

A STUDY OF THE

Protestant Reformation

1517 - 2017

The 500th Anniversary





Introduction: Frank A. James, III, DPhil, PhD

“If there is anything moderns know about Martin Luther, it is that he nailed the *Ninety-five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* to a church door and with each blow of the hammer openly defied a moribund and even corrupt Catholic Church. The *Ninety-five Theses*, it was thought, were Luther’s declaration of independence from Rome. Unfortunately, this popular view of the *Ninety-five Theses* is historically inaccurate. To be sure, October 31, 1517, would indeed turn out to be the first hint that the Western world was about to be turned upside down. But Luther’s act on All Hallows Eve in 1517 was not an act of rebellion. It was, in fact, just the opposite – the act of a dutiful son of mother church.”



Rotunda of Witnesses
Billy Graham Center
Wheaton College

Introduction



“When you have Him, you have all, but you have also lost all when you lose Him. Stay with Christ, although your eyes do not see Him and your reason does not grasp Him.”

- Martin Luther

Luther tapestry in the Rotunda of Witnesses

The Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College



Introduction: Luther's *Table Talk*

In 1532, Luther summarized his connection with Roman Catholic theology: “Under the papacy I was exposed to every error. The reason is that I had no faith. Faith is, as it were, the center of a circle. If anybody strays from the center, it is impossible for him to have the circle around him, and he must blunder. The center is Christ.” When asked why he wrote with such vehemence, Luther said, “Our Lord God must precede a heavy shower with thunder and then let it rain in a very gentle fashion so that the ground becomes soaked through. To put it differently, I can cut through a willow branch with a bread knife, but to cut through oak requires an axe and wedge, and even with these one can hardly split it.”



Introduction

“Christianity on the eve of the Reformation was undoubtedly popular and lively, but that does not mean it was healthy or biblical. In fact, if all the people had been hungering for the kind of change the Reformation would bring, it would suggest that the Reformation was little more than a natural social movement, a moral clean-up. This the Reformers always denied. It was not a popular moral reform; it was a challenge to the very heart of Christianity. They claimed that God’s word was breaking in to change the world; it was unexpected, and went right against the grain; it was not a human work but a divine bombshell.”

