**Luther's "Experience in the Tower"** The following passage was written by Luther in 1545, at least twenty-five years after the experience it described. As a result, scholars have been unable to decide (a) whether the breakthrough was in fact as sudden as Luther suggests; (b) when it took place – possibly as early as 1512, five years before the indulgence dispute, or as late as 1519, when Luther was already under attack for his views; or (c) how it should be interpreted – as a scholar's insight, as a revelation from God, or as Luther's later crystallization into a single event of a process that had taken many years.

"I wanted very much to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but despite my determination to do so I kept being stopped by the one word, 'the righteousness of God.' I hated that word, because I had been taught to understand it as the active righteousness by which a just God punishes unjust sinners. The trouble was that, although I may have been an impeccable monk, I felt myself to be a sinner before God. As a result, not only was I unable to love, but I actually hated this just God, who punishes all sinners. And so I raged, yet I still longed to understand St. Paul.

"At last, as I grappled with the words day and night, God had mercy on me, and I saw the connection between the words 'the righteousness of God' and 'The righteous shall live by faith' (Romans 1:17). I understood that the righteousness of God refers to the gift by which God enables the just to live – that is, by faith. A merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: 'The righteous shall live by faith.' At that point, I felt as if I had been reborn and had passed through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on new meaning. As I had previously hated the phrase, 'the righteousness of God,' so now I lovingly praised it."

*Translation from the Latin by Theodore K. Rabb of Luther's Preface to the 1545 edition of his writings, in Otto Scheel (ed.), Dokumente zu Luthers Entwicklung (Tübingen: Mohr, 1929), pp. 191 — 192.*