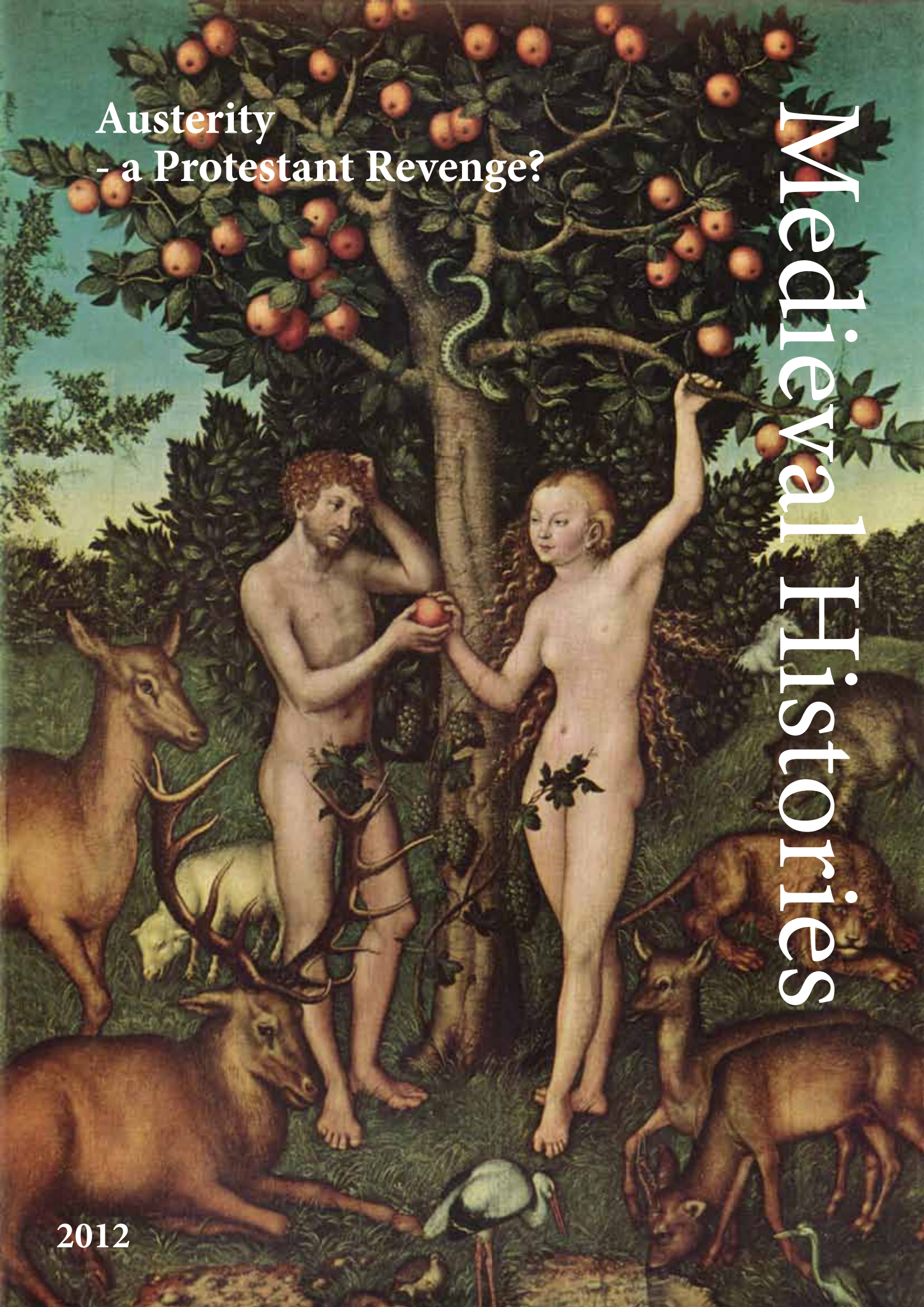
Austerity - a Protestant Revenge?



Medieval Histories

2012

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News from the medieval world about anniversaries, exhibitions, books, films, music, travels and new research

Special edition:

AUSTERITY

- Exhibition in Rome: Lux in Arcana
- Austerity - a protestant revenge?
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Photo (frontpage):

Lucas Cranach the Elder
Adam and Eve (1526)
Original at Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery

The Secret Archive in the Vatican

Lux in Arcana - a must-see exhibition in Rome this spring

For the first time ever some of the most priceless documents in the Secret Archive of the Vatican will be brought beyond the walls in order to be exhibited at the ancient political centre of Rome, The Capitol.

Officially the exhibition is mounted in order to celebrate the 400 years anniversary of the foundation of the Archives.

Unofficially, however, it seems to be part of large-scale PR-project fostered as a head-on reaction to the two films (and the books they were based on): The Da Vinci Code and Angels & Demons. (As will be remembered both films were felt as hurtful to the church; especially the first one). At least this is the immediate association one gets while watching the so-called official video promoted at YouTube . Why else let the video be wrapped in such a pastiche of music and visual effects?

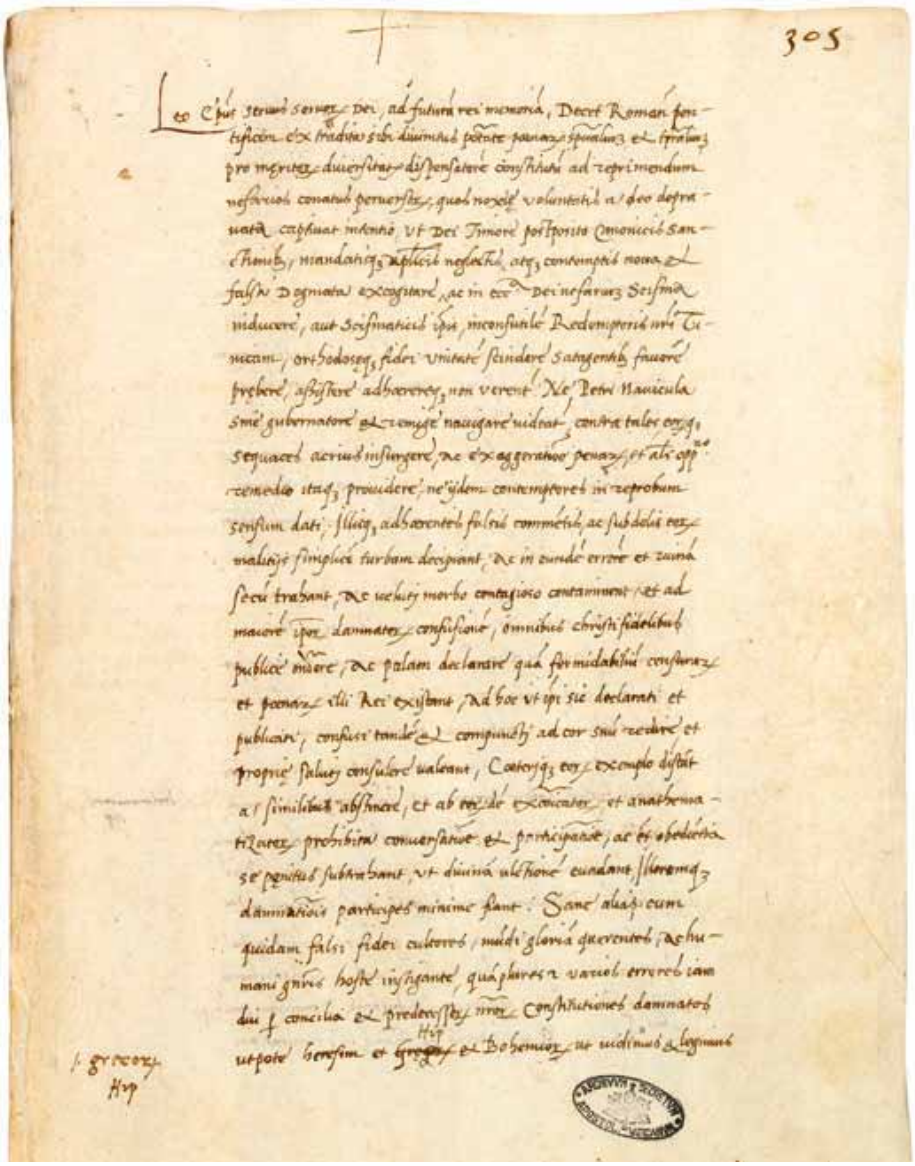
Further, of course, the title of the exhibition is in itself revealing: Lux in Arcana. Literally meaning "Light in the mysterious" it refers without doubt to two other prominent events in the late 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries: The Pope' s speech in Regensburg extolling enlightenment as an intrinsic part of Christianity, and further on the seemingly pervasive growth of the New Age'ers and their fascination with the "Arcana", symbolised by the two divisions in a pack of Tarot Cards.

