the Reformed confession.

Because these clashes and challenges were so common, Güttel's graveside sermon was quickly published. Luther's introduction slams the Expectants for relying on the dictates of the pope and ecclesiastical councils rather than the Word of God.

Sculpture fragments from Magdeburg,

second half of the 14th century

Sandstone

Magdeburg, Gouvernementsberg 3/4

State Office for Heritage and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt, State Museum of Prehistory

**Saint Margaret and the Dragon
Torso and head of a female saint
Madonna and Child**

These broken sculptures, along with many others, were used as construction material in a wall built in the 1700s near an abbey in Magdeburg. Discovered in 2003, the finds are largely in their unaltered state and reveal parts of the original painted surfaces.

Targeted attacks against sacred works of art and architecture in Magdeburg are first documented when Reformation iconoclasm erupted in 1524. Numerous sources report damage to abbeys and churches and their

furnishings. Violence occurred intermittently for more than a hundred years, affecting buildings, tombs, and altars.

These sculptures date to the 1300s. Their differing styles reveal that Magdeburg was a more important artistic center in medieval times than previously thought.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg
**Erbauliche Lieder-Sammlung (Collection
of Uplifting Hymns)**

Germantown, Pennsylvania: Michael Billmeyer, 1803
(third edition)

Luther Seminary Library, St. Paul

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg played a major role in the early spread of Lutheranism in America. In 1742, he came from Saxony as a missionary preacher to Pennsylvania. There he started to build an organized Lutheran Church in the eastern colonies. By 1748, he also compiled this hymnal, which circulated in manuscript copies before being published in 1786, making it the first Lutheran hymnal in America. The book was popular and was republished in many editions into the mid-1800s.