

[Egmont.html](#) **EGMONT.**

For a detailed and highly partisan account of the turbulent year **1568** leading up to the execution of the Counts Egmont and Horn read the old classic:

John Lothrop Motley, **The Rise of the Dutch Republic** (1899), vol II, Chapter 2.

On p. 158 you'll read about the death sentence issued by the Holy Office which "condemned all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as heretics. From this universal doom only a few persons, especially named, were excepted. A proclamation of the King, dated ten days later, confirmed this decree of the inquisition ... It was hardly the purpose of Government to compel the absolute completion of the wholesale plan ... yet it was certain that when all were condemned, any might at a moment's warning be carried to the scaffold, and this was precisely the course adopted by the authorities."

There are numerous echoes in Goethe's **Egmont** of the fear and sheer terror that gripped the citizens of the Netherlands.

Schiller writes a brilliant review of Goethe's drama in which he takes him to task for changing the historical Egmont: **Ueber "Egmont", Trauerspiel von Goethe.**

This is a good opportunity as well to review a bit of the history of the **Reformation**. H. Daniel Rops, Hans Hillerbrand, Hajo Holborn and Lewis W. Spitz are excellent accounts. And don't forget Will Durant's volume **The Reformation** in the Durants' ever useful **The Story of Civilization**.

The splendid four-volume **Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation**, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, Oxford UP 1996, is still in print and an indispensable reference.

Gerhard Ritter, **Die Neugestaltung Deutschlands und Europas im 16. Jahrhundert** remains a classic. So, of course is

Leopold Ranke, **Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation**. Berlin, 1839.

Richard van Duyl, **Reformation als Revolution** (1987) deals with social movements and religious radicalism during the German Reformation.

Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, ed. G.H. Williams and A.M. Mergal. Texts and comments.

Ernst Bloch, **Thomas Muenzer** (1921) remains a curiosity.

To understand how much the political debate in Goethe's **Egmont** is informed by **Luther's** teachings on the relationship between government and the governed, please consult two essays of mine.

(1) [Luther on Authority, Law and Order](#). (A piece constantly under revision since I first delivered it at a Cornell Luther Symposium in 1983).

(2) [The Protestant Revolution](#). A revised version of a piece published in 1993. It deals with the protest movement in East Germany that led to the collapse of the regime, and attempts to place it in a historical perspective.

Two columns of mine dealing with Luther's legacy appeared in **The Ithaca Journal**: "**A 1944 retrospect: [Germans versus Hitler](#)**" (8/26/94) and "**[Martin Luther](#)**" (2/29/96).

Martin Luther, **Small Catechism**. Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, Missouri. Section III has the "Table of Duties", among them "Of Civil Government" and "Of Subjects".

Luther und die Obrigkeit, ed. Gunther Wolf, Darmstadt 1972, reprints 18 essays on the subject originally published between 1955 and 1969.

We'll listen to **Beethoven's Incidental Music**, Klaerchen's two songs in particular. To the rescue scene from **Fidelio** as well.