And finally: Documents connected with all the "hot" issues are on show; on one hand the damnation of Frederick Barbarossa, the conviction of Galileo Galilei, papers from the destruction of the Templars Orders and the summary of the trial of the philosopher Giordano Bruno. And on the other hand the papal bull on the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and a letter from Bernadette Soubirous from Lourdes to Pius IX, probably signifying the correctly approved dogmas of the Catholic Church.

One of the remarkable documents on show is the bull - *Decet Romanum Pontificem* - which judged Martin Luther a heretic. The document from 1521 will probably not garner the most interest. In itself the document looks very business-like, preserved as it is in the protocols of the Vatican chancery. On the other hand it is still a bull, which from time to time becomes the centre of controversies.

In general it is believed by most - also Catholics - that the damnation of Martin Luther's theological propositions was a wrong move. Accordingly som theological circles hope for an official recant in connection with 2017 - the 500 year anniversary of the publishing of the 95 theses in Wittenberg.

When the present Pope asked for a meeting last autumn with representatives from the Evangelical Church in Germany in the city of Erfurt, where Martin Luther lived as a Augustinian Monk from 1506 - 09, some people thought that now the time had come.



Decet Romanum Pontificem

However, the official stand of the Catholic Church is, that it cannot recant this particular damnation in so far as the man is dead.

As of now the full content of the exhibition has not been published. Thus we do not quite know exactly how "Lux" and "Arcana" are to be balanced. However, so much is for sure: There will be room for debate! Is the Roman Church willing to make excuses for its former sins, disregarding how old they might be? And what about the archives from the second world war, which are currently being uploaded to the internet? Will they show the blameless character of Pope Pius XII? Rumour has it, that some of these documents will also be exhibited, once again raising the debate about the role of the church towards Holocaust.

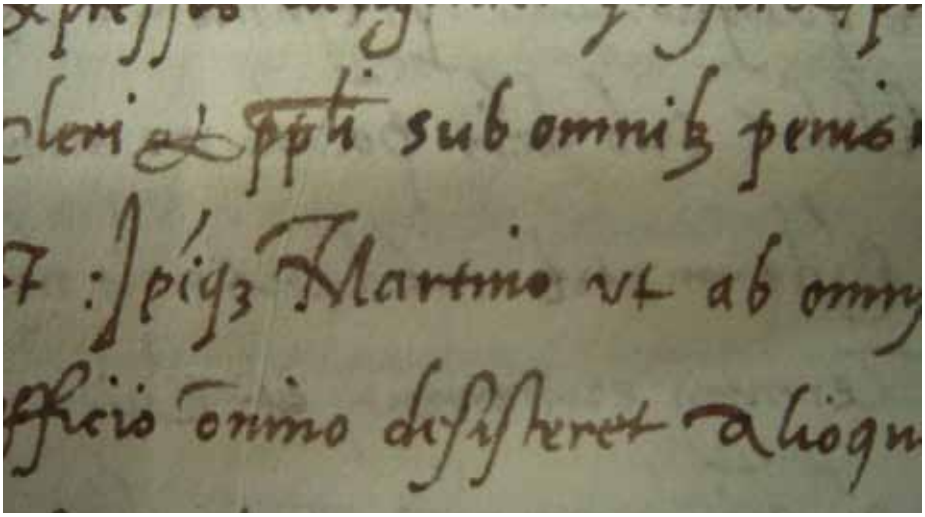
However, not only the documents will be on show. On the 29th of February, when the exhibition opens, a sophisticated app will make it possible to focus a tablet or smartphone on for instance the statue of Giordano Bruno at Campo de' Fiori and see – again and again - his pyre burst into flames, as it did in 1600 when he was burnt at the stake at the exact same spot. At the same time documents related to the trial can be accessed as well as videos with further information about his life and his ideas. The app will also make it possible to explore other documents in the exhibition.

The 100 documents, chosen among 85 kilometres of shelved manuscripts, codices, parchments, strings and registers, will remain at the Capitoline Museums for nearly seven months, from the 29th of February until the 9th of September. Accompanying the exhibition will be a catalogue published by Palombi Editori in two versions, both Italian and English.

Musei Capitolini
Piazza del Campidoglio,
29 February - 9 September 2012
Tuesday-Sunday: 9.00 am - 8.00 pm; closed Monday.

Read more:
www.luxinarcania.org

Ibidem Martino...



Winter in der Gifhorner Schweiz in Niedersachsen © Jürgen Markworth

Austerity and Asceticism

Austerity is the new buzzword. Until new-year 2010 it was hardly a blip at Google trends. And then the word started to roar being sought after at the internet between 5 and 25 times as often as before 2010. Checking Google's so-called Ngram Viewer, where you can measure the number of times a specific word crops up in publications since 1500, some of the same effect can be seen. Here the primary word is the adjective, austere. Interestingly enough, the graph shows that the word was prominent post 1815 and then reached a new peak around 1925 – 35. Unfortunately we cannot see the use of the word in books after 2008. Nevertheless, the conclusion is clear: Austerity is what characterises life in times of economic crises. But what does it mean more precisely?

Etymologically austerity has its roots in Greek auos/eos, which means dry; this is the stem of such words as East as well as "Austro" and Ostria", the names of the south-eastern (dry) winds in Rumania and Bulgaria. Another word derived from auos/eos is Aurora, the Latin name of the Goddess of Dawn. Like Greek Eos and Rigvedic Ushas (and possibly Germanic Ostara), Aurora carries the name of an earlier Indo-European dawn goddess, Hausos, root of hestia and hearth.

A number of connotations immediately spring to life: Austerity is characterising all that is left, when the abundant rains of prosperity has been quenched by the dry winds from the desolate desert. An austere lifestyle is thus stern, severe, and very simple. But it also carries the seed of a new dawn for those who are able to focus on the essentials in life; the hearth, which springs to life in the morning and harbours warmth and the prospect of new hope. In between we find however a short period of creative destruction, where the old is laid to rest and the new life of abundance gets to flourish. This in-between must however be disciplined and ascetic – austere in tone – in order for man to reach a new level of proficiency and happiness.

