

Dr. Martin Luther

Biography of the Reformer Designated for Partners in Faith

Originally issued in 1883 in German

by the George Brumder Publishing House of Milwaukee, WI

Author: August L. Graebner

Translated into English in 2012 - 2014 by W. O. Loescher

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Foreword

“I judge that no one who knows Luther could hate him. His books show his spirit. But if you had seen him face to face, if you had heard him speak about godly things in the apostolic spirit, you would say, ‘The personal contact would surpass his reputation. Luther is just too big that every Master Jackanapes be allowed to render judgment about him.’ I know well of what I speak. I also have written books and issued writings, but by way of comparison with Luther I am a mere student. This verdict does not flow forth from love, but rather love from this verdict. I despise no one, and personally would rather be despised than praised; but on the other hand I will not tolerate it when Luther is despised as a chosen tool of the Holy Spirit. This I know. He will remain theologian for the whole world. I say this, because I now know him better than I did prior to having seen and heard him personally.”

This is how the educated and highly gifted theologian Urbanus Regius wrote to Duke Ernst of Lueneburg about bringing home with him the experience of having met Luther, an invaluable treasure of the duke’s whole realm. The day that Regius, on his journey from Augsburg to his new sphere of activity, stopped to visit Luther at the Coburg, while Luther was at prayer and at work, he later described as the best day of his life. Reminded of that visit he wrote to a friend, “Luther is such a great theologian that all the centuries (since the time of the Apostles) have not been able to bring anyone forth even similar. ... To me Luther always was great, but now he is the greatest of all among teachers of God under Christ and His called Prophets and Apostles.

Without doubt, Luther is also special for all my readers. I know from personal experience that this powerful man of God does appear ever greater to us, who are of later birth, as we become closer acquainted with him. If I should succeed to contribute with my inferior work that one or another of my brothers be led to make the words of the God-blessed Urbanus Regius his own and say, “Luther was always great for me, but now he is the greatest of all, for I now know him better than before,” then I would truly have reached a much desired result.

I further know from personal experience that as Regius could call that day at the Coburg the most precious day of his life, so (spending a little time) in company with Luther, the God-

trained and God-called witness of the evangelical truth and reformer of the Church during these latter days, can bring you inner delight and inner blessing. And if the projected picture of the great teacher as portrayed in following pages of this book, though projected by a far inferior student, should present to its viewers a few cheerful and blessed hours during this anniversary year (as the book was issued in 1883) and perhaps even during following years, I would regard that as another undeserved but very pleasant result.

But as little as the viewing of the drawn life-picture (or biography) of our Luther can compensate us late-coming viewers, who have been denied personal company with him which many of his partners of that time were allowed to enjoy, all the more important must it be for us what Regius expressed with the words, "His books show his spirit." If I have thus let Luther himself speak through my somewhat expanded forms of speech and explanation, I hope that you will not hold me accountable.

I do not want to leave it at that. In discussing the writings of Luther I have referred repeatedly to a selection of his writings under the title "Luther's People's Library". (These references are almost always cited in footnotes, which are included at the end of sentences in the run of paragraphs throughout the book, under the letters LV = "Luther Volksbibliothek") These volumes of LV are available in fifteen handy double-ribbon bindings from the Lutheran Concordia Publishing House of St. Louis, MO, for a very reasonable price, either in their entirety or as individual books. I hoped that many a person who does not own one of the larger editions of Luther's works and does not have the means to buy one, that he would regard himself prompted to get this gathering of books into his possession, either in its entirety or individual copies, in order to get to know ever more thoroughly and to love ever more dearly that magnificent man and his precious teaching.

Milwaukee, WI

March, 1883

A. L. Graebner

Professor of Theology at the Seminary

Of the Synod of Wisconsin

Brief Comments about the original author:

August Lawrence Graebner (1849-1904) was born in Frankentrost, MI. After graduating from Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, he served as teacher at a Lutheran High School of St. Louis, beginning in 1872. In 1875 he accepted a call to teach at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI. In 1878 he accepted a call to teach at the newly founded Wisconsin Synod seminary in Milwaukee. (See Jars of Clay, by John M Brenner and Peter M Prange, copyright: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013, pp. 80-81, 86-87) In 1887 he accepted the call of teaching Church History at Concordia Seminary of St. Louis. During his years of teaching in Wisconsin Synod schools he also wrote this biography of Dr. Martin Luther, which was published as noted in his foreword in March of 1883, marking the 400th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's birth.

Comments by the Translator:

This book describes the exceptional leadership of Dr. Martin Luther so well that it seemed a mistake to just leave it in public domain in its original German form. Great insights are granted to the reader, who will take time to observe Luther as student, counselor, writer, debater, preacher, doctor of theology, husband, father, interpreter, translator, catechist, disciplinarian, guide, shepherd, and in other ways. Gifted by God in so many ways and with relentless dedication to God's Word, he served as called spokesman for God to common people, to the educated and to all the rest in between.

Yet, he had to be trained from childhood by God himself for his function in history. Struggling along from one institution of learning to another, he did not learn to know Jesus as His Savior from all his sins for the approximate first half of his life. All this is set forth exceptionally well in this biography. It does not seem to have been first priority of the author to present the great doctor from a superior scholarly point of view, or as a great champion in battle against giants. Rather, the author appears to want to show his readers how God by his grace kept guiding, controlling, protecting and blessing the man as needed Christian leader for His Church, to restore His gospel into central position for all His children on earth. God was controlling world history in protecting his agent against death-breathing opposition, ferociously projected from both church power and world powers.

Much more might be said. But the book itself says it so much better, as it quotes Dr. Martin Luther again and again, whom God gave to his Church during the 16th century “in these last days” (Heb.1:2). By God’s grace we may still take advantage and gratefully take to heart and keep sharing with each other our great Lutheran heritage. May the Holy Spirit prompt you to first of all keep reading and digesting a daily portion of Holy Scripture, as Dr. Luther would say, but secondarily also take time to review what the word, Lutheran, means in the names of our congregations, our synod and in whatever other context it is being used. Let us not become remiss in thanking God for his many blessings, also this huge historic blessing.

Thanks are herewith also expressed to Pastor Robert Kujawski of Manitowoc, WI, for reviewing, applying some correction and Americanizing this translation in many places. Also, thanks to Mrs. Carl (Marilyn) Toepel of Howards Grove, WI, for proofreading this book and applying correction wherever punctuation, sentence clarity, spelling and syntax in general were needed. Thanks also to Miss Ruth Loescher for skillfully transferring the 48 pictures out of the original book into this translation.

For a more thorough treatment in regard to individual application of the reformer in action be sure to read or review the 12 short essays by the 12 professors of our WELS Seminary in 1983 in the book titled, Luther Lives. (The copyright of the book, Luther Lives, belongs to Northwestern Publishing House of Milwaukee, WI.)



Martin Luther (according to Cranach by G. Koenig)

Chapter 1

In His Father's Home

At noon on the 10th of November 1483 husband and wife, Hans and Margarethe Luther, were blessed with the birth of their first child, a son. The next day he was given the name Martin at his baptism in St. Peter's Church of their town. This was in honor of St. Martin, on whose festival day the baptism occurred. The name of the town was Eisleben, which was located in the earldom of Mansfeld. The married couple had just recently become a part of this community.

It is important for us to learn what kind of parents these people were, to whom God entrusted the first care and rearing of this little boy, since this child, when he would have grown into manhood, would be the Lord's instrument for a very high purpose.

Hans Luther, the father, was the oldest son of Heinz, or Henry, Luther of Moehra (also called More or Moere in older records). His father was a farmer whose land lay between Salzungen and Eisenach, a not so very fertile portion of the vast wooded area of Thuringen (*from here on called "Thuringia"*). The farmers of Moehre were hard-working and determined. They had to be because it was such a difficult struggle to grow meager crops. These character traits were shared by the ancestors of Luther. Their hands were firm and hard. They knew how to use those hands not only for hard work but also as fists to fight for the preservation of their hard earned crops. They would often have to forfeit a portion of those crops as a penalty for damages caused by those fists. To this day there are three Luther families dwelling in this region, who are still making their living off the land. These families still exhibit some of the facial features of the great doctor. Hence, Luther did not spring from nobility but from simple farm folks. As Luther himself said, "I am a farmer's son; my father, my grandfather and homesteader, were farmers."

At the time of Luther's birth, a time when the written word and proper grammar were not taken very seriously, the name was also spelled Ludher, Luider, Lueder, or Leuder. Our Martin, when he was enrolled as a student in Erfurt, was registered as Ludher. The first letter that we have found written in his own hand was signed "Lutherus." His relatives in later days wrote their name, "Luther."

We don't know how many siblings Hans Luther had, although we have heard of two brothers, Veit and Heinz. The ancient custom of the local farmers of that area was for a father to will his possessions to only one son. According to a remark made later by Martin, as a rule it was willed not to the oldest but to the youngest. Hans was not the youngest in the family; Heinz was, and records show that he was a farm owner.

The fact that the soil conditions of the region of Moera, as mentioned before, paid off meagerly in crops easily explains why many people preferred to work in the more profitable field of mining, particularly in the pursuit of copper. To this day large piles of dross, cinders and ruts, refortified by slate, are still visible.

So Hans Luther might very well have sought to establish himself in such a position in order to obtain better wages in his home village. But even these ore-containing stones proved, like the crops, to be less profitable here than elsewhere. As a result when Hans was ready to begin his own family, he decided to make that beginning elsewhere. After all, he had not married the daughter of a wealthy clan and he had no prospect of starting his own farm. Therefore he looked for a place where he and his wife could work together to support themselves and in time build their own home.

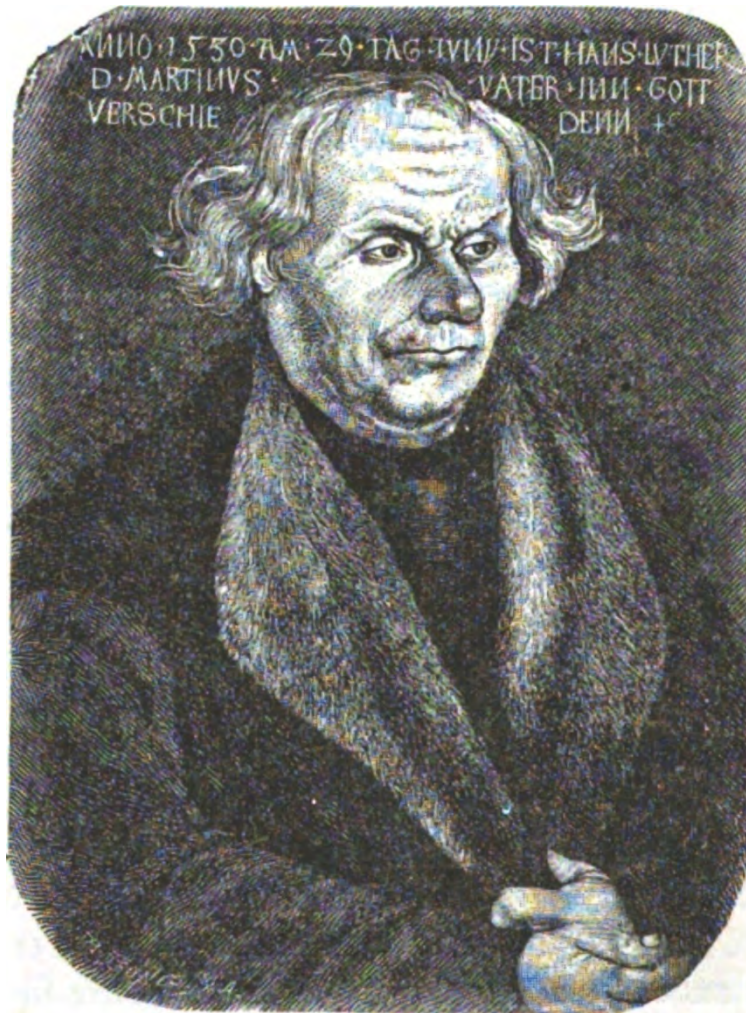
But where might they move? The answer to this question was not that difficult. At that time a considerably successful mining operation was located in the Mansfeld area. The town of Eisleben in particular was

attractive to anxious miners. This town, which at that time was the most important among the local towns in the earldom of Mansfeld, is bordered by two elevated areas of flatland; one north of the Mansfeld boundary, and one south in Thuringia. Both of these areas around Eisleben were rich with copper and silver. These two elevated flatlands had been regarded as profitable for mining operations as early as the 12th century.

It was here, where it was possible to get ahead in the world in a relatively short period of time, where a young ambitious man like Hans Luther might prosper. Since he was not afraid of honest work and with his young and brave helper at his side, Hans recognized and seized the opportunity. Hence, this is where the young son of a farmer decided to settle down with his wife, Grethe.

Now let's take a moment to consider Grethe's ancestry. There are two old versions of Grethe's (Margaretha Luther's) origin. According to the testimony of Beerwald, superintendent in Zwickau, she is supposed to have come from the Lindemann family. Contradicting this account was Kyriakus Spangenberg, born in 1528 and later superintendent at Eisleben, who said: "It is certainly true and can be proven adequately with proper documentation that Hans Luder, or Luther, with the full knowledge and support of his father Heine Luther, and his mother Margareth (nee Lindemann), who died at an old age in the valley of Mansfeld, had entered into holy matrimony with Margareth Zigurin." According to this declaration it was not Luther's mother but his grandmother who was a Lindemann. Hans Luther's wife was a "nee Zigur" or, as that name is also found, Ziegler. Like her husband, Margaretha was small in stature and had a ruddy complexion. She proved to be a diligent and faithful wife with a cheerful spirit. Her son Martin, even later in life, carried with him his mother's special little rhyme: "You and I are both to blame when no one wants to hear our name." With that little verse she would comfort herself when facing hostility coming from different sources.