- Dr. Michael Reeves

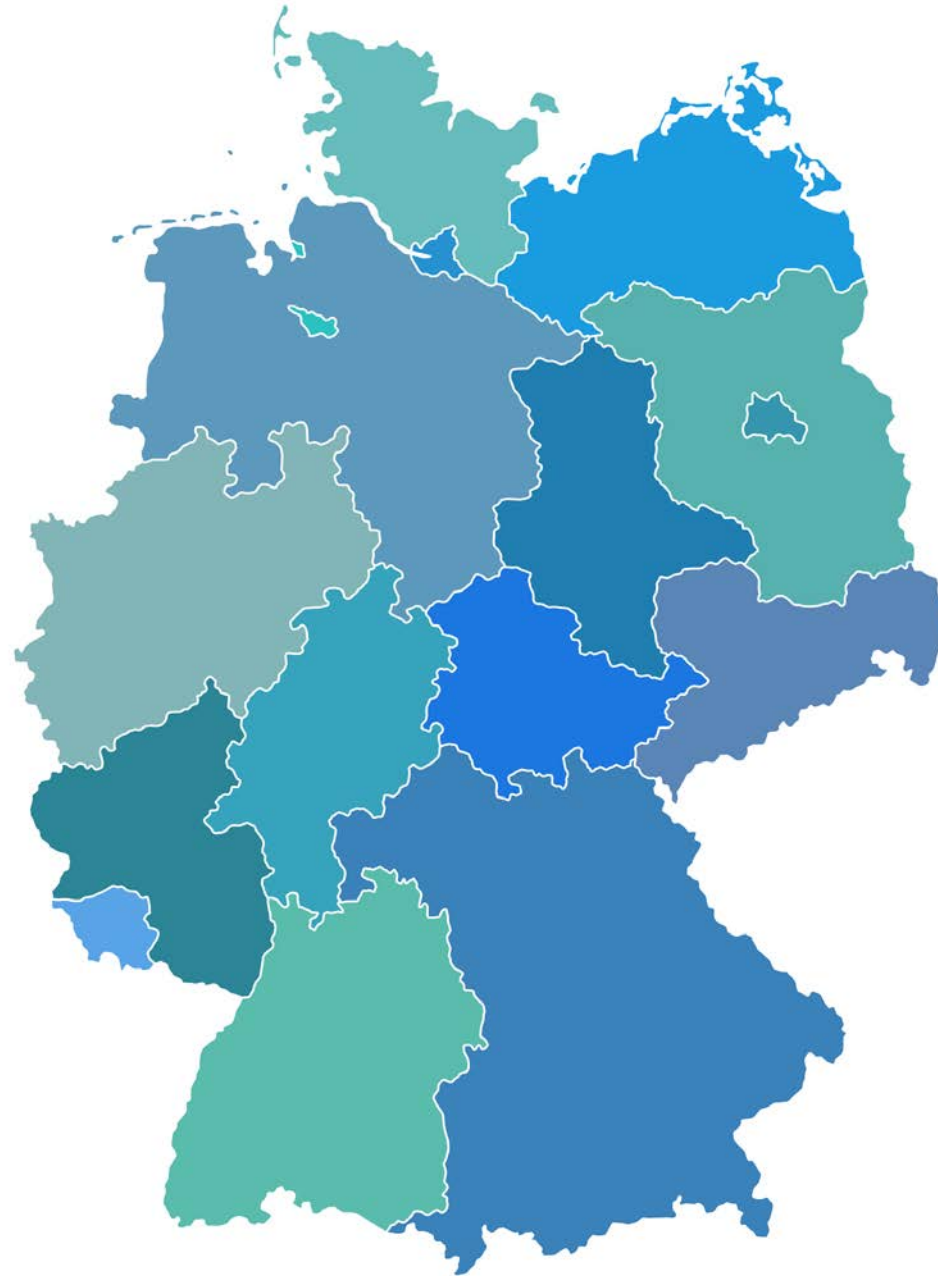


Introduction

With these words from Reformation scholars Drs. Frank James and Michael Reeves, and Martin Luther himself, we begin our journey of studying the Reformation, beginning with Luther's birth and education. Over time, Luther, as R.C. Sproul reminds us, "took the law of God seriously and it was driving him crazy....It was out of the law that Luther was driven to Christ. It was out of this agony that he rediscovered the gospel of justification by faith. His sanity was saved – his genius resolved when, in preparation for lectures at Wittenberg, he pondered the text, 'The just shall live by faith.' As the full import of the words from *Romans* dawned on him, he cried out, 'The doors of paradise opened....and I walked through!'"

Germany

16 Constituent States





IRELAND

UNITED
KINGDOM

North
Sea

DENMARK

SWEDEN

Baltic Sea

LITHUANIA

KALININGRAD
(RUSSIA)

BELARUS

NETHERLANDS

Berlin

POLAND

BELGIUM

GERMANY

UKRAINE

LUXEMBOURG

CZECH REPUBLIC

SLOVAKIA

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

LIECH.

AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

ROMANIA



ITALY

SLOVENIA

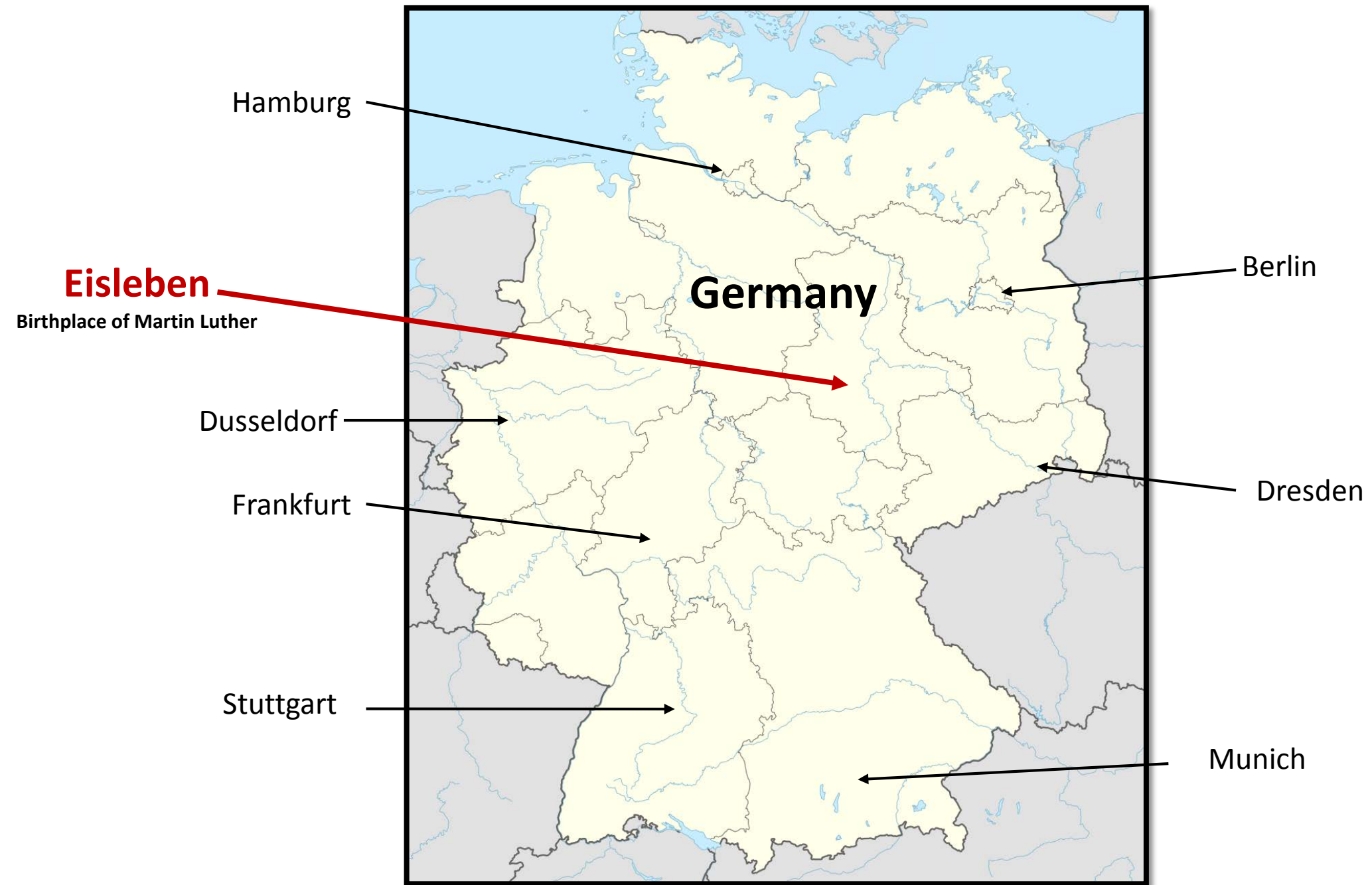
CROATIA

BOSNIA
AND
HERZEGOVINA

SERBIA

BULGARIA

Adriatic
Sea



Hans and Margarethe Luder





Luther's Parents

- Luther's father was a miner and became successful leasing several smelting furnaces and mining shafts.
- By 1491, he was chosen to represent his municipal quarter in the town council.
- By 1507 he was considered one of the outstanding citizens of Mansfeld.
- Margarethe came from a burgher family in Eisenach.
- Martin Marty describes Luther's mother as a hard-working woman of "trading-class stock and middling means."

Luther's Birth

- Martin Luther was born in Eisleben (official name: Lutherstadt Eisleben), in the county of Mansfeld, on **November 10, 1483**, to Hans and Margarethe Luder (Luther).
- Eisleben was a small town of 4,000, situated about 70 miles southwest of Wittenberg and 60 miles northeast of Erfurt.



Luther's Birth House

Original House Burned to the Ground in 1689



Luther's Statue on Eisleben Square

Luther's Baptism



Painting in Tours Cathedral

He was baptized the next day, November 11, on the feast day of St. Martin of Tours (AD 316 or 336 – 397), and was named in honor of the saint.

Church of St. Peter and Paul, Eisleben





Boyhood Education

- As a boy, he was educated at home and at the Latin school of Mansfeld.
- His father was able to provide Martin with an excellent education and purchase expensive books for him.
- There is no evidence that his early training by parents, clergymen, or teachers was exceptionally harsh.
- He was introduced to the study of Latin grammar and syntax.
- He was taught religion and music as well as the classics.
- He believed that “his appeal to Mary, the apostles, and the saints as mediators would result in ultimate salvation.”



1497: Education at 14

- Luther was sent to Magdeburg to the cathedral school where he was taught by the Brethren for the Common Life (known for their orthodoxy).
- He was moved by the monastic piety and self-denial of Prince William of Anhalt-Zerbst who was the guardian of the Franciscan monastery.