To live in austerity is thus to be invited to adopt an ascetic lifestyle in order to instigate a new life. It is in every sense a liminal – and limited – affair; something which profligates has to undergo during "dawn" while moving towards a less sin-full life.

Reymerswaele, Marinus van (ca. 1490 - ca. 1567) The Banker and His Wife ,
Original at Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes France

Two lifestyles

However, such austerity comes in two disguises. One demands a worldly renunciation of any and all sensuous pleasures – sometimes even the most basic like food, love, and sleep. This ascetic lifestyle must be characterised as a performance in so far as ascetic professional athletes carry it out on behalf of the rest and as an inspiration for ordinary people. Some might be high achievers like Symeon the Stylite or St. Anthony in the Desert were. Others are just following in a more balanced way like the religious professionals such as prelates, monks and nuns who refrain from enjoying certain foodstuffs like meat, eggs, milks, cheeses and joys like sex and music - and try to inspire their flock in this way.

Another form of austerity is innerworldly. In opposition to the first type of lifestyle, it does not show off a set of specific acts like fish eating during Lent and abstention from specific foodstuffs. Instead it parades a lifestyle, which looks quite the opposite, filled as it is with whatever seems to take the fancy.

On the inside, however, this life is characterised as highly disciplined both spiritually and bodily; the results though are not shown off; instead what we see is hard work and proper morals, documented through narratives of (often economic) success.

It is generally agreed that this link was forged through the protestant concept of life as a vocation to be lived without withdrawal – innerworldly - , as opposed to those catholic religious "athletes" – hermits, prelates, monks, and nuns etc., who withdraw bodily from the world, performing their asceticism through a rigorous lifestyle characterised through abstention.

Being a protestant thus implied (and imply) a life, which although situated in a world filled with normal obligations towards, family, neighbours and authorities, nevertheless is methodically controlled and supervised by an inner moral compass.

At play are thus two (ideal) types of "askesis" as Max Weber famous ly described them – one worldly, performative and Catholic, another innerworldly, reflective and Protestant.

Which austerity?

While debt-ridden countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and worst of all Greece are spiralling downwards into deep recession, the protestant North is right now able to keep up a reasonable growth or at least the status quo of the present. Accordingly the North together with the rest of the world is required to bail out the South.

No wonder then that the billions of Euro are accompanied by a splutter of moral indignation and general calls for austerity. The fascinating thing here is however that this specific call for ascetic austerity has no catholic niff. Quite the opposite: The moral and cultural stipulations and demands are of Northern – protestant – lineage, once again demonstrating the close links between Protestantism and capitalism.

Seen from a Northern perspective the call is accordingly not so much for a penitential period cloaked in sackcloth and ashes as much as a period of moral reckoning as for an austerity, which is deeply enmeshed in the specific doctrines of the Protestant church.

Thus, it is probably no accident that the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, is the daughter of an East German protestant minister. Nor is it an accident that the new German president, Joachim Gauck, is a theologian and protestant minister from the same circles. Both are they echoing the moral indignation of their reformation hero, Martin Luther, demanding not so much flamboyant generosity and good deeds - the catholic and Latin way - but rather study and hard work, while being at pains to straighten up corruption, lasciviousness and all the other Southern "sins".

Looked at from the South, however, the demands of austerity are understood quite differently. Here they are seen as demands of a prolonged period of "Lenten" behaviour characterised by abstention and poverty.

Read more:

Gregory Nagi: Greek Mythology and Poetics. Cornell University Press, 1992.

Wimbush, Vincent. L and Richard Valantasis (ed): Ascetism. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Weber, Max: The Protestant Etic and the Spirit of Capitalism. (1904; English transl.: 1930)

Kaelber, Lutz: Schools of Asceticism. Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities. Penn University Press 1998.

Jotischky, Andrew: A Hermit's Cookbook. Monks, Food and fasting in the Middle Ages. Continuum 2011.

St. Anthony the Great, by Cornelis Cornelisz (1525 - 35)
Original at Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal

An Ascetic Monk and a Fat Pope

On the second of May 1520 the Medici Pope, Leone X, was hunting boars out at Castello della Magliana south of Rome. The Castello was one of the Popes favourite retreats. Originally a cloister, it had been rebuilt at the end of the 15th century and turned into a small hunting lodge. Then, in the first decade of the 16th century, Leone X called upon such prestigious artists as Bramante, Michelangelo and Raphael in order to embellish the building and turn it into a renaissance salon full of literary readings, concerts and theatre. No doubt the surroundings must have enlivened the Pope with reminiscences from his childhood at the Medici villas north of Firenze, owned by his father Lorenzo il Magnifico.

A Boar hunt

On that particular day in May, the Pope was however bothered by a festering irritant, the matter of a wayward monk by the name of Martin Luther, who had raised such issues as the collection of indulgencies, the practice of simony and the rotten morals of the Papal Curia in particular. Apart from that he had also raised a number of theological issues – foremost justification by faith and not acts, which even today is the central dividing schism between the Catholic Church and the Protestants. All this, the Pope was (probably once more) enlightened about by one of the more persistent foes of Martin Luther, Johan Eck, who argued that the Czech priest, Jan Hus (1369 -1415), who ended up on the stake, and Martin Luther (1483 – 1540) were kindred heretics.

Martin Luther as Monk. Engraving by Lucas Cranach the Elder. 1520

Apparently the Medici Pope – who was a pleasure loving Epicurean with a healthy appetite – did what all wise leaders do: He send the matter back to series of committee, which held four long meetings in the end of May in order to decide upon the matter. The final result was a papal bull named after the introductory words, Exurge Domino, "Arise, O Lord". In it was listed a number of offensive statements of Martin Luther's concerning such issues as the penitential sacrament, the sale of indulgencies, the form of the Eucharist, the question of the role of faith versus actions, the matter of the free will and finally some issues of a more political nature.

The trade in indulgencies

Reading the document, however, there is no question that the fundamental issue was the lucrative business of indulgencies, which was financing not only the renaissance lives of the Vatican princes in Rome but also funded a number of the wars fought to keep the secular powers away from Italy.

Not that the abuse of indulgencies was new. In 1514, however, it reached new and mind staggering proportions, when Albert of Hohenzollern, archbishop of Magdeburg and apostolic administrator of the Halberstadt diocese, was granted the wealthy bishopric of Mainz by Rome. In order to obtain

this, Albert had to pay the Apostolic Camera 29,000 ducats, which were lent to him by the powerful Fugger bankers in Augsburg. In order to finance this, Rome suggested the newly minted bishop, that he could sell indulgencies, retaining a small percentage of the profit and sending the rest to Rome. A win-win situation, every one must have thought.

However, preaching and selling was left to the care of the infamous German Dominican preacher Johan Tetzel (1465 – 1519), who began operating in the Brandenburg territory in spring 1517, famously stimulating the faithful's generosity with a jingle: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings / a soul from Purgatory springs" (Sobald das Geld in Kasten klingt, die Seele aus dem Fegfeuer springt).