These two people, then, were the parents of the one who was being molded by God's hands to be the instrument, through which he would reform his Church. Martin's work would continue until he would end his life's labors in Eisleben, the place where he was born. He would close his tired eyes having lived a strong, courageous, and energetic life like his father. At the same time he had lived a cheerfully brisk and lively life like his mother.



Luther's father's picture according to a painting by Cranach in 1527

The building in which Martin was born on that 10th of November is still being displayed as the home of Hans and Margarethe Luther. It is located in the lower section of a long alley. Visitors are led to a room in the preserved basement of that original dwelling and informed that it was in this room, facing the street, where Martin was born. Nearby is still standing the former St. Peter's Lutheran Church, which was renovated and given the name "Saints Peter and Paul Lutheran Church".

Whether Hans Luther while living in Eisleben thought that, where too many persons want to share an equal life each individual will not have enough, or whether life and activity there were not sufficiently acceptable - enough said - the firstborn son was barely six months old when Hans and his wife traveled to a somber area populated by miners, to settle in Mansfeld. So it was there, where Martin spent his childhood years. The area was dominated by the stately castle of Mansfeld's earl with its ramparts towering over the city.

Martin's parents continued to live in Mansfeld until first his father in 1530, and then his mother the year after, entered their eternal rest. If only there were someone, or some record from Mansfeld of those years, who had some recollection of that infant who arrived with his parents from Eisleben in 1484. If that were the case we might have a more complete picture of our reformer's childhood years. The same would be true if Luther had taken the time to tell the complete story of his youth to his later friends. Unfortunately all we have are a few snapshots which can be found in Luther's own writings or scattered throughout the writings of his contemporaries. We must glean what we can from those sources.

You would think that Luther's father's home, which Martin in his later years would remember with heartfelt love and gratitude, could not have been an empty place void of love. Yet one can find no notice of anything describing Luther's father's house as being outwardly prosperous or materially comfortable during Martin's stay. It seems as though his father, during his first years in Mansfeld, had begun to be visibly depressed over his inability to provide for his growing family. Perhaps this was

because his children, eventually seven in all, were taking up more and more space around the supper table. Martin's mother, proving to be a true and



Picture of Luther's mother according to a painting by Cranach in 1522

faithful helper to her husband, was not only tending to her own duties at home but also worked with her hands outside of the home. Luther would later testify, "My father was a poor hacker (i.e., a miner with a pick axe). Mother carried all her wood into the house on her back to raise us."

Mother and father found the work very tiring for themselves. As a result it was assumed that the older children, especially during the nursing of the younger, would have to lend a helping hand. It seems as though Martin, as the firstborn, was very helpful in this regard. We are informed that he showed himself to be a modeling big brother for home behavior for his younger siblings. Since he had assumed this role, a loving relationship became apparent between his brothers, his sisters, and himself. We have learned that he and his brother Jacob were so close that neither could enjoy eating or playing without the other one being present.

The parents, however, did not mollycoddle their little flock, and Martin was no exception. To the contrary, he would later relate the firm discipline he received from both his father and mother. He recalled one particular time when his father so thoroughly thrashed him that Martin became angry with his father. His father had to work hard to reclaim his child's loving affection. At times his mother would exert even further discipline over and above the times when his father was exceptionally stern. An example would be the story that Luther told of how she once beat him so hard that he bled. All of this happened according to Luther, because he had merely taken a nut without permission. For that he was punished as though he had broken into the family's treasure box and had stolen money.

In his later years, even as he warned against too much chastening of naughty children, Luther also encouraged strict discipline all the way from the crib. According to Luther this could have the parents apply threats and spankings. Yet, bearing in mind his own upbringing he offered the familiar advice regarding discipline that the apple be paired with the rod, namely, that kindness be paired with strictness. As we bear in mind the discipline he himself received, we may begin to understand, at least in part, the frightening state of conscience and living awareness of guilt that would manifest itself in such huge measure as the youth became a man.

Nevertheless, Martin made it clear that his parents had intended everything for him from the goodness out of their hearts. Nearly fifty years later with tears in his eyes Luther remembered how he had a sweet

relationship with his father, a man who exhibited such a strict fatherly profile yet also let his paternal love shine through.

Luther would later speak of pious souls who comforted themselves during the dark night of papacy and the wilderness of false teaching. He commented that underneath it all they could find comfort for themselves with childlike faith in the merits of Jesus Christ. It is possible that he had his parents in mind. We know that his father was a friend of upright living. He enjoyed being in the company of ministers. He practiced prayer in his own home, often praying at the bedside of little Martin. But there is no doubt that the darkness of the papacy cast its shadow not only over Luther's parents' home but over Mansfeld as well. Indeed, that shadow hovered over all of western Christendom. This is evidenced by the fact that St. George, in whose name the city church had been dedicated, was the patron saint of the city. The miners had as their patron saint St. Ann, the mother of the Virgin Mary. During the year, in which Martin left his parents' home to attend school at Magdeburg, two altars in the Mansfeld church were being dedicated to a number of other saints. It was proclaimed that sixty days of remission would be secured for attending all of the masses that would be read for these occasions. Hans Luther would be among the first to take advantage of this offer. Yet, at the same time, as Hans Luther's son remembered, he could proudly rejoice in the behavior of one of the earls of Mansfeld. As this earl was nearing death he put his trust completely in Christ's blood and righteousness and thus commended his soul into his Savior's hands. Thus he was truly prepared to leave this world.

Luther's ordination into the ministry was a major celebration for Hans Luther. He attended the event accompanied by twenty horses and many companions. At the same time he was capable of applying the Fourth Commandment to the manner in which the learned men might consider a call as a spell of the devil. At one time when he believed he had an illness that might result in death he asked for a visit from the priest. When the priest encouraged him to give a larger portion of his will to the church, he dared to reply, "I have many children. I shall bequeath it to them. They have a bigger need for it."

When all was said and done Martin Luther's enemies lay no blame on his father for his son's defection from the papacy. Yet at the same time there was a noticeable awareness in Hans Luther regarding true recognition and entrapment of false papal teaching, upright and outward piety, and vain good works of rigid legalism. It may have been the same with his mother. With the outward idolatry apparent each and every day, there remained buried within Luther a spiritual spark. This might explain how our Luther had a certain pious sense that expressed itself in diligent prayer. Thus, with a heart that was filled with a fear for Christ and which longed for comfort from the saints, Martin was taken out of his father's home. He was taken into schools complete with all of such spiritual confusion and distortions until a St. Anne drove him to a fear-spawned commitment to the becoming of a monk.

Of course this was not Hans Luther's idea. He had not decided on a monastery for his son, for such a so-called spiritual position. No, he had wanted him to become a jurist, a lawyer.

Chapter 2

In Boys' School

In the upper section of the small city of Mansfeld was a house, which was reached by a steep pathway. In this house unskilled schoolmasters sought to educate the young men of that city by pounding into their heads reading, writing, arithmetic, and the beginning lessons of Latin. Martin Luther's parents prayerfully turned the young lad over to these instructors for further discipline and instruction. Although he was well acquainted with his father and mother's strict ways, he would now experience much sterner treatment. Later in life he would describe this period as a time when the schoolmasters were tyrants and hangmen and the schools were prisons and hell. Children were treated as thieves. The days were spent in worthless pursuits. Instruction was turned into torture even though experiencing beatings, trembling and quaking produced no positive learning. Luther later recalled how on one particular morning he had been lashed fifteen times in that school. This happened not because he was in any way at fault, but because he was unable to recite a lesson that had never been taught to him.

Of all the lessons missing from that school were the sweet truths of Christ and his merits. Here as before, as he later complained, Christ remained to Luther a strict and angry Judge, even more to be feared than his father's or schoolmaster's switch. He said, "All of us were taught that we had to pay for all of our sins ourselves and that Christ would demand an account of our payment and number of good works we had done on the Day of Judgment. And since we could never repent enough or do enough good works we remained terrified of his wrath. They taught us to look to the saints in heaven as the ones who would serve as mediators between us and Christ. They instructed us to pray to the dear mother of Christ and appeal to her breasts, on which she had nursed her Son. We were to ask

that she would beseech him away from his wrath and instead find access to his grace that he might forgive us. And when that dear lady was not enough, we then went to the apostles and other saints. Finally we appealed to some saints, who we didn't even know were saints. Indeed, most of them never were."

Yet there were some lessons that those tyrants of the Mansfeld School taught him, for which he was thankful, even though he learned them in misery and distress. This included the Ten Commandments, the children's faith, the Lord's Prayer, and good songs in Latin and German. The older Luther, who was so affectionately concerned with the instruction and Christian guidance for children, could be traced back to the difficult experiences he endured on the hard benches of Mansfeld's school.

Writing two years before his death, Luther recounted how from his earliest years, when his somewhat older friend Nicolaus Oemler often carried him to school, until his fourteenth year he continued to learn from what Mansfeld's school offered. But if his father's plan for him to become a lawyer was to be fulfilled, his education had to continue at an institution of higher learning. Luther with the boy of another Mansfeld citizen would therefore travel. This boy was Hans Reinicke, the son of Peter Reinicke. Peter was foreman in mine-work, but he was also a good friend of Hans Luther. The two of them left Mansfeld in 1497 to continue their education at Magdeburg. Martin and his student companion remained friends many years into the future.

In 1488 a semi-monastic fellowship, the Brothers of the Common Life, had come into existence. They were also known as Lollbrueder, or Nollbrueder, who were found in a large number of locations throughout Germany. Martin Luther entered school with the Nollbrueder in Magdeburg. At the same time a student from Kolditz, Wenzeslaus Link, enrolled as well. Though Luther departed after one year, Wenzeslaus Link remained at Magdeburg until 1501. Yet it may have been during that one year that a friendship began, which would later grow into a deeper bond as they would join together in the public battle of the Reformation.

Luther's instructors at Magdeburg compared very favorable with the jail wardens, under whom he had languished at Mansfeld. A gentler, more modern attitude held sway in their midst. Of special note was the northward movement of ideas, originating in Italy, to pass on or plant the knowledge of the old Greeks and the Romans. These ideas found many areas as fertile soil, in which they could grow. Yet there was no true new life to be found in the graves of ancient pagan skill and darkness. The ancient darkness of the heathen could not dispel the modern darkness of the papacy. The comfort of the gospel which was not offered to Luther at Mansfeld was also lacking from the teachers at Magdeburg. And when he was outside of the classroom he was surrounded with images of self-righteous holiness. He relayed the following in 1533 as a part of an article against Duke George of Saxony:

"When I was fourteen years old and attending school in Magdeburg I saw with my own eyes how the Count of Anhalt, a provost and later brother to Bishop Adolf of Merseburg, went about as a barefoot, hooded beggar. He would beg for bread and carry a sack on his back, bent over like a donkey. But his companion, a real donkey, walked alongside him unburdened. Thus the pious count could portray himself as the highest example in the world of grizzled holiness. This count went so far as to labor in the monastery, working like any other brother. He fasted so severely, stayed awake so long, and kept beating himself until he looked like the image of death, only skin and bones. He died very early for he could not stand up under such a severe regimen. To be sure, anyone who looked at him was amazed at his devotion and was ashamed of his own worldly existence."

Our Luther also had a few experiences in Magdeburg with the gathering of "bread for God's sake". His father did not send his son out away from home with a full purse. Even though by this time Hans Luther was known as an honorable and dependable citizen of Mansfeld, known by 1491 as a business leader in town, still he did not possess the means and circumstances to be able to provide complete support for his son. Thus Martin, like so many other boarding students, relied in part on the

generosity of strangers who welcomed the singing beggars into their homes. When Luther was lecturing his students on the book of Genesis during the last decade of his life, he told the following story as a part of his instruction about Joseph and his brothers:

"At first we don't understand this exhibition of God's grace and his good will. We compare his good will and grace, when it is placed before us, to our own fear and destruction. What happens to us is the same as happened to me and my friends many years ago, when I was just a lad. Together we were gathering small gifts with which to satisfy our hunger during our studies. It was a time when the festival of Christ's birth was being celebrated in the church. We went through the villages from house to house and sang, in four voices, the usual psalms about the child Jesus, born in Bethlehem. It so happened that we came to a farm which stood all alone at the edge of the village. When the farmer heard us singing he came out and asked, in a rough farmer's voice, "Where are you knaves?" But at the same time he brought out several small sausages that he wanted to give us. We were so frightened at his voice that we immediately scattered away from him and each other, even though there was no good reason for us to be scared. The farmer was offering us the sausages out of kind, good will. But our hearts were still afraid, so used to the threats and rigor we students had regularly received from the schoolmaster in those days. So we were frightened by his rough voice. But then, as we were about to run away, the farmer called to us again. We mastered our fear and came to him. We took the small gifts, called "Parteken", which he held out to us. In the same way we begin to quake and run away from God, when our conscience is guilty and we are afraid. We are thus also afraid of a bratwurst from those who are our friends and only desire good for us.

