

# *The Wittenberg Times*

1526-1550



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

## **1546 February 18 – Martin Luther Dies (b. 1483)**

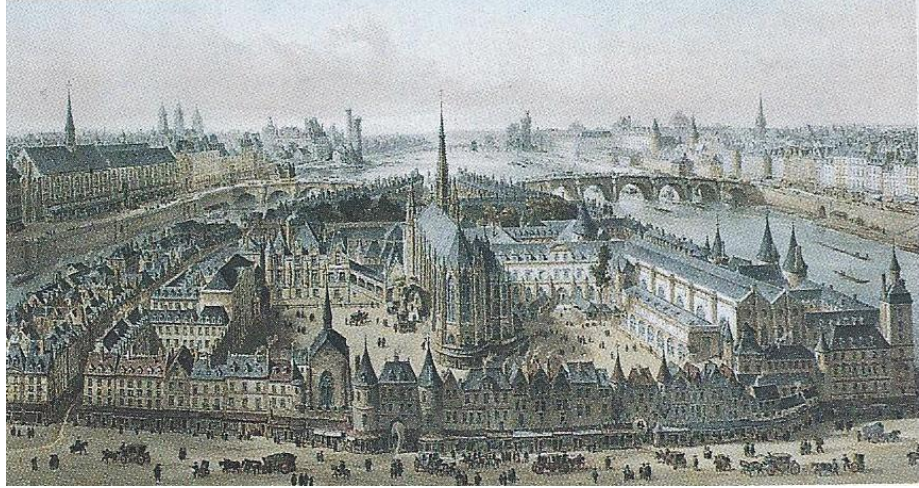
Martin Luther's victory service was held today at the Castle Church in Wittenberg. He is survived by his loving wife, Katharina of 21 years, his sons, Hans (age 20), Martin (age 14), and Paul (age 13), and daughter, Margaret (age 10). His daughters, Elizabeth and Magdalena predeceased him and are with the Lord. Elizabeth died as an infant and Magdalena died at the age of 13 in 1542.

Reverend Luther had been sick for months with kidney and heart ailments. His last public appearance was in Eisleben on January 17 where he successfully negotiated a settlement over a dispute about an inheritance between the nobles in Mansfeld. He was accompanied by his three sons, Hans, Martin, and Paul. In his last lecture at the University of Wittenberg in December, he told his students, *"I am weak and cannot go on."* Although noticeably weak and in pain, Reverend Luther preached the sermon on Sunday in Eisleben.

Reverend Luther lacked the strength to return to Wittenberg and was confined to bedrest in Eisleben, the village of his birth. He had dinner with his sons and friends before going to bed. He awakened at midnight with severe pain and told everyone he was ready to die with Jesus Christ. His final hours were in prayer and reading the Scriptures. His coffin was displayed for two days in Eisleben and then transported to Wittenberg for burial. The Reverend Johannes Bugenhagen officiated.

His life long colleague and friend, Philip Melanchthon, described Martin Luther as a man of faith who faced oppression, excommunication, death, and criticism throughout his life. In his funeral address he said, *"When a variety of great and important deliberations respecting public dangers have been pending, we have witnessed his prodigious vigor of mind, his fearless and unshaken courage. Faith was his sheet-anchor, and by the help of God he was resolved never to be driven from it."*

Professor Melanchthon also praised his gift of intellect and humble service to all people. *"He was an important instrument, in the hands of God, of public utility; let us diligently study the truth he taught, imitating in our humble situations his fear of God, his faith, the intensity of his devotions, the integrity of his ministerial character, his purity, his careful avoidance of seditious counsel, his ardent thirst of knowledge."*



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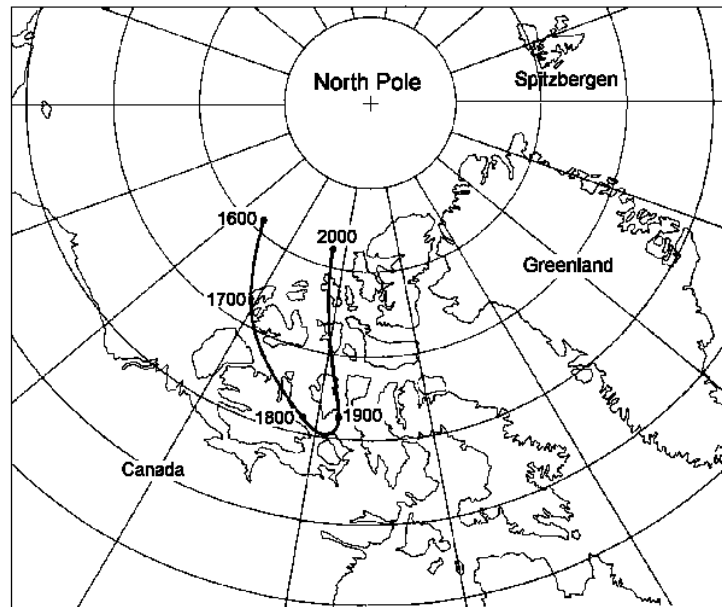


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## **1546 February 23 - Mercator Discovers Magnetic Pole**

Gerard Mercator has shared with our reporters a letter he wrote to Andre Perrenot de Granville explaining that the magnetic pole in the North is different from the geographic North Pole. Although we have compasses, they are not accurate. In his letter, Mercator argues that the Prime Meridian should be identified with the magnetic declination at zero. This point is believed to be located through the island of Corvo in the Azores and through London.