95 theses

In 1517 Martin Luther was seriously revolted by this practice and invited to an academic disputation by publishing his famous 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg, where he was professor. In the preamble, he wrote: "Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, master of arts and of Sacred Theology, lecturer in ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us may do so by letter. In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen". Amongst the theses were the following: "No. 27. They preach only human doctrines, who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory. No. 28. It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone." As Luther did not limit himself to a public disputation in Wittenberg, but also send the 95 theses to a number of Bishops, including Albert of Mainz, they were soon well-known inside most of the academic circles in Germany. The real problem arose, however, when they were translated into German in 1518 and printed.

At this point the clash with Rome began. During the first years – from 1517 to 1520 – a number of public and private disputations were held between Martin Luther and official spokesmen from the Catholic Church, who tried to compel him to recant. Already in June 1518 he was thus officially

branded as a heretic. For a number of political reasons the Pope nevertheless temporarily suspended the trial. In 1519, however, high-ranking members of the Papal Curia felt the time was ripe. A bull was drafted by a cardinal, Accolti, and later examined in four consistories, the Pope's plenary assemblies

Luther a wild boar

Very appropriate the bull quotes a number of scriptures in the arenga (preamble). Amongst those is a quotation from Psalm 80,13: "The wild boar from the forest seeks to destroy it and every wild beast feeds upon it", thus – maybe with

The Medici Pope by Romano Giulio 1521. Original at Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

an ironic twist - likening Martin Luther to the boars, the Pope was so fond of hunting at Magliana.

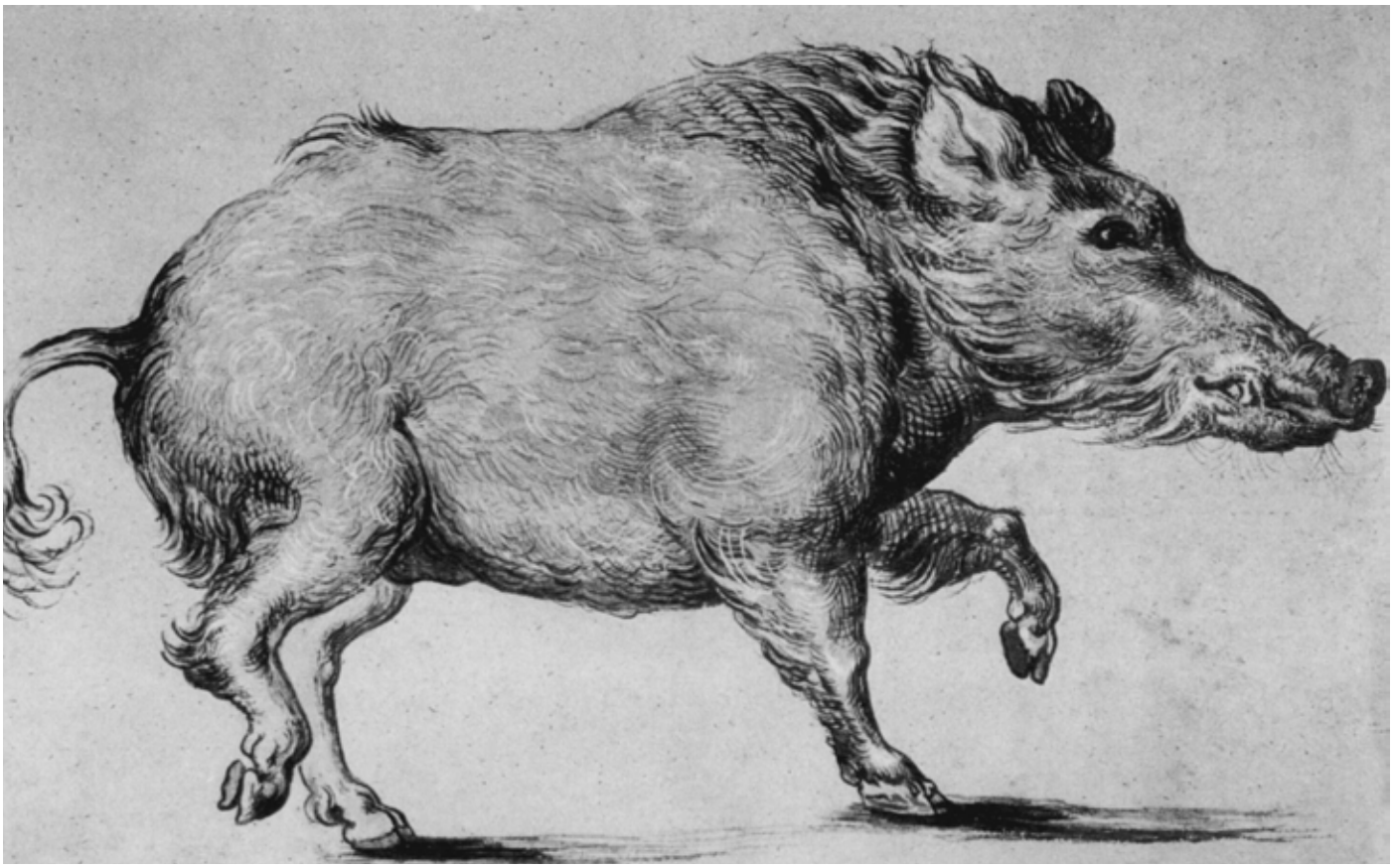
Now came however the problem of announcing the bull to Martin Luther and his co-conspirators. This was no easy matter. Entrusted to two Roman ambassadors, Johann Eck and Hieronymus Aleander, it was their job to deliver the bull into the hands of the heretics as well as make in publicly known. In Leipzig, Torgau and Döbeln it was covered in mud and torn; in Erfurt, theology students, after having shredded it, threw it into the Gera river; Nevertheless Eck and Aleander succeeded in making it publicly known and the autumn in Saxony 1520 was ripe with letters and discussions among Martin Luther and his friends and followers. As was custom, the bull had the form of a formal warning. Martin Luther might recant inside 60 days and avoid excommunication. What was to be done? Judging from the sources, Martin Luther was never in doubt. Come what may, he would not recant. The matter became official on the 10th of December, exactly 60 days after the bull had been publicised in Wittenberg. In the morning, the friend of Martin Luther, Melanchthon, invited everyone to meet out in front of the Elstertor in order to burn the bull publicly. At the same event the professors burnt copies of Canon Law and a penitential handbook, which Luther considered responsible for the abhorrent practices of the church. Finally Luther himself threw a copy of the bull at the fire, quoting from Psalm 21, 10: "Their fruit shall you destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men." After which he claimed: "After you (that is: the bull) has destroyed the truth of God, God will destroy you today. Into the fire you go". The burning of the books was a rejoinder to the fact that burnings of Luther's books had been executed in both Köln and Mainz. But it was also a defient gesture meant to send a powerful signal. Inside a month, more precisely January 3rd 1521, the pope excommunicated Martin Luther with the bull, *Decet Romanum Pontificem*.