The student Luther was to find kind hearts in other areas of Magdeburg. One of those took place in the house of the episcopal official Dr. Mosshauer, who frequently welcomed him as a guest. From the account of Luther's stay in that city we have only one more account to relate. Once he had a fever. Years later a friend, the medical doctor Ratzeberger, related, "Luther was very thirsty but was being kept from

drinking during the heat of the fever. But one Friday, when everyone left the house after the meal to listen to a sermon, he was left alone in the house. Being unable to fend off the thirst any longer, he crawled on his hands and feet down to the kitchen. Grapping a container of fresh water he drank it all with great relish. He then crawled, again on hands and feet, back to his sickbed. He crawled into bed just before the people arrived back from church. After drinking he fell into a deep sleep and when he awoke the fever was completely gone."

Luther would study at Magdeburg for only one year. He then returned to his father's home. While he was at home the old Count Guenther of Mansfeld lay on his deathbed. Hans Luther was summoned to the castle to wait on the count, who respected Hans Luther highly for his good reputation and dependability. When the count passed away Luther boasted about his lord, now fallen asleep, who had left such a glorious testament of faith. When he was asked about this testament Hans answered, "He said that he wanted to take leave of this world only by way of his Savior's merit and commended his soul to Jesus." As Martin listened to his father he did not understand his father's boasting. "For," he said, "if the count had dedicated something magnificent for the service of God, for the church, or for the monastery, that would have been a more impressive testimony than the one he gave." That was an example of Luther's understanding of Christianity that he brought home from the school at Magdeburg.

After a short stay under his father's roof it was time for Luther to go back to school. His parents favored the idea of sending him to Eisenach, where the city parish school at St. George was blossoming under the ambitious leadership of Johannes Trebonius. In addition to the school's reputation other circumstances may have contributed to their decision. Eisenach was not far from the old home of the Luther family. The boy would have relatives nearby, both on his father and mother's side. However, it seems as though these relatives didn't care all that much to help the boy. As a result the singing for his bread was once again put into practice. Luther later said, "I too was such a "Partekenhorse" (a beggar

singing for small gifts of food) and I received bread in front of people's homes, especially in my dear city of Eisenach".

As is still true today the beggars knew very well which houses would not be visited in vain. The students at Eisenach were no different. One such house was that of the outstanding citizen, Konrad - or Kunz Cotta, descended from a well to do Italian noble house. He was married to Ursula, a virtuous daughter of the Schalbe family from Eisenach. This noblewoman's attention was drawn to this modest lad who appeared regularly before her door and sang his songs so seriously. One day, having been turned away from any number of other homes, Luther sang in an exceptionally moving manner. An idea that must have lain dormant for some time in this lady's mind came to life. With her husband's blessing she welcomed this boy into her home and to her table. This lady's relatives also held this protégé of the house of Cotta in high regard. They also bestowed special favors on the youth. It was through her that he would even gain admission to a Franciscan institution. This institution was called "Schalbe Collegium" due to the rich gifts contributed by the Schalbe family. Here too the young Luther enjoyed other gifts and education.

In his infinite wisdom the Lord of the Church led the boy who would become the reformer of his church into such an accommodating company of people. Although his crib, so to speak, lay neither in the home of the Cotta or Schalbe families, nevertheless Luther spent these important days of his childhood among the sort of people who made up the majority of the German nation. Thus he learned to understand his fellow Germans. When he later stepped up as a leader, he knew how to have himself understood among the people. No one since Luther himself has understood how to speak to and write for his people as did he. But he would also have to stand before noble lords and deal with them as well. This mingling of him with the noble families of Eisenach supplied him with an excellent additional education. At the same time his spirit was also being nourished in the midst of nobility. On the one hand he was being partially diverted from the atmosphere of the school, while on the other hand, he was relieved from

worry about the persistent need for food and the feeling of inferiority that went with it.

What's more, the teaching, in which Martin Luther could rejoice while studying at Eisenach, was also a good fit. Trebonius was a man with special gifts and understanding. As an especially gifted grammarian he was also of noble character. It is said of him that whenever he stepped into his classroom he would take off his cap. He would then put it on again when he sat in his teacher's chair. In this way he would honor his students. "For," as he said, "among these students may be sitting someone out of whom God might make a major, or another a chancellor, or another a highly learned doctor or a ruler." Included among his assistants, for whom Trebonius required respect from the students, was the man who would later become Pastor Wiegand. He had applied himself in a loving way to his position at Eisenach, for which Luther would gratefully remember him.

Luther lived four years in Eisenach. These years served as an integral part of his attaining spiritual growth and ever more maturity. During this time Luther became proficient in speaking Latin properly, a skill which was actually necessary for the admission for continued studies at the university. In the same way he developed a growing desire and love for studying, as though he was walking along a flowery rather than a thorny path. But even here the most beautiful of the flowers remained hidden. Even here he was unable to find that one thing needful.

Chapter 3

At the University

A university existed in Erfurt since 1392. This university, although it was the fifth such institution established in Germany, had so surpassed all of her sisters so that by the beginning of the 16th century it happened that, as Luther later said, all the other schools of higher learning were considered to be schools for beginners. This high reputation attracted young scholars from all over Germany. The advancement being achieved here was so great that a special proverb was coined stating, "There are as many masters at Erfurt as there are stepping stones in the street." It was an amazing sight, when masters and doctors received their degrees during a ceremony accompanied by flags, lanterns, and all kinds of other pomp. Among the most brightly beaming scholastic stars of the day serving on the faculty of this renowned center of knowledge was Jodocus Truttvetter, called "the Erfurt Doctor." His name was well respected even by the proud lords of the University of Paris. In addition there was Bartholomew Arnoldi of Usingen, who like the man previously mentioned, was becoming famous by way of his writing. So it seems that Hans Luther had made a wise choice in selecting the school, in which his son would progress toward his goal of being a lawyer. In addition, the location of Erfurt made it quite accessible to a resident of Mansfeld. Thus "Martin Luther of Mansfeld" had his name entered in the rolls as a student at Erfurt during the summer of 1501.

His actual study of law would, of course, begin somewhat later. It was customary at the time for universities not to take up what we would call "major" courses right away. Instead it was believed best for a student to first become better versed with higher understanding through a general course of philosophy. In this way did the students study the rules of language and logic, gaining skill of transmitting thoughts into smooth and fitting sentences about nature, astrology and other subjects. So did the

students also become familiar with the writings of Roman and Greek authors of old.

According to both heathen philosophers and theological philosophers, (philosophical theologians of the papacy during the middle ages, the so-called "scholastics") philosophy concerned itself with questions about God, spiritual powers, and punishment. In this connection the struggle to harmonize philosophy with the teachings of the Roman church by asking subtle questions was considered valid scholarship. What St. Paul or any of the other apostles said about such issues was of no concern to teacher or student alike.

Our Luther soon distinguished himself as one of the more gifted students in this educational pursuit at Erfurt. He devoted himself to these required courses with much enthusiasm and diligence. He listened, read, and debated at every opportunity. Among his fellow students he soon became known as "the educated philosopher." It was here that he would learn to recognize the tricky pathways of the labyrinth that his papal opponents would later present to him. He was thus able to accurately counter the weapons they would employ so that he could confront them with the truth, face to face. "I understand and have also studied your skill. I still know it very well. I can wield your dialectics and philosophies better than any of you. I was raised on such things and have since my youth studied your methods and fully understand the scope of your methodology."

But Erfurt was not only renowned for its famous faculty, Luther, and other zealous students in this discipline. The so-called classic and humanist curriculum, revolving around the works of the ancient Roman and Greek masters, was also popular among faculty and students. The year Luther enrolled at Erfurt, this city saw its first book printed in Greek.

Luther would also enthusiastically read the works of Cicero, Livius, Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Plautus, and Terence. It was undoubtedly at this time that he committed to memory the various references of these authors which would appear now and then in his later writings. Just as he had

earlier gleaned proverbs and pictures from the daily lives of the German people, he did the same from those heathen authors. At this time he limited himself to the works written in Latin. He did not yet understand the Greek language, nor would he acquire it while in Erfurt. That had to occur later, for the Greek professor who had been teaching at Erfurt moved to Wittenberg as early as 1502.

Luther later regretted that he did not spend more time and effort in these studies. He wished that he had read more of these authors and history instead of wasting his time and money on the works of the sophists. Still the benefits he had garnered through his familiarity with philosophy were stated earlier. On the other hand his occupation with the Latin studies would stand him in good stead in that he could use that language with a high degree of skill. Although his ability was slightly less than some of his contemporaries, he was able to express himself with a great deal of refinement. He had become so skilled at this that a later opponent, himself a master of Latin, did not at first want to believe that Luther had edited the masterful work that had been directed against him.

So Luther rigorously proceeded on his way to academic honor. He attained the first step the year after his arrival in Erfurt when he received the degree of Baccalaureus of Philosophy, having passed the exam on St. Michael's Day. To achieve the next step for which this was a requirement, namely his master degree, would require diligence in study. Luther did not lack such diligence. If he was not spending his time at lectures or participating in open debate he loved to spend his time with books from the library.

One day Luther made a discovery which surprised him. He found a Latin Bible. That such a book called the Bible existed he knew, but he had not yet seen one. Until that moment he had held the opinion that the gospels and epistles of the Sundays and other church holidays comprised practically the whole of Scripture. But now, to his amazement, he found that there was much more to be read in this book. The very first section he came upon was the account of Hannah and Samuel at the beginning of the first book of Samuel. He derived such pleasure from reading this account

that he began to wish that one day he would own such a book for himself. Yet because of the studying he had to do for philosophy, his time at Erfurt did not provide him with much of an opportunity to read the Bible he had discovered. The piety he had brought to Erfurt from his father's house and through Magdeburg and Eisenach was not diminished during his student days. Neither the heathen influence, to which so many of his friends committed with delight, nor the influence of the church dissuaded him. He had the habit of praying and hearing masses daily. If he were to become frightened or even feel threatened because of death, he would turn to the saints for refuge. On an Easter Tuesday while heading home he accidentally cut through an artery in his thigh with his student sword. While he was lying on his back he pressed down on the wound while a companion went to fetch a physician. Later that night the wound broke open again and feeling that he was in danger of bleeding to death he again called upon Mary for help. "At that moment," he said later, "I would have died placing all of my hope in Mary."

Luther was well aware that he did not have true holiness. Indeed, in his restless mind he was tortured by the fear that God, in his eternal counsel, must have decided that Luther would not become devout but would be lost. The stern sermons of the city preacher Weinmann, well loved by the other students, could not take away his fear for Christ. As for a gospel sermon, well, there were none for him to hear! Later he wrote to the people of Erfurt, "For many years you have had a distinguished school in your city, a school where even I spent several years. But this I swear, that during my entire time not one true Christian lecture or sermon was delivered by anyone."

That Luther was a diligent student we have noted often enough already. But even his enemies were not able to claim that he led a loose life at Erfurt with drinking and unchaste living, even though they strove to find evidence for such. But that kind of outward holiness brought him no comfort. He often told his fellow students, "The longer we wash, the more unclean we become." "O, when will you become devout and do enough so that you may have a gracious God!" was the cry that held sway in his fearful

heart. Yet at the same time he could be a bright and cheerful companion. His lute-playing, which he had learned during the time spent recovering from his thigh wound, earned him the additional nickname, "Musicus" among his friends. Nor did he gradually withdraw from his studies. In 1505 he became Master of Philosophy. He passed the required exam with flying colors. He ranked second out of seventeen and attracted the attention of the entire university. (The mace on which the oath was administered to Luther for his degree currently belongs to the University of Berlin, according to Professor Graebner's footnote.)

From this moment on Luther pursued his studies in law. His father, who during this time had advanced his ranking somewhat in the community, would not let up supporting his son. He kept backing him as he had done throughout his son's university studies, regardless of how difficult it was for him to come up with the means to do so. In addition to other books he purchased for his son was the large and very expensive *Corpus Jure*, the main text for lawyers.

This father, who had hopefully envisioned an office, benefits, and a fortunate and rich marriage for his son, must have been devastated when he heard that his son had entered a monastery and had become a monk. It must have struck him like a bolt of lightning from the blue sky. That news came so unexpectedly right after Luther had paid a short summer visit home. Expecting to hear that his son had safely arrived back in Erfurt, he heard instead the news of the monastery and the new monk.

Chapter 4

In the Monastery at Erfurt

Fear produced by his father and mother's strict discipline; fear produced by the tyranny of his schoolmasters; fear produced by his perception of the burning wrath of the Judge seated on the throne in heaven; all these fears had been unleashed into Luther's mind and consciousness during his formative years. Now it would be fear that would drive him into the monastery. Remember that was the Luther who, as a youth, was always aware of his sinfulness and kept asking himself, "When will you become devout enough in your behavior so that you may have a gracious God?" It seemed inevitable for him to take the step to become a monk. In those times the monastic life in general had the fine reputation of providing true and genuine holiness and devoutness. Through their rich endowments of monasteries the sinful people of this world were said to be able to gather small spiritual benefit. However other circumstances could also stand in the way of this learned young man to make this decision. On the one hand, a life outside of the monastery promised greater learning, his circle of friends, the desires of his father, and an outwardly financially promising future. On the other hand, monastic life offered the burdens of monastery living and, first and foremost, the beggar's bag. Yet the alluring future of secular life lost all of its attraction when facing death. This thought had already confounded the young man during an illness and was strengthened through the sudden end of a trustworthy friend. So the terror of having to stand before the judgment seat of God drove itself into the soul of the young master and was powerfully reawakened.

