

He woke up at 10 o'clock, and when he saw Jonas, Coelius, his servant and house tutor still sitting there alongside the boys, he urged them to go to bed. When they replied that they wanted to still stay awake, he went to his chamber, which was next to them. He no longer complained. But as he stepped over the threshold he said, "God's will be done, I am going to bed." Then he said in Latin, "Into your hands I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, faithful God." Thereupon he lay down on the bed and slept until 1 o'clock.

When he again awoke he was chilled, and he summoned his servant and told him to heat the room. It had been kept warm all the while, and when Jonas stepped up and asked if he again felt weak he replied, "O Lord God, how I am hurting! Oh, I think I will stay here in Eisleben where I was born and baptized." He got up again and went into his chamber by himself. He again spoke the words in Latin at the threshold, "I commit my spirit into your hands. You have redeemed me, faithful God." And after he had gone back and forth several times he again lay down on his bed to rest.

The pressure on his chest relented no longer. Coelius and Aurifaber, the inn keeper and his wife, Count Albrecht and his wife, both physicians of the city, and later also a Count of Schwarzburg and his wife, now joined those who were present. The wife of Count Albrecht had brought along all sorts of strengthening remedies. The patient was being rubbed again with warm towels, but nothing helped. Indeed, he broke out in a sweat and his friends were already expressing their joy, but Luther said, "It is the cold sweat of death. I shall give up my spirit, for the illness is growing."

Then he began to pray, "O my heavenly Father, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God of all comfort, I thank you that you have revealed your dearest Son to me, in whom I believe, whom I have preached and confessed, whom I have loved and praised, whom the nasty pope and all the godless defame, persecute and blaspheme. I beseech you, Lord Jesus Christ, let my little soul be commended to you. O heavenly Father, though I must leave this body and must be torn away from this life, nevertheless, I know for certain that I may be with you forever and no one shall snatch me out of your hands." He further spoke the Bible passage, John 3:16, "God so

loved the world, etc." When Coelius offered him another spoon of medicine, he took it, but immediately after that said, "I am journeying on. I shall give up my spirit." Then three times in rapid succession he spoke the words, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, faithful God."

After this he became silent and did not move when he was being rubbed and his wrists were being washed. But when Jonas and Coelius cried the words loudly into his ear, "Reverend father, will you firmly cling to Christ and the teaching as you preached them," he answered with a clear, "Yes." Then he turned on his left side and slept. But after a quarter of an hour his face turned pale. His nose and his feet turned cold and drawing in a deep, gentle breath, he gave his spirit into the hands of the Father, to whom he had committed the same.

This happened on Thursday, February 18th, between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning.

The news of the doctor's departure spread rapidly. Hundreds of people from both low and high professions came in order to view the body of the great one who had died, who soon after he had fallen asleep was dressed in white linen and bedded in a tin casket. After an artist of the city already that first morning after his death, and the next day Fortenagel, the artist from the city of Halle, had made paintings of that precious corpse, it was ceremoniously brought into the St. Andrew Church. There Jonas preached a burial sermon. The next morning Coelius preached a second sermon. After that the counts and countesses of Mansfeld and their guests, among whom was a Count of Anhalt, the municipal council, the schools and the citizenry, escorted the body to the city gate. Two of the counts' sons brought it to Halle with an escort of fifty riders. Wherever the procession passed by, men, women, and children lined the roads in large numbers. In Halle the body was received by the clergy, the municipal council, the schools and the citizenry, with the ringing of bells with loud wailing and trembling singing voices, and was brought into the church of our Lady ("Liebfrauenkirche"). An image, which was made by pressing wax on his face, was taken there. It is still preserved in the library of that church.

A swift messenger of the elector had brought the sad news to Wittenberg on the 19th, and Melanchthon had declared the news to the students with a public posting. To the mourning widow the elector himself sent a letter of comfort, responding to a petition from Dr. Jonas, in which it was stated, "We have no doubt that by now you have learned that the honorable and highly educated, our dearly devoted Dr. Martin Luther, bless his memory, your house lord, concluded his life last Tuesday morning between 2 and 3 o'clock, in Christian manner and under divine passages of Holy Scripture."



*Picture of Luther in the casket
according to an old picture most likely by Cranach
according to one of the two copies which had been made in
Eisleben*

The body finally arrived on the 22nd at the Elstergate of Wittenberg, not far from the Luther household. It was immediately taken into the castle

church, where it was to find its final resting place according to the command of the elector. An old record states: "Before the body were riding the appointees of the Elector of Saxony and two young counts and lords of Mansfeld, approximately 65 horses. Next to the wagon which was bearing the body was the Mrs. Doctor Katharine Luther along with several matrons and the daughter Margaretha on a small wagon, which was being pulled behind. His three sons, Johannes, Martinus and Paulus Luther; Jakob Luther, a citizen of Mansfeld; his brother Georg; Kyriak Kaufmann; his sister's sons along with citizens of Mansfeld and other friends followed behind." The professors and students of the university, the council and the citizenry of Wittenberg joined in the procession with loud cries and laments.

Bugenhagen preached for the burial service using 1. Thessalonians 4:13-14, and Melanchthon as representative of the university gave the Latin oration.

Then the body was laid down into the grave near the pulpit. There the noble dust of the reformer slumbers under God's grace until the great day of the joyous and blessed resurrection.