

Luther, as Father and Teacher

By: Arnold Koelpin

Dear fellow teachers and, in some cases, fellow parents,

When the assignment to speak on “Luther, as Father and Teacher” came across my desk, the opportunity seemed more than fascinating. Rarely has the picture of Luther in the dual role of parent and professor been treated extensively in English.¹ Yet home and academic robe were daily fare for most of his life. From October 22, 1512, when the Wittenberg faculty formally received the twenty-eight year old Luther as Lecturer on the Bible, through his marriage to Catherine von Bora in June, 1525, at the age of forty-two, until his death twenty one years later, Luther’s daily routine shuttled between duties at home and at school. If we want to learn to know the man as he was we have knocked at the right door.

Those who expect to come away from the visit with a notebook full of abstract parental and educational principles will be sadly disappointed. We would be unfaithful to the Great Reformer’s own mode and manner, were we to regale you with high-sounding theories of education abstracted and distilled from Luther’s experience at home and in the classroom. To get to know Luther’s philosophy of education and homebuilding, we must become acquainted with him personally, as a father and as a teacher. In calling for such a treatment lies the excellence of the topic you assigned. Our approach, therefore, will happily be descriptive rather than prescriptive; hopefully, it will be edifying as well as entertaining.

In its own way it is strange that the English-speaking world has not readily acknowledged Luther’s place in the history of education. Columbia University, a leading teacher-training institution in our land, inscribed in stone a list of modern educators on one of its buildings. We find Melancthon immortalized there. But one looks in vain for Luther’s name.

Despite some prevailing attitudes, tributes to Luther and his efforts in the field of education at home and school are not lacking. Perhaps a bit of German chauvinism moved Dr. Schmidt, in a four volume “History of Pedagogy,” to applaud Luther as “one of the greatest educators and school masters.”² The reasons he gives for such a tribute are echoed almost point by point in Painter’s well-known volume, “Luther on Education.” He records Luther’s impact on home and school by stating:

We realize that the great Reformer accomplished scarce less for education than for religion. Through his influence, which was fundamental, wide-reaching, and beneficent, there began for the one as for the other a new era of advancement. Let us note a few particulars:

1. In his writings..., he laid the foundation of an educational system which begins with the popular school and ends with the university.
2. He exhibited the necessity of schools both for the Church and the State, and emphasized the dignity and worth of the teacher’s vocation.
3. He set up as the noble ideal of education a Christian man, fitted through instruction and discipline to discharge the duties of every relation of life.
4. He impressed on parents, ministers, and civil officers their obligation to educate the young,
5. He brought about a reorganization of schools, introducing graded instruction, an improved course of study, and rational methods.
6. In his appreciation of nature and child-life, he laid the foundation for education science.
7. He made great improvements in method; he sought to adapt instruction to the capacity of children, to make learning pleasant, to awaken mind through skillful questioning, to study things as well as words, and to temper discipline with love.
8. ...he advocated compulsory education on the part of the State.³

Was this splendid evaluation warranted? “To prove this,” we say with Thomas Jefferson, “let facts be submitted to a candid world.” While our presentation does not intend to follow Painter’s one-sided emphasis on education only, we thank him for the perspective. We turn rather to that warm nest, where learning and loving, listening and laboring first begin -the home.

Luther, as Father

For Martin Luther, the home was the foundation of all instruction as it was the primary training ground for Christian character. By the Fourth Commandment God established the place of the home to be the keystone of the social order. Parents should never abdicate their responsibility either to schools, to the church, or to the government. Luther realized, as every teacher knows, that where the home does not co-operate with the school, the efforts are often in vain. He warned parents about neglecting their prime duty to train those in the household. “For if you parents and lords do not help, we shall accomplish nothing with our preaching. ...Every parent is a bishop in his own house.”

So important was the position of father and mother in Luther’s eyes that the breakdown of the home results in tragic consequences for the child, for the parent and for the nation generally. In the long run degeneration sets in. What a child learns at home, he carries through his life. For the child is indeed the father of the man. “Where father and mother rule their families poorly,” Luther observed, “permitting their children to have their own way, there no city, market, village, land, principality, kingdom, or empire are ruled well. For a son becomes a father, judge, mayor, prince, king, emperor, school teacher, etc.” “God gave you children,” he said, echoing St. Paul, “so you would bring them up to the best of their ability.”