Such were the various and foremost feelings and thoughts in the heart of the Erfurt master who was walking along the road on the 2nd of July. It was the holy day marked as the Visitation of Mary, and Luther was on his way back from his parents' home in Erfurt. He was traveling without any friends. His only companions were his troubled thoughts. Having entered the village of Stotternheim, he was close to the end of his journey,

when a severe storm developed in the sky and with terrifying strength suddenly burst. A crackling bolt of lightning crashed near him. His terror overwhelmed him. It was as though God's burning wrath had sent this storm upon him, and the lightning bolt had been aimed at his head already weighted down with guilt. Trembling with fear he broke down. The saints would be his refuge in his great need! St. Anne was the first one to come to mind to this son of a miner. "Help, dear Saint Anne," he cried out, "I will become a monk!"

The vow had been spoken. The tempest passed. It was time to fulfill his vow. Indeed, he would later regret his vow, but he had now made the commitment.

He entertained his friends once more with the playing of his lute on the evening of July 16th and cheered them with his songs. Then those friends were allowed to accompany him, as he entered the monastery the next day. With tears in their eyes they saw the gate close behind him. (*Footnote: "It was the day of Alexius. From this a later legend ascribed the name "Alexius" to Luther's friend, whose death had so touched him.) Martin Luther had broken with his past. He had taken some of his books back to the book stores. Only the works of Plautus and Virgil went with him into the monastery.

As he took this step Luther had no premonition of what plan God was unfolding. Later, however, he recognized it as such and said, "It was God's will that I was to have personally experienced the scholarship of the universities and the holiness of the monasteries. This means that I should have experienced those things by way of so many sins and godless works. This was the reason why people could not attack me, their future opponent, as one who was condemning a situation that he had not experienced himself."

Before actually being received into the order of the monastic brotherhood the institution required the applicant to wait a year. During this year he would be free to change his mind. However, for Luther this time was shortened, enabling him to take his place within the order as early

as the end of 1505. Until that time he was a novice. As a novice he already wore the clothing of the order in which he would ultimately serve. He had a white woolen shirt with a black cloth cowl over it, a leather belt, and finally a mantle which was to signify the yoke of Christ. This consisted of a strip of cloth with a hole in the center which he could slip over his head. The mantle would hang down to the earth in front and back. The chief of the novices, or the pedagogue, was one of the older monks who supervised the novices. Luther would later praise his pedagogue as a fine old man who remained a true Christian underneath his cowl.

Our novice remained patient, even though he was burdened with the lowest types of serving assignments designed to promote humility. This continued until the university, of which he had remained a member, intervened for him and applied some pressure that he be granted more acceptable treatment. His prayer life was constant, praying the prescribed Paternoster and Ave Maria in due numbers and times, day and night. After all this was the part of being pious, for which each monk was to strive, and through which he was then taught to be earning God's good favor.

Shortly after entering the monastery Luther received a gift from the monks for which he was truly grateful. They put a Latin Bible into his hands. Luther began to read this book zealously and perseveringly. At first this was out of obedience to the rules of the order, which Staupitz, the deputy of the order, had prescribed. Although this new agenda of zealous Bible reading was for all, the rest of the monks paid little heed to it. Luther was the only true zealot for Bible reading in the monastery. In fact even his teacher, Usingen, advised him to ease up on his Bible study and instead to study the old church fathers. But as long as he remained in Erfurt Luther continued his reading. He carried on not merely in obedience to monastic regulations or because of Staupitz's admonition, but because of his personal desire. He read his red bound Bible with such devotion that he later complained when he was not allowed to keep that precious book, which he had gotten to know quite well.

The trial period of a novice ended with a celebration marking the acceptance of the novice into the order. This took place with a focus on the

dress code of the order and a threefold vow. "I, brother Martin, profess and promise obedience to God the Almighty, and to the eternally sainted Virgin Mary, to you brother prior of this site, serving in lieu and in place of the head prior of this Order of the Hermit Brothers of St. Augustine, the bishop, and his followers, to live in poverty, in chastity, and according to the rule of the same sainted Augustine, until death."

After Luther gave his vow, the prior and father confessor along with the other brothers extended congratulations. They rejoiced that now he was like a little child who had just been baptized and received a new name, in this case the monastic name of this order's saint, Augustine. Luther would later describe this as a vile despising of Christ and Holy Baptism, although his actual baptismal name, Martin, remained his most favorite.

He explained that he found not a single thread of comfort in his monastic baptism when he wrote, "When even confronted by a small moment of despair, I would collapse and not receive aid from either baptism or monkishness. Thus I had lost both Christ and his baptism for a long time. I was then the most miserable person on earth."

Yet his acceptance into the order marked the beginning of Luther's search for monastic piety. What would it have meant if Luther had derived some greater inner peace from the awareness of having made a complete denial of the world and having dedicated himself to serve God? According to the belief of the day he would have had to admit to himself that the value of his new beginning was not in giving his vow, but in keeping his vow to its completion. He would not have been made pious through his profession, but the piety in such a profession would be the cause of his zeal (to deny the world and dedicate himself to God). As a result Luther strove with all his might to avail himself of the opportunity to perform so-called holy works and exercises in abundance as the monastery would provide. A large portion of these exercises involved the prescribed prayers which had to be offered at predetermined intervals. With frightful care Luther memorized them. With deep devotion he recited them, even though others were babbling thoughtlessly through them like parakeets. Yet he did not dare to come before God with trust and confidence, as a child before his

father. No, it was still the saints, to whom he turned and appealed for help and intercession. After all, there was a huge flock of them, especially St. George and St. Anne, to whom he had turned as a child. But when the words, "I, the LORD your God am a mighty and jealous God," penetrated his soul, the artificial serenity granted by his calling on the saints completely disappeared.

But the monastery also provided other opportunities to acquire holiness, namely: castigation of the body, nightly vigils, and fasting. Also in these pursuits Luther had no equal peer. He would at times not eat or drink for the space of three days. He far outpaced his brothers in the number of vigils he kept. Indeed, he so tortured himself that he broke down in spite of his youthful healthy condition. This was the foundation for his later physical breakdowns. "It is true," he later said, "I was a pious monk. I carried out my order's regulations so strictly that I may say that, if ever a monk got to heaven because of his monkishness, I would have reached that goal. All of my monastic companions will testify to this. For if it had continued much longer I would have martyred myself to death with vigils, prayer, reading, and other works." His behavior and zeal was so exemplary that even outside of his own monastery he was held up as a model monk. Yet, he spent so much effort not to shine before others but to win favor with God with singleness of heart. In spite of all this he found himself lacking when weighing himself before God. He found evil thoughts in his heart, thoughts of impatience and jealousy. Past sins which he could not undo stood naked before his soul. Trembling with despair he was attacked again and again by the accusations of God's law and his own conscience.

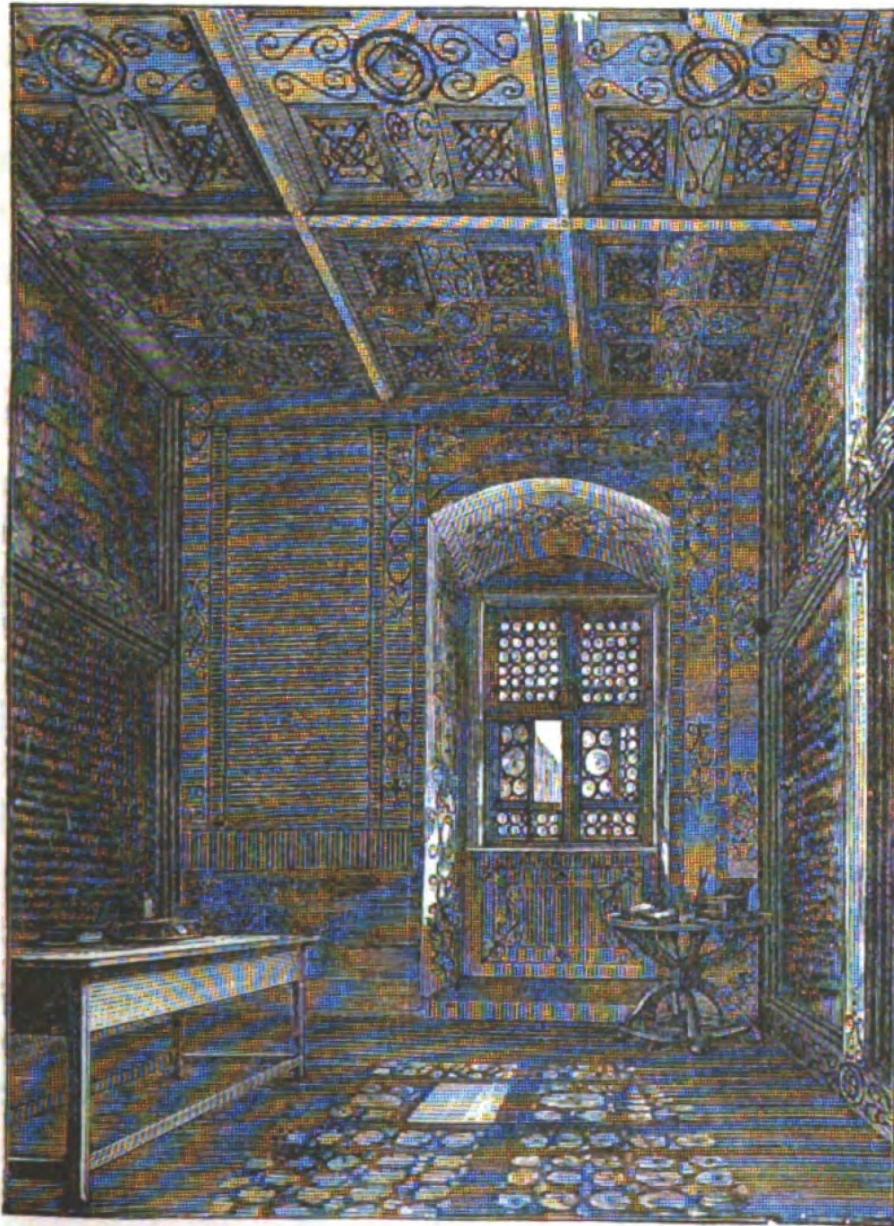
When undergoing such distress Luther turned to a third source of comfort, recommended to the brothers to be used frequently. This third source was confession. Here the solemn absolution of sins was delivered to the individual monk by the father confessor. But sadly even this absolution had been robbed of its comfort under the disgraceful papacy. Indeed, to the terrified conscience it offered only new discomfort. First, the absolution was valid only for those sins which the confessor could remember, and then it would be valid only for such a sinner who had made

himself worthy of forgiveness through a proper amount of sorrow. The sins would then be forgiven through the absolution, but true freedom from punishment could only be attained through the works of penance, which the father confessor would impose on the contrite sinner. One such dreadful form of absolution from that monastery read as follows: "The merits for suffering from the Virgin Mary and all the saints, the merits of the order, the humility of the confession, the contrition of the heart, the good works you have done and will do for the love of Christ will suffice for the forgiveness of your sins, and for the increase of their merits and grace and for the reward of eternal life."

Such a blasphemous declaration would no doubt render a carnal person secure and pharisaical, proud and boastful. But it would never comfort and give rest to a heart terrified because of its sins and incompetence. Our Luther was the latter.

With painstaking care he examined himself prior to his confession. Conscientiously he would recite his sins and what he regarded as sin before his father confessor. With broken and contrite heart he would plead for forgiveness. But what if he forgot some sins which had escaped his mind and which therefore remained unforgiven? Or what if his contrition and sorrow were not equal to the severity of the sin, thereby rendering the absolution given invalid? Or what if the father confessor did not assign sufficient penance for him to do upon departure? Were these works, like castigation and the like, as strong as they needed to be to turn away God's punishment? Questions like these could drive him to the edge of despair when he returned to his lonely cell (* See picture and foot note on the next page) after making confession.

To be sure there were also times when he believed himself to be exalted as an arrogant saint in his monastic devotion. But then he would descend again all the deeper into the torture and pain of disconsolate anguish, where he would search without success for some firm foundation to which to cling. "If someone had told me," he said later, "at what cost, however dear, I could have bought peace with Christ, I would have fallen on



A picture of Luther's cell in the monastery at Erfurt (*This is the cell to which he had been assigned after he had taken the threefold vow. One could look into the monastery garden through its only window. This was still being displayed in the old monastery building before it was destroyed by a fire in 1872.)

my face and would have even given my life, praying only for the rescue of my conscience."

It is rather difficult for us to understand how a person who was as earnestly concerned about his soul as Luther would not quickly be led to the right answer through his continuously zealous reading of the Bible. He himself stated, "No other study gladdened me as much as that of Holy Scripture. I read it zealously and fixed it into my memory. From time to time a single passage I needed to comprehend would remain in my thoughts. The meaningful words of the prophets, which I well remember, I considered over and over, even though I was unable to grasp their meaning. For example I read in Ezekiel, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked (33:11).'

One would have thought that this one passage would have brought comfort to his frightened heart as he studied. But one has to understand that in addition to the blindness of the carnal heart there was also the powerful force of deception to influence him constantly. In addition to Holy Scripture he had to study the writings of the papal church leaders of the middle ages under his monastic teachers. There he learned a number of teachings, for example, concerning the grace of God which is necessary for salvation.

