

LutherFacts #7



Martin Luther's trip to Rome during 1511/12 (the exact date is disputed) had a major impact on his life. By then, he had begun to delve deeply into theological issues. He explored the texts of medieval church theologians, such as Peter Lombard, to find answers to questions about the ideal Christian life. Then, in the midst of that effort, the Augustinians sent him to Rome to represent them in an organizational dispute.

Luther used the trip, his first abroad, partly as a pilgrimage. He was excited about visiting the Eternal City and exclaimed out loud his greeting as he passed through its gates. He toured all the important sites and praised the Pope. But the longer he was there, the more Luther became disenchanted. He was shocked by the wealth and luxuries of the Vatican and the selling of indulgences. He rejected the lavish meals at the Augustinian monastery where he stayed. He returned to Erfurt disillusioned with what he had found in Rome. The experience turned him further against the medieval church as he became more critical of its ways. The Holy City was, for Luther, an unholy place that needed to be reformed.