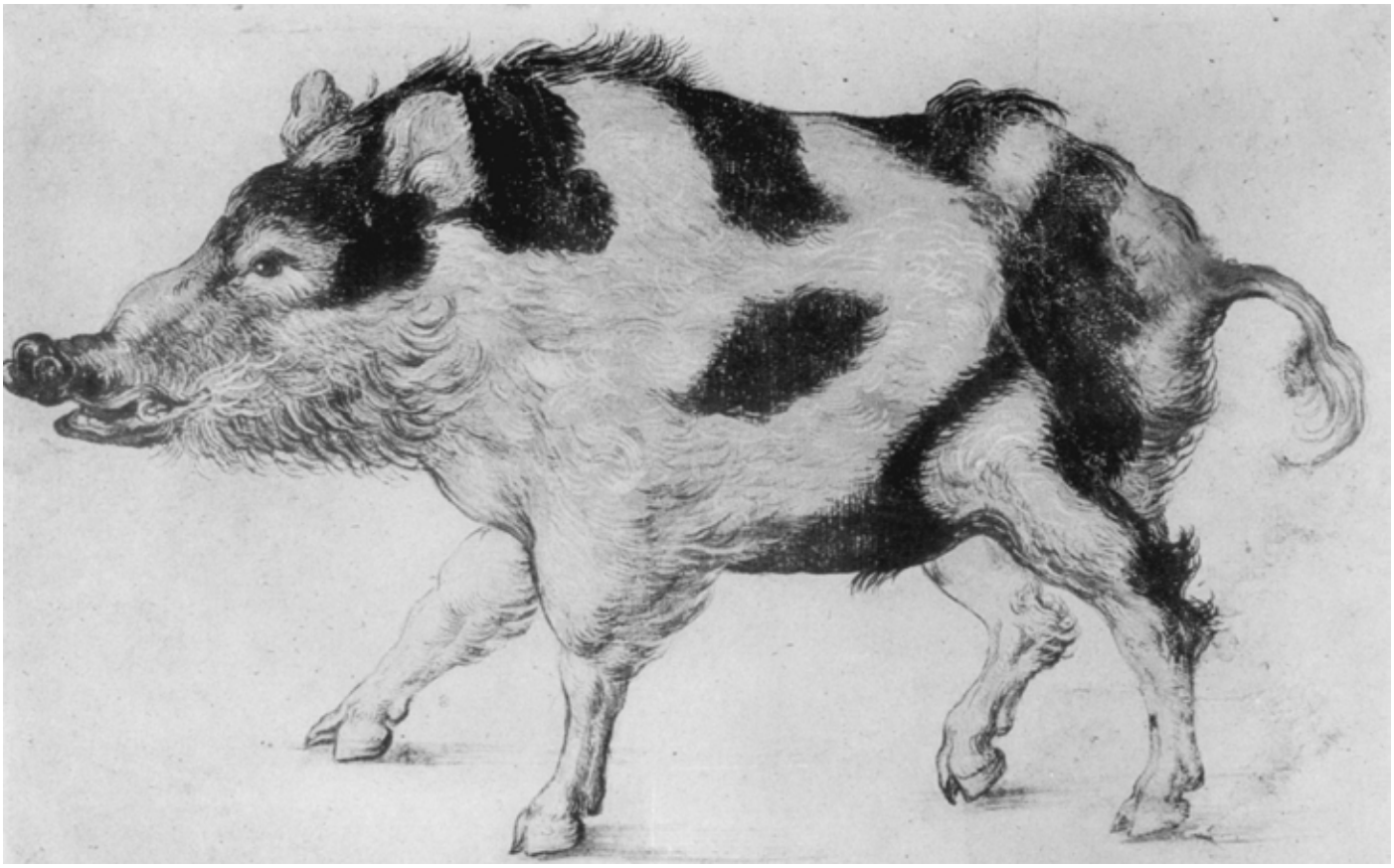
The text of the bull is transcribed in the Medici pope's register, just after that of the Exsurge Domine. After a precise juridical arenga, where little space is left for biblical quotations, the pope summarises the document's rulings, to the point where he cast the harshest ecclesiastical penance against Luther and his followers, while-reserving for himself a prospective absolution of the monk, and ordering all ecclesiastical authorities to fight the Lutheran heresy in defence of the Catholic faith.

Luther at Worms

The following spring saw Luther at the Diet of Worms, where he was called upon to defend himself in front of the Emperor and the assembled German princes against the accusations for heresy. After

Cranach the Elder





Cranach the Elder

days of deliberation, the Papal nuncio at the diet, Hieronymus Aleander, drew up and proposed the denunciation of Luther which was called the Edict of Worms, promulgated on the 25th of May.

The Edict declared Luther to be an obstinate heretic and banned the reading or possession of his writings.

Despite the agreement that he could return home safely, it was privately understood that Luther would soon be arrested and punished. To protect him from this fate, Prince Frederick - on of his supporters - seized him on his way home and hid him in Wartburg Castle. It was during his time at Wartburg, that Luther began his German translation of the Bible.

Hunting at Wartburg

At Wartburg he had to live incognito. In the beginning he was sorely restricted in his movements. A bit later he was able to move more freely around as Junker Jürgen; amongst other things this enabled him to partake in hunting parties in the forrests of Thüringen. In a letter to his friend Spalatin, he described this experience in the following way:

"Last week I hunted two days to see what the bitter-sweet pleasure of heroes was like. We took two hares and a few poor partridges - a worthy occupation indeed for men with nothing to do. I even moralized among the snares and dogs, and the superficial pleasure I might have derived from the hunt was equaled by the pity and pain, which are a necessary part of it.

It is an image of the devil hunting innocent little creatures with his guns and his hounds, the impious magistrates, bishops, and theologians. I deeply felt this parable of the simple and faithful soul. A still more cruel parable followed. With great pains I saved a little live rabbit, and rolled it up in the sleeve of my cloak, but when I left it and went a little way off, the dogs found the poor rabbit and killed it by biting its right leg and throat through the cloth.

Thus do the Pope and Satan rage to kill souls and are not stopped by my labor. I am sick of this kind of hunting ..." *(Letter to Spalatin 15th of August 1521)*

In this way Martin Luther reflected upon the papal discourse of hunting, in order to position himself culturally in opposition to the regime in Rome, who - as we have seen - used the hunting metaphor as the central way of framing the heresy of Martin Luther, classifying Luther with the wild boars, medieval metaphors for Satan.

A new life

At this point, Luther was still reacting to, less than rejecting the cultural framing of the papal bulls and decrees. In the beginning, his was not a schismatic project, but an endeavour to cleanse the Catholic Church of what he considered

a flood of medieval accretions in order to recapture the essence of Christian spirit and life.

Guiding this endeavour was his conviction that God is not for sale. God cannot be bought through cheap words and lousy wine, aka eternal masses or donations. Nor can he be mitigated through fasting, eating fish on Fridays or going on a pilgrimage, was Martin Luther's opinion. Salvation was for Martin Luther a gift of faith, a feeling of trust inspired by God.

To his initial dismay, a reaction to all this was however that the more or less ascetic medieval disciplines were little by little abolished by his followers. Such was not his initial intention, although he did claim that the old rules and regulations were adiafora - of no consequence. The point was however not to create a formless world, but a world formed in another way, guided by the Scriptures.

As seen from the Catholic Church this opened the gates for a lifestyle filled with all the seven deadly sins – gluttony, lust, greed, pride, despair, wrath, vainglory and sloth. In the pamphlets and writings of the Catholic Church Martin Luther was for the rest of his life lambasted with harsh reproaches for his fatness, his marriage, his wealth, his pride in his academic titles, and his angry and often gross writings against Rome, which he called - referring the the Book of Revelation - "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and Abominations of the Earth."

In general the Catholic Church won this war on words: Today Protestants are still believed to behave like fat cats, bent on living the good life – even during Lent.