Mercator recently moved to Germany to practice his Protestant faith.



The magnetic pole is not in a fixed position and at times the North and South poles have become reversed. It is possible that this will happen in our lifetime!

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## **1546 *Fuggers' Fortune Valued at Four Million Guildens***

The Fuggers released their "10K report" today and reported assets of more than 4 million guildens. The firm began as a textile trading company in 1357 in Augsburg and rapidly expanded their inventory to include Oriental rugs. By 1400 the firm was making loans to influential church and political leaders, buying property, and involved with international trade. By 1500 the firm had companies in Nuremberg, Venice, and Budapest.

After the death of Jakob Fugger in 1525, the vision of his nephew, Anton, to expand the business into Spain and monopolize the markets for copper and silver have more than doubled the firm's wealth. Today the firm has significant interests in publishing, mining, real estate, banking, and trade in silk. The have bought the majority of interests formerly held by the Medici family in Italy and have considerable influence with the rulers of Europe. In today's dollars, the firm would be valued at approximately \$875 million.

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## **1546 Royal Navy of England Board Founded**

The largest ship in the Royal Navy is the Henry Grace a Dieu (Henry Grace of God) and the most powerful warship in Europe with 20 cannons, 43 heavy guns, and 141 light guns. The ship is four decks high and has difficulty navigating in high seas. The ship was launched by King Henry VIII in 1511 and recently remodeled. The newly commissioned Royal Navy Board released the inventory of the 58 ships in the British navy today.

<b>Ships</b>	<b>N°</b>	<b>Tonnage</b>	<b>Soldiers</b>	<b>Mariners</b>	<b>Soldiers &amp; Mariners</b>	<b>Gunners</b>	<b>Total N° of Men</b>
Shyppes	20	79,400	2337	2314	...	386	5,037
Galleasses	15	37,400	...	1436	780	304	2,520
Pynnaces	10	5,150	...	432	...	41	473
Roo-Baerges	13	260	...	464	...	52	516
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>124,550</b>	<b>2,337</b>	<b>4,646</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>8,546</b>

**Note:** The Spanish navy in 1550 is similar in size to the British navy. However, its merchant fleet is larger with three convoy routes to India, China, and the Americas. After the discovery of silver in Potosi in 1545, the Spanish will construct 50 heavily armed galleon ships to a fleet of about 130 in their first armada. Portugal has 72 ships in 1550 and The Holy Roman and Austrian empires have large armies because of their struggle against Ottoman expansion in the east. Portugal has 72 heavily armed ships.

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## **1546 *Michelangelo Designs Dome for St. Peter's in Rome***

Pope Paul III created a special commission to complete the construction of St. Peter's, which has proceeded very slowly since the death of Bramante in 1514. With the unexpected death of Bramante's last heir and distinguished architect, Antonio Sangallo, Pope Paul has asked Michelangelo (age 72) to serve on the committee to complete the cathedral.

Michelangelo is vocal in his criticism of Bramante's design and is accusing Sangallo's heirs of fraud and corruption because of their deviations from Bramante's original drawings. The supporting arches and the interior façade has been completed but the dome has not been built.

Michelangelo proposed to Pope Paul III that he be appointed the head of the Fabrica construction company to redesign and complete the dome and church. He agreed to do this for free, without any salary.

The Sangallo family is furious and citing Michelangelo's ill-health (kidney stones) and age of 72 as factors why he should be removed from the project.



Exterior view of the dome designed and built by Michelangelo



Interior view of the Dome

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## **1546 *Valerius Cordus Pharmacopoeia***

The *Pharmacopoeia* was published posthumously one year after the death of Valerius Cordus from malaria. He is expected of being bitten by a mosquito carrying malaria in the search for new plant species. Valerius Cordus discovered ether by mixing ethyl alcohol with sulfuric acid.

His *Dispensatorium* included recipes of plants, herbs, and myrrh as cures for a variety of ailments include migraine headaches, menstrual cramps, contraception, and ways to terminate a pregnancy.\* The *Dispensatorium* was written for a professional audience and not intended for ordinary people.

Cordus was in the first graduating class of the University of Marburg and he received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Wittenberg in 1544. He was a member of the Lutheran Church. He died at the age of 29 on September 25, 1544.

\*<http://www.imaginingthepast.com/crime-passion/theme-5/important-texts/dispensatorium/>