



Start here. Simon Schama's statement is reasonably relevant to the study of Luther. Though evidence abounds, from table talks, edicts, writings, letters, etc, historians have struggled to recreate Luther's personality and character, along with his social impact, in completeness for they have often been slaves to ~~other~~ motives other than the history of Luther in its completeness. However, all too often historians have not been "painfully aware of their inability to reconstruct" Luther, with most interpretations being presented as "definitive truth above all others."

This can be seen in the Catholic-Protestant debates that have raged over Luther. The Catholic historian, Dentley, is for all intents and purposes an Empiricist, with his depiction of Luther being derived solely from sources. However, with all his sources coming from the Vatican Library, the findings suffer from prejudice and bias which seems to echo Charles V's Edict of Worms which formed much of Catholic historiography of Luther's personality.



Balwin, a Protestant Quaker, is slightly more balanced. Writing in the 1950s, when ecumenicalism was taking hold, he steers ~~away~~ slightly away from the previously hagiographic writings of older Protestant historiography, admitting faults in Luther. Balwin's evidence is derived from the table talks & letters, a mass of evidence pertaining to Luther's character, personality & beliefs. However, the nature of the table talks is not scrutinised; as oral history, written <sup>quoted</sup> from memory by keen admirers, they suffer from bias & unreliability much the same as Denifle's <sup>sources and</sup> work did.

Indeed, ~~one~~ of the only historians to have questioned the reliability of the table talks is Marius, a secular historian writing in the late 20th century. Here Marius asserts that there is no evidence of Luther nailing the 95 theses to the Wittenberg church door; it is only mentioned in table talks. ~~This shows that~~ Marius questioning of this evidence is a questioning of the ~~documentation & evidence~~ ~~which~~ the views and 'facts' derived solely from unreliable material.

Additional writing space on back page.

And yet, Marius' portrayal of Luther also suffers from the inability to portray Luther in completeness. Though more scrutinizing in his evidence, he has inserted beliefs & ideas into his history of Luther. Formerly a Lutheran himself, Marius became disillusioned with religion following its use in propaganda during <sup>the</sup> Vietnam War, to which he <sup>was</sup> thoroughly opposed. Here he turned to Luther for answers but found he had no word to speak to our time. This caused him to see Luther as a catastrophe "not a <sup>great</sup> stepping stone in our civilisation, but a trauma like famine or plague". The religious pluralism (and the wars that stemmed from it), the lack of authority in Protestantism, were all disasters to Marius who'd come to see the impact of Luther in religion through his negative engagement with the Vietnam war.

And yet, Marius manages to present Luther as a person, fairly balancedly. Whilst those other polemic views, the Catholics, had intrinsically linked his personality to his intentions, Marius presents Luther as a man of "warm and benevolent aspects mixed with vicious and intolerant ones" which he believed to be inseparable (as opposed to the divine or diabolical debates between Catholics & Protestants).

You may ask for an extra Writing Booklet if you need more space.



Start here.

Wilson, a journalist writing about Luther in the early 2000s, writes almost oppositely. In writing to "explain what the present owes to the prime mover of that grand revolution," he focuses upon the positive social impacts, such as "the education of children," "the empowering of the ordinary (or at least, literate)" and other changes to the way we think about work, art & human callings. This unfortunately steers Wilson to write of Luther in glowing terms - the lack of balance means lack of "completeness".

The Protestant historiography, even those ~~of~~ of ecumenical leanings such as Balton, wrote similarly. The hagiography of Luther, as the saintly man who rose up against the Church, do better man kind ~~is~~ oft occurs. Even Balton, one who admits faults in Luther excuses them for "he revived Christian consciousness in Europe," indeed, crediting him with the qualities "lonely, loyal, devoted, troubled," etc barely conjure negative thoughts, but those of empathy.

This is likely part of Balton's ploy to return Luther's form of wisdom to the stage. Himself a pacifist, he elected not to attend war during times of heightened nationalist pressure; it is likely that Luther's utterance "it is wrong to go against one's conscience" struck a further chord with

Balaban.

Such a view, of course, is diametrically opposed to Catholic historiography. Indeed, Denifle proposed his aim immediately: to make Luther into so vile a man he could not have been an instrument of God.<sup>3</sup> His history, written to convince people to "have done with Luther: return to the Church," is an unbalanced piece of propaganda. Here it closely resembles Charles' edition of Worms, labelling Luther a "debaucher, drunkard," etc who wished to destroy Western Christendom.

And yet, all such views, so diverse (and oft opposed) are all presented as 'true'. Historians, in large, have, converse to Schama's assertion, been painfully unaware of their inability to "reconstruct a dead world in its completeness."

However, the Marxist historian, Paskal, does indeed present his history as "an interpretation" rather than truth. Here, he focuses upon the social impact of Luther. As a Marxist, the provision of the tool to batter down the social class was an immense success. And yet, as a pre-determinist, he feels no need to safeguard character; it was the event that were important rather than the man behind it;

Additional writing space on back page.



"divine or diabolical is irrelevant", states Pascal, though "he promoted freedom of thought, he was oppressive." Once more, history is not attained in completeness but in focus & perspective.

Schemata's statement is thus, fairly relevant to the study of Luther. Though historians have ~~not~~ all suffered the "inability to reconstruct a dead world in its completeness", because of their contexts & perspectives colouring their views, they have been painfully unaware rather than "painfully aware" for many of these diametrically opposed histories have been presented as definitive further to the nature of these, as opposed rather than complementary, the combined ~~whole~~ study of all perspectives would not achieve "completeness", but rather a combination of often unbalanced didacticisms.

You may ask for an extra Writing Booklet if you need more space.