When parents neglect to perform their duties, the sins of the fathers do not only come down on the children, but also on the fathers themselves. In a wedding sermon, Luther instructed the couple: “There is nothing which will more surely earn hell for a man than the improper training of his children; and parents can perform no more damaging bit of work than to neglect their offspring, to let them curse, swear, learn indecent words and songs, and permit them to live as they please. Some parents themselves incite their children to such sins by giving them superfluous finery and temporal advancement, so that they may but please the world, rise high, and become wealthy. They are constantly concerned to provide sufficiently for the body rather than for the soul. Therefore, it is highly necessary that every married person regard the soul of his child with greater care and concern than the flesh which has come from him, that he consider the child nothing less than a precious, eternal treasure, entrusted to his protection by God so that the devil, the world, and the flesh do not steal and destroy it. For the child will be required from the parent on Judgment Day in a very strict reckoning.” How similar was this instruction to the pastor’s reply to a certain lady. She would not give her children religious instruction until they had reached an age when they could decide for themselves. He told her, “Madam, if you do not teach them, the devil will.”

From such seriousness we might conclude that Luther was a stern and rigorous father. What a dreary home that must have made! Nothing could be further from the truth. Where God’s Word is rightfully applied there is joy and laughter in the midst of life’s frailties. The Luther home was full of life and love. It became, as is well attested in history, a model for the Christian parsonage.⁴

Luther was fond of children. He admired their simplicity and trustfulness. Even though he wed later in life, his twenty-one years of marriage were blessed with six children. The oldest, John (June 7, 1526), better known as Hans, was named after his grandfather. On the occasion of his birth, Luther opened his heart in a letter to his friend Spalatin. “I am a happy husband, and may God continue to send me happiness, for from the most precious woman, my best of wives, I have received, by the blessing of God, a little son, John Luther, and, by God’s wonderful grace, I have become a father.” He watched the boy grow with a father’s eye and an educational interest. Of the seven-month old Hans, he wrote: “My little Hans sends greetings. He is in his teething month and is beginning to say, ‘Daddy,’ and scolds everybody with pleasant insults.”

But the affectionate father suffered intensely, when Elizabeth (December 10, 1527), born a year after Hans, died as a baby. “My little daughter Elizabeth is dead,” he wrote to a friend. “She has left me strangely

sick at heart. ...I would never have believed that a father's heart could be so tender for his child. Pray to God for me." The sorrow eased with the birth of another daughter, Magdalena, (May 4, 1529). A very beautiful girl with a sweet disposition, she was named after Aunt Lena, who lived in the Luther household. The father seemed to dote on her, his little Lenchen.

Another son was born on November 9, 1531, and named after his father, since their birthdays almost matched. "The youngest children are always the most loved by the parents," Luther commented introspectively. "My little Martin is my dearest treasure. Hans and Lena can now speak and do not need so much care, therefore it is that parents always love the little infants who need their love the most. What a heart-stab it must have been to Abraham when he was commanded to kill his only son. Truly I would dispute with God if he bade me do such a thing."

On January 28, 1533, the Luthers received a third son. At the christening the next day, the proud parent said to the sponsors, "A new Pope has just been born; you will help the poor fellow to his rights I have called him Paul, for St. Paul has given me many good sayings and arguments, wherefore I wish to honor him." The last child, Margaret (December 17, 1534), named after Luther's recently deceased mother, was the only of the three daughters to reach maturity.

Even the unfortunate happenings of fatherhood did not dampen Luther's love. One day when the baby, after the manner of children, dirtied papa's lap, he turned to his guests and good-naturedly explained that the child's performance was no different from the way we treat our heavenly Father. God cares and provides for us, and we repay him with the filth of sin and ingratitude. On another occasion when his child was screaming at the top of his voice because it could not have its way, Luther mused, "What cause have you given me to love you so? How have you deserved to be my heir? By making yourself a general nuisance. And why aren't you thankful instead of filling the house with your howls?"

