

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Luther as Hercules Germanicus* (c. 1519)

Abstract

This woodcut by Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497–1543) shows Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) bludgeoning scholastics and inquisitors with a spiked club; the image was meant to conjure up Hercules' slaying of the nine-headed hydra. A doll of Pope Leo X is suspended from a ring in Luther's nose. This depiction of Luther as a "German Hercules" is a very early example of the pictorial staging of Luther as both a German national hero and an ally of the anti-Roman humanists. At the same time, he is also depicted as a German ruffian. Illustrated broadsheets of this sort were a popular media form in the sixteenth century, and this image would have been accessible to broad audiences.

Source



Source: Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), *Luther as Hercules Germanicus*, colored woodcut, c. 1519. *Schweizerchronik bis zum Jahre 1534. Das Achte Buch*, c. 1519. Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms A 2, p. 150. Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.7891/e-manuscripta-48182>

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