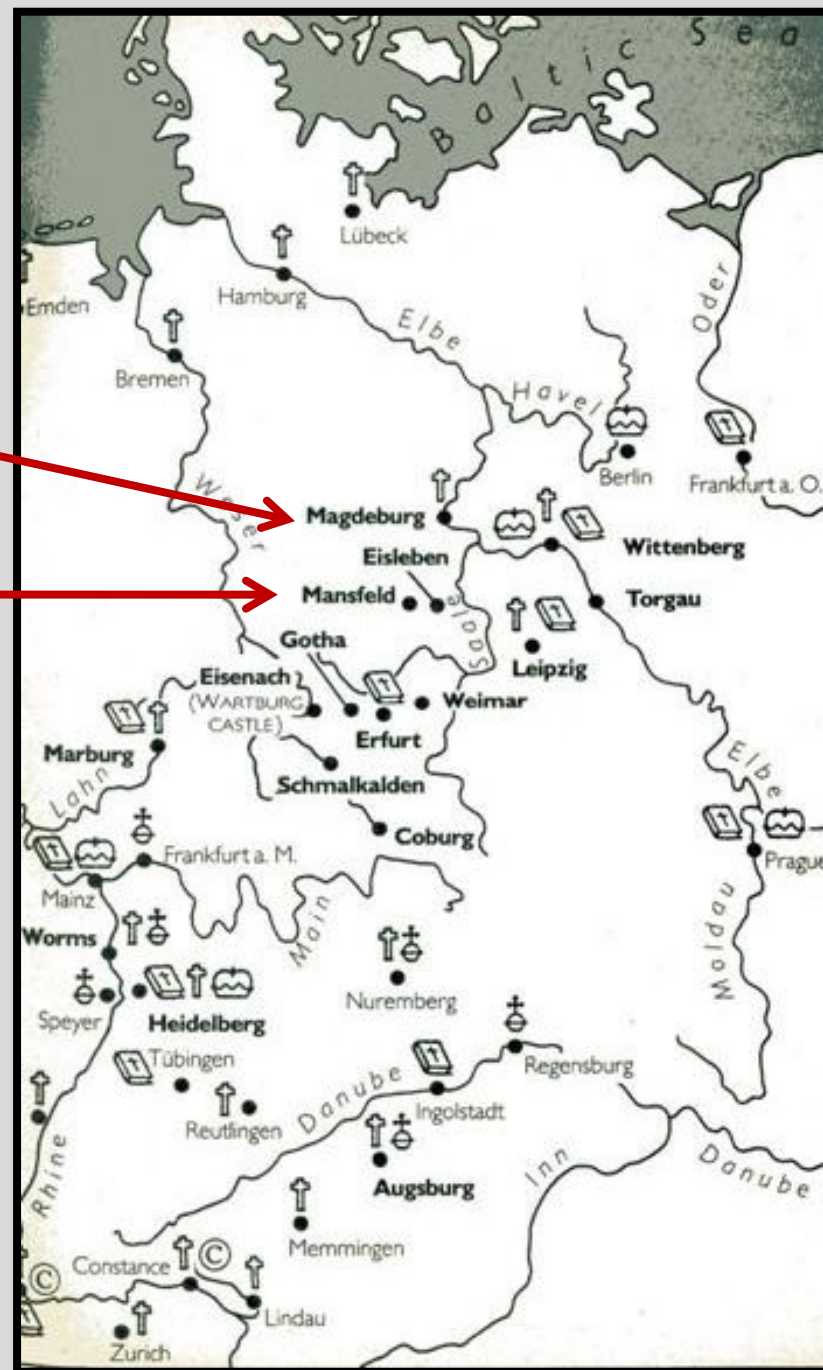


Magdeburg Cathedral

Magdeburg

Mansfeld

(Moved here in 1484)



1498-1501: Latin School



Lutherhaus Eisenach

Museum since 1956 and fully restored and renovated between 2013 and 2015
in preparation for the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017