But Luther recognized that children need discipline because of their sinful nature. In the Christian home, respect for parents and love for parents go hand in hand. He could vividly recall the severe punishment he had received as a youth for stealing a nut. For this reason he emphasized the pedagogical guideline that "the apple ought to lie next to the rod." On one occasion son Hans disturbed Luther's concentration in studying by his singing. For this the boy was reprimanded and stopped out of respect for his father. The memory came back to Luther, as he was working on the second Psalm, "Serve the Lord with fear and trembling." "They go together—joy and fear," he commented. "My little son Hans can do it before me, but I cannot do it before God. If I sit and write and Hans sings a song over there and plays too noisily, I speak to him about it and he sings more quietly with care and respect. So God will always have us joyful, but with fear and honor to him."

Luther was not always so firm and gentle. Once Hans angered his father to such an extent, that, despite Katie's pleas, Luther refused to forgive the boy for three days. On this occasion he made the remark (that your present speaker also heard from his parent), "I would rather have a dead son than a disobedient one." The word came from the heart of a loving parent who knew the meaning of the Scripture: "Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:37 NIV).

But Luther came down hard on any form of child-beating that gave vent to a parent's anger and merely satisfied his feelings. Commenting on Paul's words, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger" (Col. 3:21), he said, "This is spoken against those who use passionate violence in bringing up their children. Such discipline begets in the child's mind, which is yet tender, a state of fear and imbecility, and develops a feeling of hate towards the parents, so that it often runs away from home Yet St. Paul does not mean that we should not punish children, but that we should punish them from love, seeking not to cool our anger, but to make them better."

Luther did realize how exasperating children can be. He once quipped, "Christ said we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. Dear God, this is too much. Have we got to become such idiots?" Yet despite their sinfulness, his children were examples to him and the greatest blessings of God. To his fellow Professor, Jonas, who was rejoicing in God's blessings of fruit by hanging a cherry branch over his table, Luther declared, "Why don't you think of your children? They are front of you all the time, and you will learn from them more than from a cherry bough."

In many ways, father Luther had more trouble training his nephews and nieces than his own children. No fewer than eleven of his orphaned relatives children lived in the Black Cloister from time to time. Can you imagine the noise! Then there was also a number of tutors for the children, like Jerome and Peter Weller (and their dog, about whom the good Doctor noted, "If I were devoted to prayer as Peter's dog is to food, I could get anything from God."). In addition, as was customary among German Professors, Luther also took a certain number of students as boarders, who paid their way sometimes by working in the household. Then came the distinguished visitors and itinerant priests in need of shelter.

The Prince of Anhalt once warned a friend, "The house of Luther is occupied by a motley crowd of boys, students, girls, widows, old women and youngsters. For this reason there is much disturbance in the place and many regret it for the sake of the good man, the honorable father. If but the spirit of Dr. Luther lived in all of these, his house would offer you an agreeable, friendly quarter for a few days, so that your Grace would be able to enjoy the hospitality of that man. But as the situation now stands... in the household of Luther, I would not advise your Grace to stop there." But Luther himself did not mind the activity. "King Solomon fed 24,000 people every day," he joked, "and all the poor relations from his father's house came to stay in the palace, just as happens here in the Black Monastery. That's why the king needed so many wives. They were all of them kept pretty busy."

With this background, we can begin to understand Luther's emphasis on the importance of the home in education. In his famous educational treatise, the Sermon on Keeping Children in School, he spent pages spelling out parental duties to their children. He himself set the example by producing the Catechisms. As the repeated headlines in the Small Catechism indicate, the handbook was not intended first of all for pastors but for parents. The questions and answers were given "in the plain form in which the head of the family shall teach them to his household." Luther sat down with his children daily to review the basics of God's Word in this way. "Though I am a great doctor," he often repeated, "I haven't yet progressed beyond the instruction of children in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. I still learn and pray these every day with my Hans and my little Lena."