But this divine grace was, according to the explanation of those teachers, a gift of God through which man is put into position to fulfill the highest demands of God's law and to do works which, by virtue of their value, would prompt God to grant him salvation. But this grace was supposed to make it possible for man to achieve it for himself, making himself worthy for it through the natural ability which was claimed to have remained in man after Adam's fall into sin. Those who had achieved this for themselves would have such grace poured into them by God's charity and kindness.

These and other explanations like them hung like a blanket in front of the poor monk's eyes. They were like dark colored spectacles through which he would see all of the other passages about God's grace distorted.

Thus every passage was translated involuntarily into papist thought patterns.

For him it was the same with other Bible passages: "I am working with zeal and terror," he relates, "on how to understand the passage in Romans 1, where he tells us that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. I searched for a long time, knocking on the door continuously. For that phrase, 'justitiae dei,' the righteousness of God, was in my mind to be interpreted according to common teaching: righteousness is a virtue of God, in which he is righteous for himself and condemns sinners. This is the way that all of the doctors, except Augustine, explained this passage. They said that the righteousness of God is the wrath of God. As often as I read that passage I wished that God had revealed the gospel."

Indeed, there were times when his reading would suggest to him that some things were not the way that the church fathers interpreted them. Then the question would arise, "Do you think you are the only one who is so wise?" Just like that the evil-tinted eyeglasses were there in front of his eyes. They caused the merits of Christ and the grace of God to seem like something for which he had to make himself worthy, turning Christ into a terrible judge who in his great majesty was only to be feared by the sinner. "I assumed," he later said, "such a high regard for the pope that I believed that the one who does not agree with him on even the smallest issue, would have to belong to the devil eternally and be condemned." And again, "If someone at that time had taught me what I now, by God's grace, believe and teach, I would have torn him apart with my teeth." Such was the deception under which he was held captive and which kept Scripture hidden from him.

Out of this experience he would later write in his preface to Romans, "First of all we must become acquainted with and understand what Paul means through the words: law, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, flesh, spirit, and the like. Otherwise reading this letter will be of no use to us." And after explaining these words he concluded, "Without such an understanding of these words you will never understand Paul's letter or any other book of the Bible. Therefore watch out for all teachers who use these words

differently." Here we have, from Luther's own pen, the key to understanding Luther's mindset from those days.

In the opinion of the monks of his monastery and the other brothers of this order this learned and devoted monk, Martin Luther, was surely a wonderful and spiritually converted second Paul. He was a jewel of his monastery and his order. As a result, in order that such a light would also shine outside of the monastery's walls and bring it honor and gain, Martin's activity would have to be expanded. Indeed, during his second year the fathers of the monastery had taken the first step by accepting him into their number. He was ordained as one of the priests, who were called fathers in distinction from the common brothers of the order. Luther considered this promotion aimed at him as a sign of God's compassion. In this way he would be allowed to carry out even higher and more holy works.

The 2nd of May of that year was the day chosen for his ordination. That year it was the Cantate Sunday. (*the 4th Sunday after Easter.*) This date was chosen out of consideration for the schedule of Luther's father, whom the son invited to attend this day of celebration. This would be the first time when father and son would see each other again, ever since that visit to Mansfeld, followed so quickly by his entrance into the monastery. The deep displeasure which the father had expressed at that news of his son, resulting in the withdrawal of some of his fatherly affection, had in the meantime mellowed and given way to acceptance. Two of Martin's brothers had died of the plague, and it had even been reported once that Martin himself had died.

The father arrived at the Augustinian monastery at the appropriate time with twenty horses, a number of his neighbors from among their Mansfeld friends, and a present of twenty guilders he had saved for the occasion. The farmers of his area also expressed their joy at Martin's ordination.

The least happy member of all of the participants was the guest of honor. Martin Luther stood before the altar in anguished fear after the dedicating bishop, Johannes von Lasphe, had bestowed on him the priestly

sacrament. How he felt that day remained a vivid memory for him throughout his entire life. He still referred to it in his lectures on Genesis, "When I was to read these words in the mass for souls for the first time, 'We humbly pray of you, most gracious Father, etc.' or, in the same way, 'We sacrifice to you, the living, true, and eternal God, etc.' I was completely struck with fear." Indeed if his monastic teacher had not held on to him, he may very well have fled. Every error and every blunder against the rubrics of the observation of the ceremony of the mass, no matter how small, was regarded as a tremendous sin. Notice how differently he assessed the consecration of a priest, "My consecrating bishop," he said, "as he made me a priest and put the chalice in my hand, said nothing except 'Accipe potestatem sacrificandi pro vivis et mortuis' (*Receive the power to sacrifice for the living and the dead.*) That in reply the earth did not swallow us up because of this wrong testifies greatly of God's patience and forbearance." In referring to the sacrifice of the mass he wrote in his commentary on Galatians, "Here the priest of the mass, who as an apostate denies Christ and blasphemes the Holy Spirit, is allowed to stand before the altar and perform this work which should provide and serve as comfort and salvation, not only for himself but also for others, for the dead and the living, indeed for all of Christendom. ... Therefore one can easily see, based on this one piece of evidence, the immeasurably enormous patience of our Lord God, in that he has not already, years ago, damned the papacy to hell, burning it with fire and brimstone like Sodom and Gomorra."

As the attending guests from the university, the monastery officials, and those visitors from Mansfeld and Eisenach sat at the table after the consecration service, Luther's father brought the new priest back to reality, something which took no little effort. For when, in front of all of the guests, Luther in an amiable manner confronted his father and said, "Dear father, why were you so strongly opposed and even angry about me becoming a monk? Perhaps even now you fail to understand? Is it not a fine, peaceful, and godly life?" Father Hans hammered him back, "You who are so learned, did you not learn from Scripture that father and mother are to be honored? Contrary to this commandment you have abandoned your dear mother and

me in our old age, a time when we should have finally received your comfort and aid, since I spent so much money on your education. Instead you entered the monastery contrary to our wishes."

When it was protested that his son had been called to this vocation by an appearance out of heaven, he cut it off with these words, "If only it was God's will, and that it was not a demon from hell." In any event it was apparent that he was not wholeheartedly rejoicing in his son's decision. Those strong words of his father drove deep into the son's heart, although at the time he had hardened his heart in his own piety. As he later said he felt as though God had spoken to him.

As a priest Luther pursued this piety zealously. He could not be at peace, he would later relate, unless he read a mass every single day, and in each mass call upon three of the twenty-one saints he had chosen for himself. He also began to preach to the brothers of the monastery. He accomplished extraordinary success in this area, even through his vigils and fasting. He could later truthfully say, "My life shone brightly before the people."

So Luther achieved what he did not desire, namely honor among men. Yet he failed to achieve what he truly desired, namely peace for his stricken conscience. This was the case, even though the holiness of a monk's life was believed to be so rich and abundantly blessed that one could even share some of these blessings with those not so holy. Luther would later tell his students, "How it was my custom, when I was still a monk, to daily confess my sins, to pray, to hold sacrificial masses all solely in order that from these vigils, masses, and extra good works I could share with, or sell to, the lay members. The monks would take money, grain, and wine in payment. Even today there remain many official written records of this kind of buying and selling by monks and priests in which they offered their goods to the people as follows: "'We herewith want to share with you (name) our fasting, vigils, prayers, discipline, mass, etc. for a bushel of grain.' So it was also our custom to write such letters and so did we sell our good works."

But while others may have found some peace of conscience in the good works of Father Martin, he found no comfort for himself. He approached the altar with doubts. He departed the altar with doubts. Neither confession nor the mass gave him comfort or serenity. When thinking of Christ upon seeing a cross and considering the sacrifice of the mass, he would be shaken to the core and in terror break out in a sweat. He wrote: "In those days we cried out to the papacy for eternal salvation and the kingdom of God. We even harmed ourselves physically. Yes, we nearly martyred our bodies to death. This was not done by sword or any other weapon, but with fasting and the castigation of our bodies. In this way we were seeking and knocking at the door day and night. And as for me, if I had not been rescued by the comfort of the gospel, I would not have lived two more years. That is the way that I martyred myself and fled from the wrath of God. Neither did I lack from the shedding of tears and weeping. But through all of this we did not accomplish a thing."

As a result of his soul's anguish Luther once again slipped into the terrible conclusion that God, in his infinite wisdom, may have decided that Luther was unmistakably destined for eternal damnation. That explained the vanity of all of his striving and his works. Thus his terror of God rose to its greatest height. When feeling this way, he said later, one finds himself tempted to blaspheme God, calling him unjust and cruel. Indeed, it would be better if there was no God at all.

Yet it was necessary that he, through whom God would lead his poor Christendom, enslaved under the papacy, out of captivity, learn for himself the brick-molding labors of Egypt and the chastising rod of the slave driver.

Even in the darkness under which Luther was living at this time and in the terror which surrounded him, God was holding his hand over him. God would allow the sun to rise for him in his own good time. Already in the monastery at Erfurt was he allowed to see the first glowing beams of the rising sun and thereby be revived.

The Augustinian monasteries in Thuringia and Saxony had an excellent superior in the person of John Staupitz who had served since

1503. He was a gifted, educated, devout, and distinguished man. Descended from nobility he was also noble-minded and managed those monasteries entrusted to him in true faithfulness. Among all of those monasteries he seemed to take special care in dealing with the one in Erfurt. Of all of the monks who lived there it was brother Martinus who attracted the attention of his superior. Having been noticed because of his intelligence, his devotion to his studies, and his exercise of monkly piety, he responded to Staupitz with a fragile trust. This man, though he was quite distinguished, was not equal to the task which God had intended for Luther. Indeed, after the enormous work of the reformation was begun, he quietly withdrew into the background. Yet, God saw to it that he would serve as an important tool in preparing the reformer. Staupitz was the one, who had urged Luther toward a diligent study of Scripture and who then saw to it that he continued in that study. And it was Staupitz, who served as a St. Philip, leading this Bible reader to understand the central message of Scripture, even though his eyes had been kept sealed shut by the old papal teachers of the church.

As late as a year before his death Luther still spoke of Staupitz, "Of him I must declare, when I don't want to be a damned, unfaithful, papal ass, that he was my first father in introducing me to Christ. Because of him I am bound to serve everyone as he would demand it of me." For example once the word "repentance" entered the discussion Staupitz declared that there is no true repentance other than the kind that brings with it love for God's righteousness. "This statement," Luther wrote to Staupitz in 1518, "transfixed me like an arrow delivered by a master bowman. I began with those passages of Scripture that dealt with repentance to see for myself, and behold, what a sweet breath of fresh air! The words stood out in perfect harmony and everything fit together beautifully with this explanation."

Luther would also find a number of other comforting bits of advice. He sought these out both in person and in writing in order to soothe his conscience. The mere fact, that Staupitz would not accept some of the things that Luther confessed as sin to be sin, had a calming effect on this

frightened monk. Staupitz explained that Luther tortured himself with bungler's work and puppet sins. But he also directed him to Christ, the Savior. Once when Luther was in the depths of despair Staupitz comforted him by saying, "You want to be a make-believe sinner and look to Jesus as a make-believe Savior. Accustom yourself to the fact that Christ is the true Savior and you are a real sinner. God is not playing a shadow game with us and he wasn't jesting when he sent his Son and gave him up." Staupitz managed to beautifully comfort him as he wrestled with his temptation regarding eternal election. Luther told his students, "Dr. Staupitz used to comfort me with these words: Dear friend, why are you torturing yourself with wild speculation and lofty ideas? Look at the miracles of Christ! Behold the blood he shed for you! The election shines forth from these!" Then he added, "The election is to be understood in the wounds of Christ and nowhere else. For it is written, 'Listen to him!' For all treasures lie hidden in Christ Jesus. Without him they are all removed behind locked doors. So envision Christ well and correctly. And so predestination is included in his work and you are already elected!"

The productive power of such comfort also showed itself in Luther's life. As late as 1542 he pointed to Staupitz as the instrument God used to save him from the depth of his woe. "If Dr. Staupitz, or more importantly God himself, had not lifted me out of that terrible depression I would long ago have drowned in it and would have gone to hell." Truly throughout his entire life Luther had heartfelt gratitude for "his dear Dr. Staupitz," even though Staupitz's later timidity grieved him a great deal.

That gray-haired monastic instructor was also God's instrument for bringing the first beams of healing to Luther's soul. On one occasion when Luther was tearfully recounting his dismay, that gray-haired man replied, "What are you doing, my son? Don't you know that our Lord God himself commanded us to hope?" This understanding was new to Luther and he later said, "That one word, 'commanded,' gave me such comfort! After that I knew that one must believe in the absolution and in the being set free from sin. I had often heard this before, but beset as I was by foolish

thoughts, I believed that these words didn't apply to me or that I had to believe them."

It was also this hoary-headed man who gently pointed Luther to child-like faith, as stated in the Third Article, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." He expounded this idea, "It is not enough that one believes in a general way that there exists a forgiveness of sins. Even the devils believe that David and Peter have forgiveness. But God wants each person to believe for himself that his own sins are also forgiven. This was even confirmed by St. Bernhard who, in a sermon on the annunciation of Mary said, "In addition, also believe that through him your sins are forgiven to you. This is the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives in your heart: Your sins are forgiven to you. For the Apostle holds forth that man is justified, free of charge, through faith."