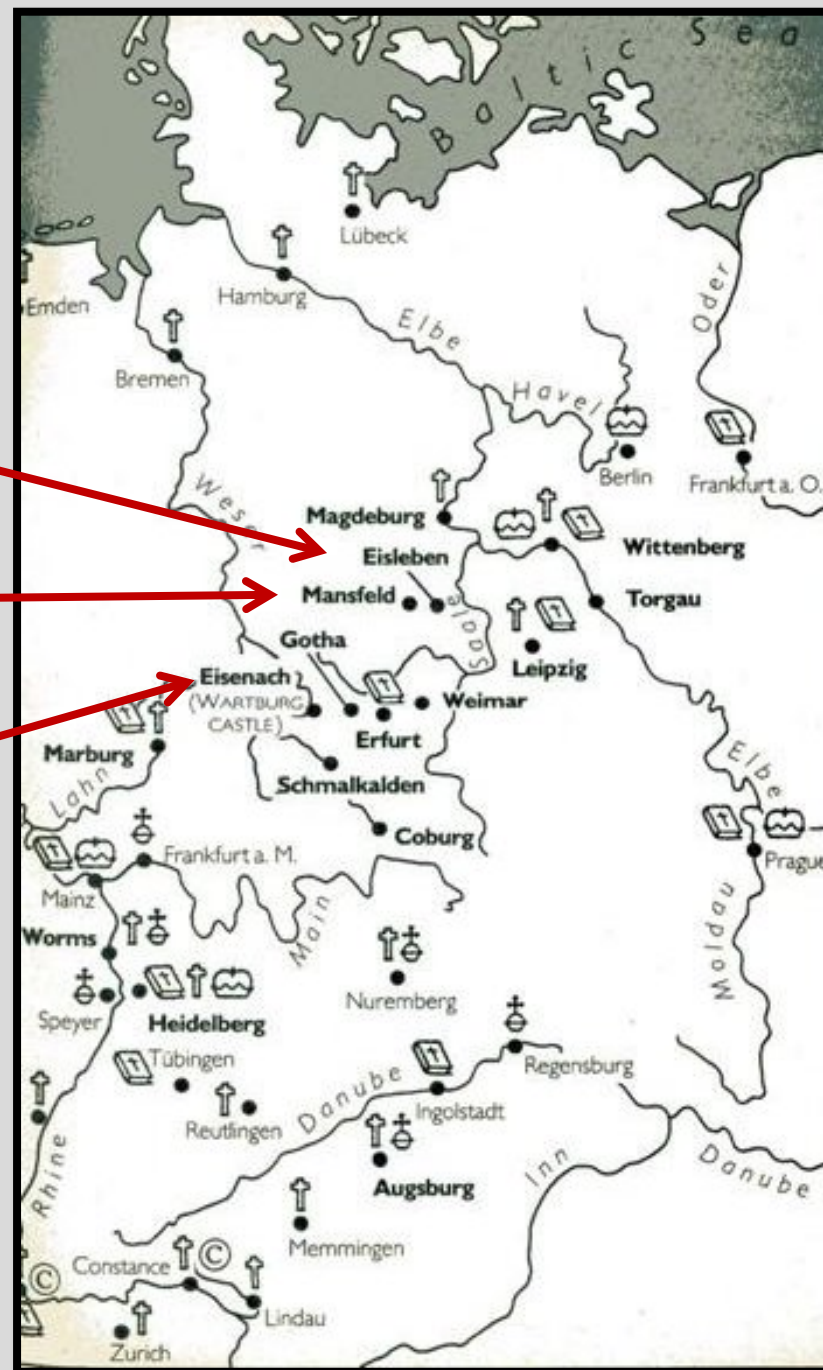
- Luther completed his preparatory education in Eisenach where he was sent in 1498 (many relatives and friends there).
- Luther spent 3 pleasant and stimulating years in Eisenach and was strengthened in his religious interests.
- He was given training in advanced grammar, rhetoric, and poetry.

Magdeburg

Mansfeld

(Moved here in 1484)

Eisenach





“In the Land of Martin Luther”

In a May 15, 1983 article published in the New York Times by John M. Todd, he writes that “Eisenach is a pleasant, old-fashioned place, warm in summer, in a little valley under a great forested ridge. It is a workaday market town of stone structures built over 600 years. There one can visit the rebuilt Church of St. George, where Luther sang as a choirboy; the Church of St. Nicholas, where his great uncle Conrad Hutter was sacristan, and the Churchy of Our Lady, where a Franciscan friar, Johann Braun, befriended him. Luther remembered this time as golden – he wrote of ‘the good old town’ and ‘my beloved Eisenach.’”



Wartburg Castle, Eisenach

1501-1505: University of Erfurt

- Hans intended to prepare Martin for a legal career – and had the money to do it.
- This university ranked the highest in reputation at the beginning of the 16th century.
- Luther studied grammar, rhetoric, logic, physics, philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics, and ethics.

