

# *The Wittenberg Times* 1526-1550



All the news that's fit to print with some editorializing by Martin Luther  
Editor: Hank Bitten

## **1542 *Bavaria Taxes Beer and Alcohol***

The decision to tax beer for revenue at private brew houses has caused an increase in the production of wheat beer at the tax exempt monasteries.. The *Reinheitsgebot* (German Beer Purity Law) set the production standards for the ingredients of water, malt, and hops for beer in 1516. The decision of the Landstandetag (Diet or Council) to tax beer is directly aimed at controlling the quality of the beer produced and generating local revenue. The proliferation in the supply of beer manufacturers has led to questions about the quality of beer sold.

In 1500 there were 38 brew-houses in Bavaria, mostly in Munich. Today there are more than 1,000. Beer is sold at 2 pfennings per maass (quart) in the summer months (April 24 – September 28) and at 1.5 pfennings in the winter.

When Martin and Katharina Luther received the property of their home, Black Cloister, from the Elector Frederick the Wise, they also received the right to brew and distribute beer 12 times a year. In our interview with Dr. Luther, he referred to his wife, as “the brewer.” According to Dr. Luther, “Katie understands how to make a light brew and our investment of a new well in the cistern garden provides us with Germany’s purest water for beer.”

We interviewed the manager at the newly opened Wolferstetter Brewery in Munich (still operating today) who said “the new law is good for beer and although the price will increase, our Bavarian beer is superior to the brew in the northern provinces and the wines of France.”



*The Tax Collector* by Marinus van Reymerswaele, 1542