Luther would later admit, as Melancthon reports, that these words not only lifted him up, but that he was also instructed in the meaning of Paul's words, where it says, "We are justified through faith." Since he had studied many other interpretations of these words, he continued learning from that old brother. The comfort he received led him to conclude that all of the current interpretations were false. Through further study of the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles this doctrine kept becoming ever more clear, little by little.

Although it was during this third year of his life in the monastery, his last in Erfurt, that the light began to shine regarding the truths of Scripture, it would be a mistake to think that Luther had already fully understood how to properly evaluate the papacy. Such understanding would come much later and it would come gradually. That does not mean that there weren't many skirmishes. One occurred when he found a book in the library of the monastery. It was a book of sermons written by the Bohemian martyr, John Hus, whom the papists had burned at Kostnitz a hundred years earlier. "In that book I found so much," Luther said, "that upset me. Why was such a man, who could apply Scripture in such a Christian and powerful manner, sent to the stake? But because at that time his name was so universally condemned I thought that the walls would turn black and the sun lose its

light at the mere thought of the name "Hus." So I closed the book and walked away with a wounded heart. But I comforted myself with the idea that perhaps he had written these sermons before he became a heretic."

Indeed, he later confessed about himself, "I regarded John Hus as such a damned heretic that I believed it was sinful and contrary to God's will to even think of him. I was so filled with enthusiasm for the pope that I longed to have been allowed to bring the wood, fire and stones, with which Hus was killed.

Thus I would serve, if not with the actual deed, with good will and good intentions in my heart." Even Luther's monastic way of life at times caused him to think. It seemed that the center of a truly Christian life, namely the practice of Christian love, was missing. We noted earlier how his father's serious comment about his ordination to priesthood caused him great concern. Still, for over a decade he clung to the monastic rule. And for a decade he devoutly read the papal masses, those same masses that he later would rightly abhor as blasphemous abominations. Even though he was a priest he was obligated to carry the beggar's sack through streets and towns in company with a monastery brother, and he did so willingly.

His studies remained on papal teachings to a large extent. His ambitious learning was not limited to the scholastics but also included the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Wilhelm von Occam, Gabriel Biel, Peter von Alliaco, Peter d'Ailly, and Gerson. He committed large sections of these writings to memory and could soon pass as the most well versed expert on scholastic theology in the entire Augustinian order in Germany. The study of Holy Scripture still remained important to him. So in the quiet of his monastic cell he began to learn the Hebrew language in order to glean for himself the ability to study the Old Testament in its original form. He appears to have used a dictionary by Reuchlin for this purpose.

But again it must be remembered that Brother Martinus was not just a bookworm, studying only to gain extensive and thorough knowledge out of thick books, only to lack the ability to apply or even use such knowledge. On the contrary, we find that he was applying his acquired

knowledge already in Erfurt, a gifted man looking out for the best interests of his order. He even appeared on behalf of the order before Count Adolf von Anhalt, the provost of Magdeburg at that time. This appearance had to do with business concerns. The count would later talk about the zealous, pious, and respectful monk.

In truth Luther already stands before us as a man of high renown. We have followed his journey to this point and now we must leave Erfurt to travel with him to a new and more important phase of his life.

Chapter 5

Beginnings at Wittenberg

Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony had established a university in his city of Wittenberg in the fall of 1502. This university was dedicated to God, to the Virgin Mary, and to St. Augustine. The university's theology school chose St. Paul as its patron saint; the school of law chose St. Ivo; the school of philosophy was under the protection of St. Katherine; and the school of medicine was under the protection of St. Kosmos and St. Damian. This university was established with the permission of the pope but on the provision of Caesar, and in that sense was not under spiritual rule like other institutions of higher learning. When he founded and organized the institution the elector chose two special men in whom he placed his trust. One of these was his medical doctor, Dr. Pollich of Mellerichstadt. He had accompanied the elector on a trip to Palestine. As a learned man with an impressive reputation, he had distinguished himself magnificently as a professor in both the schools of doctor of medicine and of law in the city of Leipzig. He was established as the first chancellor of this new university. He also became a doctor of theology so he was also qualified to lecture on that subject. The other counselor chosen by the elector was Dr. Staupitz, with whom we are already quite well acquainted. He was the first deacon of the theological department.

At first the financial support for running this new university came out of the founder's own coffers. But this initial investment was not enough to bring this institution to be equal to its sister schools. This shortage, along with the near poverty standard of living in the city of Wittenberg, was the reason why the enrollment for the first year was 416 but by the fourth year had shrunk to 127. To gain a better financial standing, the University of Wittenberg adopted a policy which had proven beneficial to other schools.



A picture of Wittenberg on the Elbe River according to a copper plate of 1546 With the title:

Capital in the Electorate of Saxony, Beginnings at Wittenberg (p. 3 of 4)

The wealthy castle church was established, with papal approval, as a foundation church with a chapter by adding a few neighboring parishes to its domain. The foundation was established to have close ties with the university. Thus the professors were to serve also as foundation lords and so benefit from the foundation's income. In addition Staupitz hoped to be able to direct suitable men from his order as professors to the university. They would receive their room and board from the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. In this way the funding for professorships was preserved so the number of professors could increase considerably.

Of course, having a large number of professors did not guarantee success. Those professors had to be proficient in their subjects in order to build the university's reputation. At first Wittenberg lacked professors of that quality. Staupitz, because of his many journeys on behalf of his order's business, spent far too little time at his university lectures. Pollich, a man with a wide range of scholarship and high reputation, was able to win the hearts of his students through some bold ideas and kindness. Yet his achievements were not enough to place him on the same level as professors at other schools. Even when Luther's old teacher, Truttvetter, was brought from Erfurt to Wittenberg, adding a trained and honored teacher, they also were adding a follower of the scholastics. Two of the younger professors were Andreas Bodenstein from Carlstadt and Nicolaus from Amsdorf. The former had not yet ever seen a Bible, and the latter, though he was a bright, sincere and zealous professor, he had not yet garnered a reputation outside of Wittenberg.

In 1508 Staupitz was again serving as deacon of his faculty. It seems as though shortly after stepping into office he found himself once again under pressure due to the burdens of his labor. He swiftly came to the conclusion to call a man to serve alongside himself. This man was one, whose zeal, gifts, and learning Staupitz had known for a long time. He was one, who Staupitz believed would work zealously and with success. This man was our Luther.

The move of Brother Martin from Erfurt to Wittenberg happened so quickly that he did not even have time to say farewell to his friends. The

move of this poor brother out of the monastery, a man who had very little to pack, was accomplished very easily. He simply made the move, obedient to his superior, and left the one monastery for another. He began his new position without any salary. However this move did not completely please him because he had been called away from his study of Scripture. Here, as a master of philosophy, he would not be giving theological lectures. Instead he would be teaching Aristotle. But it was not Staupitz's intent in drawing him to this professorship to have him remain in the philosophy department. Soon after his arrival in Wittenberg we can see steps being taken to open the door for him to teach theology.

As early as March 9, 1509 Luther was given the degree of Bible baccalaureus and, along with it, the authority to interpret Holy Scripture for the students. This was, according to the statutes of the university, the first step toward a full professorship in theology. One might assume that this was the final step. But Holy Scripture was so lightly regarded that the interpretation position was assigned to beginners. And even for those beginners, it was required that a baccalaureus had to teach Scriptural interpretation for a whole year (a half year if he belonged to an order). Only then could he take further steps toward a doctorate. Thus it was possible to get one's doctorate without having seen the Bible, as had been the case with Carlstadt.

In regards to our Luther we cannot prove that he began his Bible instruction as soon as he was authorized. It is apparent that Biblical instructions were regarded more as a right, and less as a duty, for a baccalaureus. Luther may even have taken the time to prepare for the next step in achieving full professorship, namely the step of becoming sententarius. The sententarius was required to conduct lectures on the sentences of the scholastic, Peter Lombardus, whose book was used in the schools as a textbook for theological study. This was so, even though, as Luther later said, he spoke about the chief articles of the Christian faith with little depth.

The twenty six year old baccalaureus had already presented a disputation, a requirement for the next step in his promotion. But shortly

before attaining his goal, his work in Wittenberg was interrupted. For a reason unknown to us Luther was called to Erfurt. It was there that he accomplished the promotion to sententiarius, though with great difficulty due to the faculty's interference. It was the custom that the next two degrees, the licentiatur and the doctorate, were to be bestowed in quick succession, one after the other. But before Luther would actually take his position as a professor of Holy Scripture, God wanted him to experience something else for himself. He later remarked that he would not trade what he would see for any amount of money because he would never have the opportunity again. He, through whom the power of Rome would be overcome, was to travel to Rome.

Chapter 6

The Journey to Rome

A dispute arose among the German Augustinian monks, which cannot be easily explained. It appears as though a rift developed between those who favored a more strict rule and those who favored a more lax rule. That seemed to lie at the root of the problem, and it was debated as to how the two sides could come together. Hence, input was to be obtained from Rome. This required appointing a person who was willing and able to present the situation accurately and, at the same time, was willing and able to determine what was best for the order. Staupitz was the leader of the faction seeking a stricter rule. He could think of no more dependable man to be entrusted with this task than Brother Martin. After all, Brother Martin had already earlier proven himself in defense of the order and would also be able to adapt himself to worthily represent the order in Rome. Thus Luther, accompanied by another brother from the monastery as required, set out for Rome. He was heading to the city which he still believed to be the holy capital of Christendom. He still regarded that city as the place to find the greatest comfort for a heart yearning for salvation.

According to information from Luther's own writing his stay in Erfurt began in the fall of 1509 and lasted one and one half years. Since he reported finding ripe grapes and pomegranates in Italy he would have begun his journey around the middle of 1511. He very likely set out directly from Erfurt, although it is possible he made a short visit to Wittenberg.

The two monks traveled on foot toward their goal, most likely via the most direct route, through Bavaria. They received food and lodging in the monasteries that they passed. Some of these brothers distinguished themselves with warm welcomes which they extended toward their guests. This was especially true after entering Italy. But while the rich fertility of the Italian landscape filled them with amazement, the libertine ways of the

rich and prosperous Italian monks filled them with dismay. On one occasion they became victims of an illness of head and body, as they were sleeping next to an open window with Italian humidity on both sides. When this happened the monks of that Italian monastery proved to be equally malicious, since they had been confronted because of their licentious lives. In their malice they sought to kill our travelers. The kindness of the monastery's gate-keeper saved them. He helped them by guiding them in their flight.

When Luther finally beheld Rome he stretched out his arms toward it and crying out, "Greetings, holy Rome!" he cast himself piously to the earth. The Roman papal throne was occupied at that time by Pope Julius II, a spur-clanking and fighting lord. For him the coat of mail fit much better than the cassock. Peter's sword agreed with him much more than the shepherd's staff. He was known to make use of the papal ban against military opponents when his other arrows did not yield the desired outcome. In other ways Julius presented himself as an improvement over his predecessor, Alexander VI, who had grown gray because of all of his abominable depravities. That unworthy pope finally died of poisoning, a poison he had intended for a wealthy cardinal. With his death the Roman people were unexpectedly joyful.

The new war-happy pope would have had little time for a Saxon monk and his problem, since his head and hands were fully occupied in a war with France. Yet somehow the issue that had brought Luther to Rome seems to have found a satisfactory conclusion. However, the matter was not settled in one day. During the time when his issue was being examined Luther found quarters in the Augustinian monastery near the Porto del Popolo. He had enough time to explore the city and all of its famous sites. Seemingly with every step this simple, honest German found more and more to dismay him. He had expected to see and hear holy practice and respectful piety everywhere. Instead he found frivolity buzzing and fluttering around streets and palaces. He saw that, what he had seen and heard about the warrior politician Julius and his cardinals had implanted itself everywhere he looked. He was exposed to hideous unnatural

abominations being practiced in shameless insolence even by highly placed churchmen. As he would later say, "These abominations made Sodom seem like child's play." He even heard the most vilely infamous tales of the former pope, Alexander, and his children. Those tales were told openly and with certainty, being still fresh in the thoughts of the then living citizens of Rome.

Malicious games were being played even in respect to the saints. "There a person sees," says Mathesius, "the holy father, the pope, and his gold-covered religion and the impious whores and court servants." These sights gave him great motivation later on when he was doing his important writing against the Roman abominations and idolatry. As he often stated at the table he would not take a thousand guelders for the experience he had in seeing Rome. For in Rome he had wanted to rescue his friends from purgatory through his saying the sacrifice of the mass, as everyone believed at that time. So he conducted his mass very deliberately and devoutly. During the same time a priest at an altar next to him said seven masses before Luther finished his one. The Roman conducting the mass said, "Passa, passa, passa! Away! Send this woman's son home again soon!" Luther himself reported, "In Rome I heard whores laughing and bragging in vile language how some were saying masses using these words over the bread and the wine, "Panis es et panis manebis; vinum es et vinum manebis. (Bread you are and bread you remain; wine you are and wine you remain.)"

In spite of this experience he would later relate about himself, "I was such a holy fanatic in Rome. I walked through all of the churches and catacombs. I believed everything that was deceitfully invented even though it stunk like the pestilence. Whether I held one mass or ten I was deeply sorry at that time that my father and mother were still alive. I would have liked to have saved them from purgatory through my masses, or better yet, with my other good works and prayers. There is a saying in Rome: Blessed is the mother whose son says a mass for her on Saturday at St. John. How dearly I would have liked to have sanctified my mother there. But it was

too crowded and I could not get close enough. I ate a rustic herring instead."