While Catholics are at least called upon to form their lifestyle in certain ways, fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and – although it is voluntary - abstaining from meat during Lent etc.

The point, however, is that the protestant lifestyle was not less formalised or demanding; it was just different, guided as it was by the Scriptures less than tradition and visualised through the hagiographies of saints.

Luther might later defend hunting as a passtime; but he thought that nobles should primarily hunt beasts like wolves, bears and boars, known for their destructive and frightening habits.
Which of course did not keep renaissance nobles and princes from their beloved pursuit. That, however, is quite another story.

The Staghunt of Friedrich der Weise, patron of Martin Luther. Lucas Cranach der Elder
Original in Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Boar in Peppered Sauce

"The boar is so fierce a beast, and also so cruel, that for his fierceness and his cruelness, he despise and set nought by death, and he rises full piteously against the point of a spear of the hunter. And though it be so that he be smitten or sticked with a spear through the body, yet for the greater ire and cruelness in heart that he has, he rises on his enemy, and takes comfort and heart and strength for to wreak himself on his adversary with his tusks, and putts himself in peril of death with a wonderful fierceness against the weapon of his enemy.

And has in his mouth two crooked tusks right strong and sharp, and breaks and rends cruelly with them, those which he withstands. And uses the tusks instead of a sword. And has a hard shield, broad and thick in the right side, and puts that always against the weapon that pursues him, and uses that brawn instead of a shield to defend himself.

And when he spies peril that should befall, he whets his tusks and frots them, and assays in that while fretting against trees, if the points of his tusks be all blunt. And if he feels that they be blunt, he seeks a herb which is called Origanum, and gnaws it and chews it, and cleanses and comforts the roots of his teeth therewith by virtue thereof. "

From:

De proprietatibus rerum, book 18 by Bartholomaeus Anglicus /1203 - 1272). Quoted from: Medieval Lore from Bartholomew Anglicus, by Robert Steele 1893. (can be accessed freely at www.gutenberg.org)

Bore in Pevered
– Boar in Pepper sauce.

"Take a boar when it has been scalded and split it [along the backbone]. Take a quarter of it, or as much as you need; cut it in large pieces. Boil it on the fire until tender, then cut it in lengths, a rib surrounded by muscle [like a spare-rib], then put them in a pan. Add enough minced unions, whole cloves and maces, and add ground pepper to it. Then add it to a fresh broth or else a leg of beef or more, if necessary. Then boil figs in water; grind them, mix them with the same broth, they were boiled in. Boil this meat; when it is boiled enough, add to it the syrup and salt and sanders and saffron and give fourth."

From:

Cocatrice and Lampray Hay: Late Fifteenth-Century Recipes from Corpus Chhristi College Oxford. Ed. and translated by Co nstance B. Hieatt. Prospect Books 2012.

The Boar at Hattonchâtel © fxcuisine.com

Hunting at Castello della Magliana

Sale delle Muse

In an unhealthy, swampy place along the shores of the river Tiber south of Rome, lies an architectural renaissance pearl. Originally it was a simple farm owned by the monastery of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. In 1480 it was taken over by the popes and in 1490 it was torn down and rebuilt as a small renaissance castle. Later the favourite architect of the Medicis, Giuliano da Sangallo, was employed to build another wing with a portico. At the same time the old chapel, dedicated to St. John the Baptist was also rebuilt.

In the interior of the castle is found the famous "Hall of the Muses" which was used for a number of meetings between the literates, artists, sculptors and philosophers belonging to the coterie of the Medici pope, Leone X. Amongst those who frequented the "salons" were Michelangelo, Bramante, Rafael, Guicciardini and Machiavelli. As it stands today with a tiled floor and a wooden ceiling, the hall is like a theatre with perfect acoustics. Around the walls used to be a a frieze of laurels, eagles and lilies framing a bucolic landscape in which Apollo and his muses were enjoying life. Gerino "da" Pistoia painted the frieze. They are now at the Palazzo Braschi, the Museum of the city of Rome.

At some point hunting stopped being a favourite papal pastime and the small renaissance castello was turned into a nunnery. In the 19th century it fell into disrepair and the nuns started selling some of the treasures, among those the fresco by Rafael (or his school) from the chapel, which is presently exhibited at Louvre.

Today the small castello is squeezed in between the railroad, the Autostrada Roma-Aeroporto di Fiumicino, the nearby hospital of San Giovanni Battista, a residential area and a golfclub. The Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta, who runs the hospital and uses the buildings for the headquarters of the hospital, owns the castle.

It is seldom open for guided tours, look however at www.comitatocatacombedigenerosa.it/

Castello della Magliana

"The City of Wittenberg seen from the Elbe," from the travel album of Ottheinrich (1536), University Library Würzburg. The drawing shows how the citizens of Wittenberg had gardens in front of the ramparts reaching down to the river - as had Martin Luther's family

Gardening in Wittenberg

"I have planted a garden and dug a well, which make us happy. Come and you will be crowned with a wreath of lilies and roses", wrote Martin Luther in 1526 to his friend Spalatin a year after his marriage to the former nun, Katharina von Bora. A year later he claimed in another letter, that he wanted to be a gardener "in his next life".

There is no doubt that Luther was in the middle of unfolding his life in Wittenberg as a protestan-tarchetype. His was a life full of prayer, studies, writings and teaching in a self-sufficient house complete with wife, children, students, servants and old family-members plus the odd guest, surrounded with a garden and supplied from neighbouring farmland and fishing-ponds.

Martin Luther and his wife, Katharina von Bora Originals at Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery

In the centre of this was his garden, filled with a multitude of fruits - peaches, apples, oranges, figs, berries and medlars as well as fruits like melons and herbs. Kales, beans, peas, roots and carrots may have grown on the gardens and fields Luther and his wife, Käthe, rented and bought during the following years.

We don't know much about how Luther's garden in Wittenberg looked like. Probably, though the well was dug in the centre surrounded with square, raised beds with vegetables, which were bordered with planks or small bushes of rosemary or lilac. Among the fruit trees would be beehives. Here Luther would work as well as walk around, dreaming of Paradise.
Part of this garden was located inside the yard of the former "black" cloister, which Luther was gifted with after his former colleagues, the monks, had either left to live out the rest of their lives among their catholic brethren; or left to

work as protestant pastors in the new fledgling church. Further garden lots were located in front of the ramparts on the brink of the river Elbe.

To get a proper idea of how Martin Luther thought of the good life, we may turn to a letter he wrote to his four year old son:

To my dearly beloved son Hänschen Luther at Wittenberg, Grace and peace in Christ!

My dearly beloved son, it pleases me to hear that you are studying well and praying diligently. Do this, my son, and keep it up. When I come home, I will bring you a nice gift from the fair. I know a pretty, lovely, pleasant garden, where many children go; they wear golden coats and gather nice apples, pears, cherries, and plums from under the trees; they sing, jump, and are merry. They also have pretty little horses with golden bridles and silver saddles. I asked the owner of the garden: "Whose children are these?" He said: "These are the children who like to pray, study, and be pious." So I said: "My dear sir, I also have a son, his name is Hänschen Luther. Might he not come into the garden, too, so that he might also eat such lovely apples and pears, ride such fine horses, and play with these children?" Then the man said: "If he likes to pray, study, and be pious, then he, too, may enter the garden. Lippus [Melanchthon] and Jost [Jonas] as well. And if they all come together, they will also get whistles and drums, lutes, and all kinds of stringed instruments; they will also dance and shoot with small crossbows."