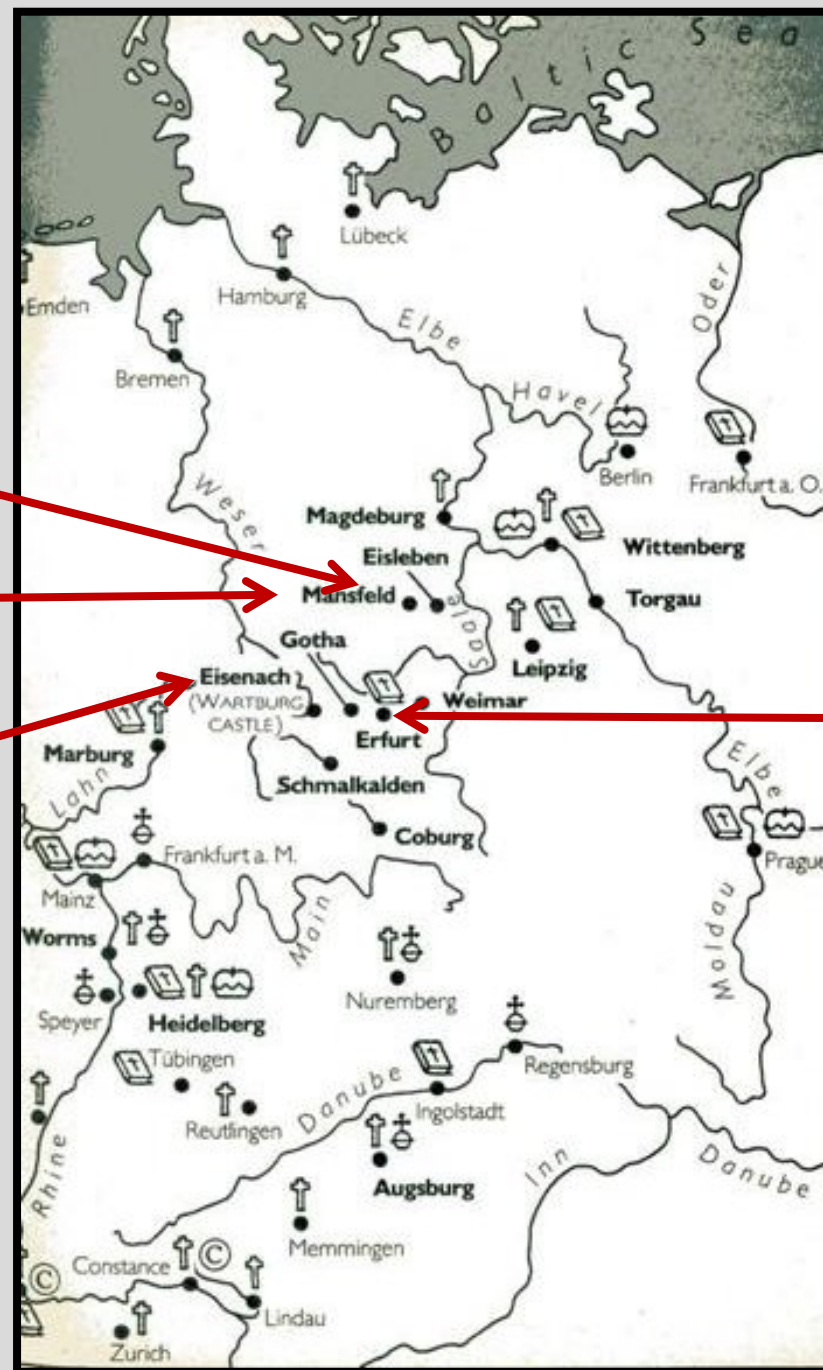


Magdeburg

Mansfeld
(Moved here in 1484)

Eisenach

Erfurt





The City of Erfurt

- The most important commercial center in Thuringia with a population of approximately 20,000.
- The people founded their own university.
- The city was called the “little Rome” because there were so many churches and religious edifices.
- Almost every monastic order was represented.
- This “environment apparently increased Luther’s medieval piety and respect for ecclesiastical institutions.”

1501-1505: University of Erfurt

- Luther enjoyed the classical authors, especially Virgil, Plautus, Cicero, and Livy.
- “Luther called (William) Ockham his ‘master’ and accepted without question the scholastic teaching of his Erfurt professors.”
- He received his bachelor of arts degree in the fall of 1502, ranking 30/57.
- In February 1505, he passed the master’s examination, and ranked 2/17.

Review of Luther's Early Life

- Born on November 10, 1483 & baptized on November 11 in Eisleben.
- Boyhood education at home and Latin School in Mansfeld.
- 1497: sent to Magdeburg to be educated at the Cathedral School.
- 1498-1501: completed his preparatory education in Eisenach.
- 1501-1505: Luther studied at the University of Erfurt.
- 1502: Luther received his B.A. degree.
- 1505: He completed his Master's Degree.