

A CONTEMPORARY GOLD MEDAL OF MARTIN LUTHER

(SEE PLATE XXI)

Through the courtesy of Mr. Alastair Bradley Martin of New York, The American Numismatic Society has received on loan an outstanding contemporary medal of Luther. This Renaissance medal can be described as follows:

Gold medal, 1521, by Hans Glimm and Peter Floetner, made of two uniface medals joined together.

Bust in low relief to left. Legend starting at the bottom clockwise HERESIBVS. SI. DIGNVS. ERIT. LVTHERVS. IN. VLLIS - ET. CHRISTVS. DIGNVS. CRIMINIS. HVIVS. ERIT † The date 15 Z 1 engraved into the left field.

Rev. Bust of Christ right, draped, with small upstanding locks in the middle of the forehead; hair in long curls on the shoulders; beard fairly short and curly. Above the head the holy dove. In the left field there is the following inscription: ICH BIN / DAS LEM / LEIN DAS / DER WE/LT SVND / TREGT JO / HANES / AM (I am the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world, from John I); in the right field: I. CAPT / NIMANT / KVMP / ZV DEM / VATER D / AN DVRCH / MICH 10 / AM XIII (No man cometh unto the Father but by me, from John XIV, 6). Habich 721. 61 mm. 87.8 gr. PLATE XXI.

Habich lists four specimens of the obverse which were probably cast in lead. These are or were in the collections at Berlin, Vienna, Gotha, and Weimar. They differ from each other in that the Berlin and Weimar specimens have the date in Arabic numerals and the artist's initials incuse, while the Vienna specimen has the date in Roman numerals without the artist's initials. The Gotha specimen resembles the Berlin specimen in all respects except that the date and initials are in relief. An additional copy came up for sale in the Belli collection sold by Sally Rosenberg in November, 1904. This example was cast in silver with a reverse showing a long inscription. The gold

specimen on loan to The American Numismatic Society was formerly in the collection of the "Chorherrenstift" at Klosterneuburg, Austria.

The portrait of Luther on this medal shows a striking similarity to the engraving done by Lucas Cranach in 1521 before Luther's departure for Worms.¹ The combination of this obverse with the Christ reverse was recorded for the first time in Juncker's *Das Guldene und Silberne Ehren-Gedaechtniss D. Martini Lutheri* where a drawing of the medal is to be found.² In a note Junckers tells of the owner of the medal. "Die Copiam von dieser schönen silbernen Medaille hat Herr D. Rundisch, ein beruehmter und curieuser Medicus zu Altenburg in Meissen aus seinem Museo mir gegönnet."³ (The copy of this beautiful silver medal has been lent to me from the museum of D. Rundisch, a famous and inquisitive physican at Altenburg in Meissen). The combination of Luther's portrait with a bust of Christ and the legend on the obverse express very forcefully the view that Christ himself would be guilty of heresey if Luther's teachings were branded as such.

The medal is dated 1521, and there is little doubt that it was cast in that year. It is more difficult to come to definitive conclusions about the artist who engraved the obverse side. The Berlin, Gotha, and Weimar pieces show the monogram HG under the bust. Habich in his corpus of German Renaissance medals states that the name of this medallist is unknown. In his earlier work *Die deutschen Medailleure des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, which was published in 1916, Habich mentions the possibility that the artist of this medal was either Hans Guldenmund or Hieronymus Gaertner. He goes on to say, however, that the character of the medal does not permit the definitive conclusion that it was created by a Nuremberg artist. Dr. Behrend Pick, the late curator of the Ducal Cabinet in Gotha, thought that the signature HG might stand for the author of the distich. He was also inclined to attribute this medal to Lucas Cranach himself.

The reverse of this medal with the bust of Christ was engraved by Peter Floetner who settled some time before 1523 in Nuremberg.

¹ Cf. Lippmann, *L. Cranach*, Plate 62.

² Juncker, *Das Guldene und Silberne Ehren-Gedächtnis D. Martini Lutheri*, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 60, note.

This suggests that the medal most probably originated in Nuremberg. Max Bernhard in his *Reformatorenbildnisse auf Medaillen der Renaissance* suggested that the Nuremberg goldsmith Hans Glimm was the medallist who created this medal. Glimm was a friend of Dürer who in turn had a very close relationship with Lucas Cranach. It seems very probable, therefore, that the artist whose initials were HG may have been Hans Glimm who was very well known for his skill and ability in chasing large size silver plaques as well as for his talent as an engraver. Stylistic examination of the piece, however, does not yield any greater certainty regarding the creator of this Luther medal, which is unique in its treatment and conception. Only the discovery of some hitherto unknown documents will prove conclusively whether or not Glimm deserves the credit for having produced this fine example of German Renaissance medallic art.

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