And he showed me a lovely lawn, all ready for dancing, where golden whistles and drums and fine silver crossbows hung. But it was still early, so the children hadn't eaten yet, which is why I couldn't wait for the dancing and said to the man: "Ah, dear Sir, I must hurry off and write all this to my dear son Hänschen, so that he will be sure to study diligently, pray well, and be pious, so that he, too, may come into this garden. But he has an Aunt Lena, whom he must bring as well." The man said: "That he can, go and write him thus."

Therefore, my dear son Hänschen, make sure to study and pray, and tell Lippus and Justen to do the same, so that they may study and pray, too. That way, all of you will

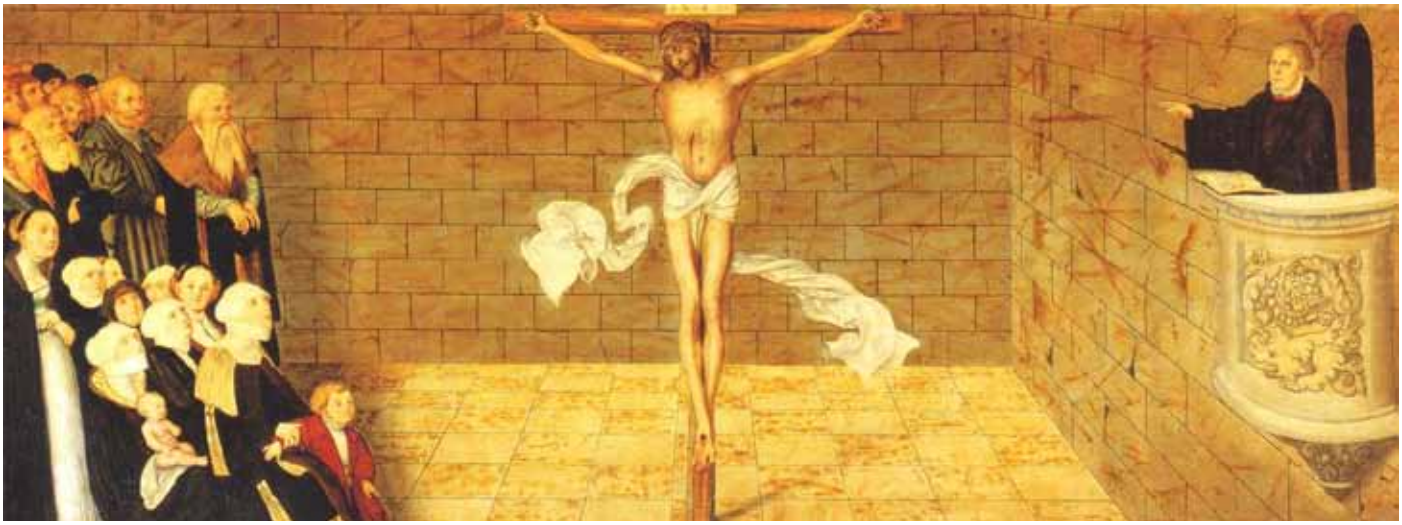
Martin Luther is shown tending to the heavenly vinery together with his friends on the Epitaph of Paul Eber. Cranach the Younger 1569

get into the garden together. May you be herewith commended to God, and greet Aunt Lena and give her a kiss for me.

Your dear father
Martinus Luther

It is true that Martin Luther did-not invent this life. It was a widespread bourgois norm already in the 15th century. But the focus on gardening was definitely a "new" protestant symbol; inspired, no doubt, by the great fascination with the identification of Paradise, which followed upon the discovery of the New World.

Luther preaches in Wittenberg. The boy in red is Hänschen. Cranach the Elder, Stadtkirche Wittenberg



Melanchthon's Garden

Unfortunately the foundation, which caters for Luther's House in Wittenberg has not found it opportune to recreate his garden.

Therefore, the best place to get a sense of what Martin Luther's garden was like is to go next door and see the Melanchthon's house.

Phillip Melanchthon (1497 – 1560) was close friend and collaborator with Martin Luther and worked tirelessly as a reformer, theologian and university teacher. In 1518 he was called to teach at the University in Wittenberg, where he married Katharina Krapp in 1520, with whom he had four children plus a number of his sisters and later daughters children.

In the beginning he lived in a small House called the Bude, which originally had been part of the extensive black cloister, where Luther lived. In 1535, the Bude was found to be in such a derelict condition, that it was torn down. Instead magnificent new three-story structure was erected out of sandstone and mortar. The University of Wittenberg and Frederick the Wise paid for the new house, since Martin Luther was keen to keep his friend in Wittenberg.

The house is a remarkable struct ure as it stands today. Apparently it was never destroyed by war or fire, and when we enter it, it is through the same sandstone portal as Melanchthon and Luther used to walk through for nearly 500 years ago. Inside the house there is a vaulted hallway, which runs the entire length of the house. At the left are doors leading into the former servant quarters, storerooms and the kitchen. Next floor, which is reached by a winding stairway, finds us in his study with a beamed ceiling. The room was also used as a living room and this is where Melanchthon died in 1560. On the third floor are the former student quarters and a classroom.

However, behind the house is what really interests us, a walled-in back yard with a fountain with running water and a small garden for growing fruit trees, flowers, herbs and vegetables. In the garden is a 450 year old yew.

Currently the house and garden are closed for visitors until August 2012. Recently it became possible to buy the lot next door and reunite the "two" gardens, which were split 150 years ago. Further, the "Stiftung Luthergedenkstetten" are currently building a new house to be used for the ticket counter, a shop, restrooms and space for a more modern exhibition of the Melanchthon collection currently exhibited in the house itself. This is then going to be renovated. The furniture – neo-renaissance copies from the end of the 19th century - will presumably be replaced with a more up-to-date exhibition.

Hopefully, however, the tranquil character of the garden will not change. It is one of the very few places in Germany where a common renaissance garden may be experienced. And where it is possible to get a sense of what gardening ment to Luther and his contemporaries.

The House of Phillip Melanchthon

The Mill and the Cross

In 1564 Pieter Bruegel painted "The Way to Calvary", set in Vlaanderen at the time of the Spanish occupation, he painted the Roman Soldiers as Spanish Militia in their red coats and filled the landscape with next to 500 people engaged in everything from buying, selling and grieving to playing and dancing.

Recently this painting was recreated through the artist's eye of the Polish film director, Lech Majewski. The film – the Mill and the Cross - which is a curious mixture of still-lives and vivid scenes of daily life, tells the story of the painter, played by Rutger Hauer, and how he envisioned the brutal passion unfolding in the midst of an idyllic landscape filled with peaceful peasants and burghers, whose lives are grinding slowly while the miller – God - perched on the platform of his huge mill placed on top of a steep cliff looks dispassionately down upon it all.

Another leading actor is Michael York, who plays the wealthy burgher and art collector, Nicolaes Jonghelinck. The main dialogue takes place between these two, while they are discussing the horrid times and idea behind the masterpiece of Bruegel. The real gems, however, are the minutely recreated scenes from daily life in the mid 16th century, and the beauty of it all. Slow filming at it's best!