Among all of the sacred deceptions, multitudes of which were taking place then and even today, was the so-called Pilate staircase. This staircase, which was standing in front of the Sancta Sanctorum Chapel, was said to have been transported in a miraculous way from Pilate's judgment hall in Jerusalem to Rome. For centuries it was promised that whoever would work his way up these steps on his knees, steps on which the foot of Jesus had touched, would receive nine years of indulgence for each of the 28 steps. Even our "holy fanatic" didn't want to miss out on this blessing and so piously climbed all of these steps on his knees.

But Luther could not find true solace in any of the laudable acts which he so devoutly performed in Rome. In fact there was much less solace afterward. First he felt bitterly disappointed, even though he did not dare to admit it to himself or others. He felt he was going mad from his experience in regard to those things he had considered holy and precious. Even then there was a beginning of the injection of a truth of Scripture. It would pierce his forsaken soul like a mighty, rushing wind that surrounded him. The Word of God came to him and surrounded him with wondrous persistence, echoing louder and louder until its low register vibrated through his soul like loud thunder against his false work of reconciliation. This Word of God was, "The righteous will live by faith." God had given him this teaching to accompany him on his journey to Rome. It occupied his thoughts. It harassed him in his wild piety. It traveled with him from place to place. And though he could not find its basis it held his soul captive. When he took leave of Rome after his four week stay he did not take back with him everything he had brought. But that word he did bring back. It was becoming for him the gateway to paradise.

Chapter 7

The Doctor Hat

Now if you might think that Luther returned to Germany as a son of thunder ready to rail against the apostasy of the pope, the separation from Babylon, and assume the mantle of the reformer, you would have to simply change your mind. This much is certain, Luther was maturing through various forms of testing. As he had earlier come to understand that not everything was right in the teachings of the highly distinguished papal leaders, now he had to experience his own personal disillusion. He had to admit that much in the papacy was downright corrupt, in fact much more corrupt than he had known or suspected up to this time.

At the same time you could be sure that this man, who had learned so much through his awareness and experience, was still a long way removed from sounding the alarm, exposing the pope's disgrace, and preaching a holy war. Even less did he believe himself to be the spearhead of a reformation. He was not even at the front of the battle in the small circle of his own preaching influence. It seems that at the beginning of his renewed time at Wittenberg he withheld himself from all public teaching activity. Instead he applied himself only to his monastery duties, duties which he now assumed in the position of subordinate prior.

A portion of those monastic duties, now as before, included preaching in the monastery chapel. Mykonius writes poetically about this little church. "The foundation for the church had been laid in the new Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg, but it had not grown beyond ground level. An old chapel was still standing in the midst of it. Made of wood and held together with clay, it stood about thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. It was dilapidated and needed to be propped up on each side. It included a small, old, and sooty nave in which twenty worshippers could stand, crowded together."

Along the southern wall could be found a preaching chair fashioned out of old, unplanned boards. It stood about one and a half cubits tall. Truly, it had the appearance that artists give to the barn in Bethlehem in which Christ was born. In this poor and miserable chapel God caused his holy gospel and the dear infant Jesus to be born anew, to be unveiled and shown to the entire world. It was neither a cathedral nor a huge central church which God had chosen for this purpose, though there were thousands from which to choose. But soon this church proved to be too small and Luther was commanded to take his preaching to the parish church. Thus the baby Jesus would also be brought into the temple.

The scholarship and teaching skill of Luther was to prove valuable for the university (according to the direction of Staupitz), for the elector (who would also listen to Luther's sermons), and for the brothers of his order (who in part had been enrolled as students). As a result Staupitz encouraged Luther to be given the title, Doctor of Theology. It wasn't Luther who requested the promotion. In fact, when Staupitz approached him, he tried to decline and pleaded to be spared. He said that he would soon collapse under the work. He also stated that he lacked the means to pay for what the doctorate would cost and brought up many other excuses.

Staupitz, however, destroyed all of his objections in a conversation that took place under the pear tree in the inner yard of the monastery. He raised a valid argument which he knew would convince this conscientious brother monk. He invoked the debt of obedience to the superior of the order. "It is apparent," he said, "that our God shall soon have much to be done in heaven and on earth. For this reason he will need to have many young doctors doing the work through which he will carry out his plans. Whether you live or die, God needs you in his battle plan. Therefore be obedient in respect to the duty your house is giving you according to the debt you owe. What you need for your expenses your gracious elector will supply. He will do this out of his devotion to our God, to promote this university and monastery, according to his grace."

In reality it was the argument pertaining to his obedience to his superior and to his monastic vow which caused Luther to reconsider. As he

later wrote, "I was called and forced to become a doctor against my desires, purely out of obedience. Thus I had to accept the doctorate and swear upon my praised and most loved Holy Scripture to preach it faithfully and clearly." At the same time he invited the vicar and fathers of the order at the Erfurt monastery to remember their obedience and accept his invitation to the ceremony.

According to the rules a person had to become a licentiate before he could earn the degree of doctor. This happened on the 4th of October and was the occasion on which Luther swore to valiantly defend the evangelical truth against all error, the oath he referred to in the previous statement. His doctoral disputation was held on the afternoon of October 18 under the chairmanship of Carlstadt and was attended by gentlemen of the university and numerous guests. The next morning the usual ceremonies took place. These involved the swearing on the mace, the presentation of the doctor's hat, the doctor rings, etc. And so Martin Luther was proclaimed and duly sworn in as doctor, promising not to present vexatious or foreign doctrines, or doctrines, which were condemned by the church. He was not to present evil teachings to holy ears.

So we have standing before us on the 19th of October 1512 the Augustinian Dr. Martin Luther. He was a man from among the people, of fearful conscientiousness, reared by his father and mother. He was a man of deep introspection acquired particularly in the quiet of his monastic cell. He was a man versed in the basic knowledge of his day, garnered through his studies at the various schools he attended as well as his private study. At the same time he was a man increasing in his understanding of the one thing needful which he was gleaning from his persistent searching of the Scriptures. In addition, in spite of all the insight he had gained concerning the enormous damage that was becoming evident in his church, he remained a zealous and faithful, submissive son of the Roman church. And now he was a doctor of theology, taking his sacred oath in all sincerity.

Where else might one have found another man who would measure up to these descriptions?

Chapter 8

Luther's Work and Growth to 1517

Martin Luther had stood alone in the study of Holy Scripture while in the monastery at Erfurt. He also stood alone in Wittenburg, even as he began the duties which came with his doctorate. None of the other university professors held the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of their theology and teaching as did Luther. This must have immediately become obvious to Luther's students and colleagues alike. This seems to have been especially true in the case of the elderly Dr. Pollich, who, in noting Luther's penetrating eyes, accurately predicted that this monk, having his position founded on the writings of the Prophets and Apostles and the words of Christ himself, would ultimately outshine all the other doctors and overturn the doctrine which was currently holding sway in the universities.

Thus it would be appropriate to take a closer look at those men who were at this time associates of Luther and in regular communication with him.

We begin with Luther's old acquaintance and brother monk, Dr. Wenzeslous Link. Dr. Link had become a part of this group of teachers of theology at the same time as Luther. He had studied at Wittenburg as early as 1503. He had earned his own doctor's hat a year before Luther, and he was serving as the prior of the monastery where they both lived. He was the deacon of the faculty.

Then there was Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt. He had stepped into the professorship which had become vacant with Trutvetter's return to Erfurt. A part of this professorship included the archdeaconry of the church foundation and receipts from the parish of Orlamuende. While Link was a noble and devout man serving with Luther, Carlstadt proved to be much more of an impure spirit. His education and career revealed that he was at heart an average Thomist. (A Thomist was a follower of Thomas Aquinas.) In addition he was a restless and ambitious man who, in order to

present something dramatic, would resort to the oddest methods. For example, he arrived at the notion that theology and jurisprudence actually belonged together. This resulted in a journey to Rome in 1515 to begin his study of jurisprudence. This study was against the expressed stipulation under which the university had granted its permission for the journey, a permission he had sought five years earlier. Carlstadt showed the same lack of responsibility when he failed to keep his promise of having a substitute for himself during his absence. Before he left for Italy he had roamed throughout the country to gather contributions for his pilgrimage. Throughout this time the university had no certain knowledge as to his whereabouts. After a time they finally learned that he was indeed in Rome. He had been granted leave to be in Rome for four months, yet he remained for an entire year. When, in addition to this, he brazenly requested that his income be forwarded to him, the elector demanded his immediate return. Carlstadt did not comply. The result was that the count notified him on February 23, 1516, that if he did not return to Wittenburg by St. John the Baptist day, his office would be declared vacant and filled by another. That helped.

A more respectable figure in Luther's circle was Georg Burkhard, originally known as Belt Spalatin. He and Luther were students together at Erfurt, where he was included among those who admired classic antiquities. This group was known as the "Poets." He became Magister after his first year as a student and he began to study law. He later also studied theology. He was the recipient of special honor by the elector, who put his trust in him. Two nephews of the count, who were studying at Wittenburg, were placed under his personal supervision. Spalatin was the man who later became the court chaplain and served as a mediator between the count and his friend Luther.

John Lange was another member of the circle of "Poets" as well as a friend of Luther. He was also drafted to Wittenburg in 1515, where he achieved top honors in theology and was assigned with Luther as a teacher in the monastery. Because of his knowledge of Greek, in which he had demonstrated his proficiency as a student, he became a valuable fellow

worker with Luther, as well as a close friend. Luther felt deeply indebted and grateful to him.

The old Dr. Pollich, whom Luther had met on his return to Wittenburg, was not allowed to work with Luther much longer. He was called out of this world as early as 1513. With his departure Luther lost the last of his old professors at Wittenburg.

But what Pollich had predicted for the young scholar was now coming to pass. For as Dr. Luther began his theological lectures he based them not on the sentences but on the books of the Bible. He began with Psalms, those wonderful hymns. On one hand, those songs clearly expressed the knowledge of sin to damnation and the fear and misery of a broken heart. On the other hand, they rejoiced in childlike trust and in the compassion of God. While there is no clear record of Luther's lectures to the students, we do possess a copy of the Book of Psalms in which Luther noted his personal comments. It is reasonable to assume that these comments give us a sense of what his lectures were like. Already in these remarks the central teaching of Scripture, justification by grace through faith, was set forth with clarity and certainty. For example, in commenting on Psalm 32:1, Luther wrote: "In Romans 4 the Apostle speaks against all those who want their sins to be forgiven by God on account of their own works and merits and demand to be declared righteous through their own works. Hence Christ would have died in vain, since they wanted to become holy without his death, by their own works. This is false."

Concerning Psalm 61:8 he wrote: "According to the explanation of Augustine, God's mercy means that God does not look on our merits, but on his grace and goodness. This is the reason why he removes punishment and gives eternal life. The truth is that he actually fulfills and imparts what he promised. Both are the effects of his grace, namely that faith justifies us. This is mercy. This is what he had promised. This is truth."

Regarding Psalm 51:11 Luther wrote: "For Christ leads to salvation directly, by the shortest and the straightest path, while the law takes a

detour. But Christ is exalted and has drawn everyone to himself. He is the Mediator of all. A person who has him has everything in his perimeter.

Indeed, Luther's theology continued to flow, just as we met it already in his interpretation of Psalms. It still leads us on the short pathway of faith to salvation, and Christ is at its center. To be sure, there remains a lengthy portion in which he comments, "That we, as is our custom, have been diligent in allegory (i.e., the use of picture language) and were counseled through them. This worked quite well for me when I was young." But even there he makes use of every opportunity to bring in Christ, since everything refers to him.

This book of Psalms further illustrates how Luther was learning, especially from Paul's letter to the Romans. This understanding was then communicated to his listeners through his lectures on Psalms. But beginning in 1515 Luther also began holding lectures on Romans itself. And then in 1516 he progressed to Paul's letter to the Galatians. As he dedicated his study of the Greek language under the guidance of his friend Lange, it became increasingly easier for him to understand and to apply these important New Testament writings.

A further examination of his lectures on the Book of Psalms reveals that Luther also made use of the writings of the church father, Augustine, in his exegetical presentations. He now began to use the old Lyra to interpret the Psalms, although he later commented that, when he began to study theology, he had no use for it, because the Lyra zealously adhered to the text and was hostile to allegory. But at this time he preferred Lyra. In Augustine he discovered that the inabilities of natural man were strongly asserted, just as Paul had so powerfully emphasized. He came to comprehend sin and grace better as he learned to differentiate between law and gospel. He presented the law in all its sharpness and the gospel in all its sweetness. Because of this he could better comprehend how his own experiences were leading him in the right direction. He had previously suffered under the weight of the law with its threats and condemnation, as has already been noted repeatedly. But now he acknowledged his own incompetence as a natural man in regard to spiritual matters. At the same

time he also was experiencing the sweet comfort of the Gospel with its wonderful quickening power in his heart.

The skill with which Luther could write and speak about the righteousness of faith can be best shown in a letter which he wrote on April 7, 1516, to his dear friend and brother of the order, Georg Spenlein of Memmingen. In this letter we read: "I, more than anything else, desire to know the condition of your soul. Is it finally sick of its own righteousness, and has it learned to be restored in the righteousness of Christ and put its trust in him? For in our time many are viciously attacked in arrogant madness, especially by those who want to be righteous and devout through their own ability. They do not know the righteousness of God which is imparted to us in Christ, which is given abundantly and free of charge. They seek to achieve their own righteousness until that day when they would joyfully stand before God, adorned with their good works and achievements, although such a thing is impossible. When you were with us, you also got caught up in this error, even to a greater extent. I, too, was a part of this and even now must battle against it, having not completely conquered it. Therefore, my dear brother, learn the truth of Christ crucified. Learn to sing to him and despair of yourself, saying, 'You, Lord Jesus, are my righteousness, but I am your sin. You took to yourself what you were not and have given me what I had not.' Watch yourself that you don't seek to attain such a holiness which will cause you, in your own eyes, to see yourself as neither being a sinner nor desiring to sin. Know that Christ lives only in sinners. For this reason he came down to earth from heaven, so that he would also live with sinners. Ponder the depth of his love. In it you will find sweet comfort. For if we should have to achieve rest of conscience by way of our own work and struggling, then for what purpose would he have died? Thus only in him, having been convinced of the folly of saving yourself through your works, will you find peace. What's more, you will learn from him that as he himself has carried you and taken your sins upon himself, so he has made his righteousness your own. If you joyfully believe this (as you must, for the one who does not believe is cursed), then reach out to your brothers who are still imprisoned in their error and bear with them patiently. For if you are a rose or lily of Christ,

understand that you are to live among thorns. Watch out lest through impatience, overly hasty decisions, and secret pride, you become a thorn yourself. Christ's kingdom is in the midst of his enemies, as the Psalm tells us. But what did you think? Did you think that he should be in the midst of his friends? So whatever you need, be sure to kneel before your Lord Jesus in prayer. He will teach you everything himself. Just always bear in mind what he did for you and for everyone. In this way you will learn what you must do for others. If he would have had to live only among the good and have had to give his life for friends, for whom in the world would he have died? Or with whom on earth would he ever have been able to live? So carry on with your labor, dear brother, and pray for me. The Lord be with you."

What a tender inner spirit expresses itself alongside the clear, deep understanding of Christ's salvation we read in these words! May this characteristic of that doctor, who went through such a hard struggle, strike a chord in each of us. Yet we know at the same time as this letter was written, Luther became better acquainted and influenced by a teacher from the middle ages who expressed himself with the same sort of warmth and intimacy. When he at the same time contemplated this teacher's deep, devout theology, Luther called the learning of his own era an "iron-like" or "pottery-like" knowledge. This teacher was the Dominican monk, Johannes Tauler. His sermons were studied and loved by Luther. Tauler had died in the garden house of his sister at Strassburg in 1361. It was in his sermons, even though they contained all kinds of bad papal counsel and odd speculations, where Luther found the teaching of salvation in Christ Jesus presented so beautifully and richly. Luther often maintained that Tauler's sermons "led him in the spirit."

Since he had such a specially deep desire to be rid of the empty human identity of this world and to find true rest and peace with God, Luther found great comfort in these sermons. At the same time he learned to treasure the individual union with Christ, in which the believer says, "You are mine and I am yours," he treasured the truth that Christ grows into even more of a presence in us. Later in life he would encourage others more

strongly, but at this time Luther simply recommended the sermons of Tauler to his friends, including Lange and especially Spalatin. "Taste and see," he wrote to Spalatin, "how friendly the Lord is," and vowed that he would get the book for himself.

Luther discovered another enjoyable 14th century work that sang the same tune as Tauler's sermons. He passed portions of it along for printing in 1516. Two years later he saw to it that the complete work was published under the title, "Ein Deutsch Theologia, das ist ein edles Buechlein vom rechten Verstand, was Adam und Christus sei, u.s.w." (A German Theology, which is a Noble booklet of Proper Understanding, What Adam and Christ Are, etc.). This is the title that it has retained ever since. By using this title Luther was showing what had attracted him both to Tauler and this other anonymous and untitled booklet. He had discovered a theological work written in German, since at that time little was produced in German while the lion's share of theological writing was in Latin. He even spoke highly of Tauler in front of Spalatin, praising the flow of his German phrasing. Having been so pleased to be able to find the truth printed in his native tongue (literally, "In German dress"), which was so dear to his heart, Luther applied himself even more diligently to have the counsel of God proclaimed to his fellow Germans in their mother tongue.

Through persistent preaching he demonstrated his commitment at every opportunity. The papacy preaching had diminished to such an extent that in some areas of Christendom sermons might be absent for almost a year. The sacrifice of the mass for the living and the dead had nearly crowded every other element out of the divine service. Even where some preaching could still be found, it was not based on the Word of Christ. "Preach the gospel," Luther later said. Speaking of this era he continued, "Previously a preacher was ashamed and timid; indeed, it was regarded as unfitting, womanish, and a disgrace to proclaim the name of Christ from the preacher's chair. The Prophets and the Apostles were never considered, nor were their writings quoted. Instead the rules for preaching styles for all preachers were as follows: First, choose your theme, quotation and question from Scotus, or Aristotle, the heathen master. Secondly, divide

the same. Thirdly, follow with the Distinctions and the Quaestiones ("Distinctions" in the sense of basic philosophical statement and "Questions" in the sense of exploring and debating by way of reason in regard to spiritual entities. The two terms are derived from the 13th century teacher, Thomas Aquinas, who seemed to have intermingled ancient Aristotelian philosophy with Bible related thoughts. Thomas Aquinas is a revered teacher in Roman Catholicism.) In the same sense the men who were considered to be the best did not dwell on the gospel and did not treat a single passage of Scripture; indeed, Holy Scripture was covered up, unknown, and buried."

Thus Luther could write to people in Erfurt that in his student days he had not heard a true Christian lecture or sermon from anyone. Many priests were incapable of preaching a sermon, with the result that the people were spending their lives in the depth of ignorance. In Wittenburg, of course, there were a number of educated people holding church office. But the pastor of the church at that time, Simon Heins, had his preaching hindered due to illness. Since the city was going to assign him an assistant, pressure began to be put on Luther to accept the position. After all, he had already earned a reputation as a fine preacher because of the sermons he had preached in the monastery chapel. The end result was that, as Mykonius said, "The child Jesus who had been in the barn until now was also brought into the temple."

Luther applied himself to this new assignment with amazing zeal. Whereas prior to this time the poor ignorant people had only heard the priest mumbling the Latin as he presided over the mass accompanied by the choral works in Latin, now Luther was committed to see to it that the people would hear messages that would instruct and edify them. In a letter to his friend Lange, Luther reported that among his labors he had to preach daily in the parish church. In fact, during Lent in 1517 he preached twice a day. It even happened that on one day he preached three times. What's more, his sermons were not mere philosophical treatises or the retelling of the legends of the saints. Instead he preached "the wisdom of the cross so that the people could learn to despair of themselves and hope in Christ." As

he did this he did not follow the example of Zwingli, who as soon as he had become the preacher in Zurich, pushed aside the pericope texts. Luther stayed true to the Sunday and festival gospels and epistles, the same pericope we are still preaching today. In addition he preached a series on the Ten Commandments through the summer, and during Lent of 1517 he preached a series on the Lord's Prayer from the pulpit. In examining all of these themes one notices a regular focus on the daily needs of spiritual life. His presentation on the Commandments focused on the many varieties of conditions and occurrences of human life, but he always returned to the central point that every human must recognize himself as a lost sinner, even that "all saints are sinners". Comfort could be found only in Christ and in his fulfillment of the law. Our hope could only be grounded on God's mercy. As he comments on the First Commandment, our works produce only more and more despair. "Christ," he continued, "lived for us and is our merit, when we believe in him. However, those who believe in him do not henceforth live for themselves, seeking to heap up their own merits, but serve Christ."

Next to such gold, silver, and precious gems of wholesome truth these sermons also contain all sorts of wood, hay, and straw. But as Luther steadily grew in knowledge he dropped one after another of the latter, which becomes apparent when we compare these sermons on the Ten Commandments with another presentation on the same subject presented the following year.

At this time Luther was not only concentrating on preaching in order to educate and instruct people in Christian truth. He also busied himself with other special written lessons for his people. During the spring of 1517 he issued a short and simple explanation of the seven penitential psalms, dedicating the foreword to "all the members of Christ who read this booklet." "Seven Penitential Psalms with German Commentary" is the title of this publication which Luther produced personally. Since the interpretation of each psalm was intimately connected with the text of the psalm, he always presented the text before the commentary. Thus we have

in this work the beginnings of the Lutheran Bible Translation. Note how the 130th Psalm is worded as translated into German:

1. "O I have cried to you from the depth, O God hear my crying.
2. O that your ears would give attention to the crying of my praying.
3. 'If you will pay attention to sin, Oh my God, Oh God who can stand.
4. Then there is forgiveness only with you, therefore you also are to be feared.
5. I have waited for God and my soul has waited and I have built on his Word.
6. My soul is waiting toward God from the morning watch again to the morning watch.
7. Israel, he waits toward God, for the mercy is with God and manifold is redemption with him.
8. And he will redeem Israel from all his sins."

As we compare this translation of the psalm with the one produced by Luther's later efforts in the German Bible, we recognize a certain clumsiness of language in this beginning work. Yet already in this early work we find the same powerful yet simple writing which would later in Luther's translation be advanced to a much better effect. But even in this earlier work we find Christian doctrine streaming from our doctor's pen, interpreting the psalm with the thoughts flowing in a clear and fresh manner. Yet we fail to find any direct attacks by Luther, as he would incorporate in later writings, against errors that had at that time been adopted and were being publicly implemented. Rather, like the Israelites of past ages proceeded with trowel in one hand and a sword in the other, so here Luther seemed to proceed similarly, remaining calm in regard to gross public contradiction. He, who was not aware of subsequent history, would

surely not conclude from this peaceful booklet that there was an anti-Christian pope and an indulgence scandal. Nevertheless, Squire Tetzl was already in Saxony with his trunk, and Luther's dear superior, Staupitz, had already made several journeys to purchase more holy relics so as to gain from them more indulgence blessings for both his electorate's collection and the Wittenberg church foundation.

During Staupitz's journey and also after he returned, we find Luther actively tending to his duties. He was serving as district vicar of Meissen and Thuringia. The 1515 convention in Gotha had appointed him to this position. In addition to seeing to extensive and time-consuming correspondence he personally visited the eleven monasteries which had been entrusted to him. He did so in a paternal way, assisting individual brothers in the order, practicing discipline in all seriousness and love wherever necessary, and coming to the aid of the priors and their underlings with advice, admonition, and comfort. We find him in Grimma, then in Erfurt (where he installed his former prior, Lange, in his former monastery), in Gotha, in Langensalza, in Nordhausen, in Magdeburg, in his birth city of Eisleben, and again in Dresden where he preached in the castle church. During that period he wrote to his friend Lange, "I am monastery preacher, preacher at the table, am required to preach daily in the parish church, am guide for the monastic studies, am vicar (the equivalent of eleven priors), am curator of the Litzkauer fishpond, and am manager of the Herzbergers estate in Torgau. I present lecture readings about Paul in addition to the Psalms. I do all this including my written correspondence which, as I have told you, consumes most of my time. Rarely do I find enough time to observe the horen (the hourly prescribed prayers of the monks). Add to these: I am personally tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Ah, what a man of leisure I am!"

Through it all Luther's influence was growing. This influence extended through his teaching, as more and more students were crowding into his classroom. The same was taking place from the pulpit, where his sermons were being preached to growing numbers. And finally there was his influence as a vicar, in which he was involved in the development of

many valuable and multi-faceted activities beyond the walls of Wittenberg. This was the Luther, whom Carlstadt encountered right after he returned from Rome, and whom he engaged in controversy. This happened as follows.

That Luther issued sharp condemnation of sin from his pulpit, but also contrasted it with his proclamation that forgiveness of sins and salvation depend on faith in Christ, not on one's own works, soon aroused opposition. The fact that as a theologian he had begun to base theology on Holy Scripture and that he sourced his lectures from the books of the Bible, in contrast to the traditionally accepted way of teaching, could be seen as conspicuously new. Indeed, the Roman Church recognized the Bible as the Word of God and Augustine, to whom Luther often referred, was admired as a true believer and teacher of the church. However, the scholastic teachers of the middle ages were also accepted as valid instructors in Roman-Catholic theology and were regarded as standard models. The fact that Luther would set these aside and mark certain of their teachings as false could already be regarded as a deviation from sound and healthy doctrine. It also seemed that suspicions began to be voiced in regard to Luther's lectures.

One example of this type of suspicion came about when Luther's student, Bartholomaeus Bernhardi from Feldkirch, presented theses for a disputation over which he wished Luther to preside. In these theses he denied all spiritual power by the natural man. It was assumed from the beginning that he had prepared these theses under Luther's influence. During the course of this disputation the writing, "Concerning true and False Repentance" was used as reference. Even though this teaching had been ascribed to Augustine, nevertheless, it had been used as the main source for the errors of the middle ages. Luther boldly declared subsequent arguments deduced from this writing as false. With this declaration Luther, as he himself admitted, delivered a massive blow to everyone's thinking. This especially applied to Carlstadt, who was now Luther's firm opponent.

But Carlstadt would soon learn who had the upper hand. It was difficult among the Wittenberg students to find some who still wanted to