A book by Michael Francis Gibson, which was published more than a decade ago, heavily inspired the film. Here the art critic told the story of this particular painting and discussed every little detail in the dresses, the artefacts, the brushstrokes in a book which was highly acclaimed as a piece of spy-writing. Although it is bad form to reveal the conclusion, it is perhaps appropriate here. According to the author, the figure of Christ seems to be a mere addendum, while the rock together with the mill on top represent respectively the rule of grace and the rule of law – or in fact the Protestant reformationversus the Catholic Church; a conclusion, which we are served initially in the film,

Pieter Bruegel the Elder ca. 1520 – 1569, The Procession to Calvary, Original at Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien

Ending scene from The Mill and the Cross showing the procession to Calvary

which opens with a gruesome execution of a young heretic.

The film, which premiered last year, has been shown on a number of prestigious festivals as well as in cinemas all over the world. And yes, it profits from a wide screen. It is however worth buying the dvd, as it includes an additional 40 min. filled with a documentary on how the film was made plus and interview with Lech Majewski.

Read more:

The official site:
www.themillandthecross.com/

Watch the film online at mubi.com/films/the-mill-and-the-cross

Gibson, Michael Francis: Le Portement de croix de Pierre Bruegel l'Aîné. Noêsis, Paris 1996. English translation: The Mill and the Cross. Acatlos, Lausanne 2001.

Bruegel. The Mill and the Cross. Bosz Publishing House, Angelus Silesius 2010. Contains the greater part of the essay of Gibson plus an account by Dagmara Grzasda of the storyboard and the shooting and writings by Lech Majewski.

Rutger Hauer as Bruegel

Cranach the Elder - Painter of the Reformation

Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 – 1553) belonged – next to Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein the Younger and Hans Memling - to the most important artists of his time.
He spent his youth in Kronach, where his father lived as a painter. Around 1500 he left for Nürnberg (to learn from Dürer) and later Wien. In 1505 he was appointed court-painter to the ducal household of Saxony and set up shop in Wittenberg. At first he followed the duke around having bed and board at the different castles in Wittenberg, Torgau and Coburg. In 1512, however, he married Barbara Brengbier and bought a huge house in Wittenberg, where he sat up shop as a painter, printer and designer.

This brought him in close contact with Martin Luther, who started teaching at the University of Wittenberg in 1508. Soon they were fast friends and later collaborators in the dissemination of the reformation. Especially his work as a publisher and printer was indispensible in the years after 1517, when Luther published his 95 theses and began his work as a reformer.

A recent book by professor Steven Ozment – known for his fascinating stories about life in late medieval and early modern Germany - tells the story of how the fates of the "Serpent" (Cranach) and the "Lamb" (Luther) were intertwined as were their very early use of their coats of arms and their emblems as ways of enforcing some sort of copyright on their combined works as author and publisher. Although somewhat "weak" on the latest scholarship on Martin Luther, the book is fascinating because it explains in an original way, how Cranach albeit heavily investing in the reformation was able to move effortlessly amongst both reformers and Catholics.

Naked virtue

At the same time as he painted powerful people in both worlds, he created the series of beautiful naked "mothers" nursing their children, thus showing how eros and the body should no longer be considered hellish; quite the opposite: The naked woman was the

Adam and Eve, Lucas Cranach the Elder (1526)
Original at the Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery

Charity, Lucas Cranach the Elder
Original in Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten

Lucas Cranach the Elder, Wittenberg Altar, Original in Stadtskirche Wittenberg

fountain of precisely that God-given love and nourishment, which graced the new life in the new church.

The book makes the claim that the reformation had never succeeded without Cranach's visualization of the new theology. That may very well be. Whether he was the second most important reformer next to Luther, as the author claims is however less certain. Maybe it is more accurate to claim that the reformation was a result of the actions and efforts of a number of people, who simply happened to converge in the same place at an opportune moment in history.

Open database

Cranach the Elder was compared to his contemporaries a prolific artist. A "fast hand", he was called by people, who marveled at the vast production capacities of the man and his workshop – paintings, portraits, altarpieces, woodcuts, drawings, set pieces for hunts and tournaments and even wallpapers are just some of the results of a life long working career and business enterprise of the renaissance painter.

Now 400 paintings, 5000 drawings and woodcuts plus 2000 pages of research are available for in-depth perusal at the official "Digital Cranach Archive", which recently opened some of its collections up for the public eye. Here it is possible to get detailed information of dates provenience etc. as well as access to a large part of the research hitherto hidden in obscure corners of scientific journals. As this is only the first installment, more is yet to come. The database is financed by the Andrew Mellon Foundation and a joint venture of institutions from all over the world. Undoubtedly the plan is to finish the work around 2015, which is named as Cranach-year as part of the Luther-Dekade leading up to the 500 - year reformation jubilee in 2017. Maybe at that time the three planned exhibitions in Weimar, Eisenach and Gotha will be superfluous as all the works of Cranach can be studied at home in high resolution and copiously documented.

Read more:

Steven Ozment: The Serpent and the Lamb. Cranach, Luther and the Making of the Reformation. Yale University Press 2011.

www.lucascranach.org - not to be mistaken for www.cranach.net which is an exclusive database, fenced off for anyone who is not a registered researcher.

Red or Black Berets?

In August 1524 Luther had a livid row with local artisans and burghers in the small town of Orlamünde, where Karlstadt, his former friend and comrade in arms had set up shop. Karlstadt, who was of noble origin, was highly egalitarian in his leanings plus harboured iconoclastic and other extreme views, which Luther regarded as heretical.

On that particular morning Luther arrived to sort out some of the views held by the local elders, who had sent a letter addressing him as "our spiritual teacher Martin Luther, our brother in Christ".

Luther was flaming mad. He could only see this as a gross attack on his superior scholarly authority as a doctor of theology. As the burghers proceeded with their lack of reverence, Luther threw a tantrum and demanded the horses to be hitched to the wagon. In the end he was somewhat mollified, but resisted in taking off his doctor's beret, which was flaming red – same colour as the traditional beret of the pope.

A mature Martin Luther by Cranach, Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein, Gotha

Luther was never painted with a red beret, and later paintings by Cranach actually shows him habitually dressed in a black beret. That red mattered to him, however, is apparent from the fact that he habitually was shown with a white shirt with black edges, a red vest or jacket and a black coat. In the end this is how he and his "visual designer", Cranach the Elder, decided he should look. Dressed in black as the rest of the reformers and with a black beret, but always with a slight purple tinge around his neck, signifying that although Luther was not pope, he was definitely on par.

Leo X and his nephews by Rafael, Uffizi Gallery

Such is how we envision him: Preaching to his congregation or celebrating baptism, communion and penitence; and thus crafting the new church, materialized through the people showing of their sense of moral indignity, honour and reliability through their comportment - be it as members of the local council, in their homes, in the bosom of their families,while gardening or in church.

The beautiful small vignette about Luther in Orlamünde is brought to us in a recent book about "dressing up", which tells us how cultural identity in Renaissance Europe was formed through a spectacular new obsession with clothes, their colours and form. In the book the author, Ulinka Rublack presents us with a cornucopia of 156 fascinating illustrations and countless stories about Renaissance people, and to what extent they regarded their clothes as markers of not only social, but also personal, national and religious identity.

The book, which won the Roland H. Bainton Prize for History 2011, is hereby highly recommended.

Read more:
Ulinka Rublack: Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe. Oxford University Press 2010.