That is why he prepared for quick publication early in January 1529, a catechism in the form of charts to be hung on the wall. The first edition was sold out in less than a month. By June of that year a third and "enlarged and revised edition" appeared. The title of this work was "Enchiridion" or "Handbook" and was intended for use in the churches. The book in small form (octavo) contained a handy collection of materials for use in the evangelical congregations. It included twenty illustrations, a preface by Luther, the Five Chief Parts with explanations, Morning and Evening Prayers, the Table of Duties, the Marriage Booklet, the Baptism Booklet, a Short Form for Confession, the German litany with music, and three collects.

In the Catechism's final form, two important additions were affixed: the introduction to the Lord's Prayer and its explanation, and the section On Confession, making clear the nature of confession and giving a form for private confession preceding the administering the Lord's Supper. After Luther's death, the Office of the Keys was added and the Christian Questions for Those Who Wish to Take the Lord's Supper.

What the Catechism demonstrates was Luther's concern and skill for presenting difficult theological material in a simple, direct way. He made special effort to make it a handbook for the home. Much of the success of the Catechism can be explained by his use of down-to-earth expressions and rhythm of language. In talking as people talk, Luther hoped to help the parent to act as "bishop in his own house." In this, Luther himself took the lead.

There was probably no typical day in the Luther household, even as one is hard to find in ours. But were we to reconstruct that representative day, it might have gone something like this. Catherine must have been the first one up; her husband called her the "morning star of Wittenberg." Luther began each day with his own private prayers. There is a splendid account of Luther at prayer mentioned by Veit Dietrich, his companion at the Coburg. "Once I happened to hear him," Dietrich writes. "Good God! how great a spirit, how great a faith, was in his very words! With such a reverence did he ask,...as with a Father and a Friend. 'I know,' he said, 'that You are our Father and our God. I am certain therefore, that You are about to destroy the persecutors of Your

children. If You do not, then our danger is Yours, too...’ I, standing afar off, heard him praying with a clear voice. And my mind burned within me with a singular motion when he spoke in so friendly a manner, so weightily, so reverently, to God.” Luther was accustomed to say his prayers aloud at the open window and to talk with the same ease and openness as he did to Melanchthon.

After prayer, he joined the family for devotion. In the popular booklet to his barber, Peter Beskendorf, entitled “A Simple Way to Pray,” Luther pointed out that the father of a family is instructed by God to lead his family in prayer. If that is neglected, the home becomes a pigsty. In another remark, he explained what he meant. On learning that many people could not repeat the Lord’s Prayer on their deathbed, he stated “If one is... so careless, we do not want to stick the sacrament into the jowls of a sow. If one has lived like a sow and has concerned himself with nothing else, let him die as a sow, not a Christian! The deathbed is no place to begin the learning.” Thus daily devotion was the basis of all education throughout life.

The Doctor then devoted the morning hours to lecturing and preaching. The principal meal of the daytime was served at about ten o’clock. But the family did not stay to converse at length after it, since the hours from eleven o’clock until five in the afternoon were prime study hours, used by Luther for writing, preparing, and reading.

The evening meal was served at five o’clock. Before the meal Luther read a portion of the Bible, which was often discussed during the meal. The time was used for relaxation and good conversation. Table companions even recorded his Table Talk, thanks to which we are able to glean many things from his life. The conversations dealt with a wide range of subjects. Preserved Smith writes, “Compared with his human breadth and refreshing unreserve, how dry... is the table talk of Melanchthon.” And “Luther’s whole nature blossomed out in response to the warm sunshine of domestic life.”⁵ Often hours passed before the diners rose from the table. The meal concluded with the singing of the Latin responses of the church year, and of old religious songs and chorales.

Within this setting Luther would add his own compositions. The family learned and sang the songs by heart. Hymn-singing without the aid of hymnals was so engrained in the German Lutheran church that as late as 1697, a century and a half after Luther, a peasant who took his hymnbook to church and sang from it was forbidden by his pastor to introduce such novelties. Thus by singing, Luther, a man of the people, sought to bring the true faith into the hearts and homes of the people.

Church festivals especially inspired Luther to write something for the family. He liked to celebrate Christmas with the freshness and spontaneity of a child. The carol “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” was undoubtedly composed for the family setting. It is the most childlike of Luther’s hymns. Published in 1535, it may well have been written for the previous Christmas when Hans was eight and Lenchen five.

This carol was designed to be enacted as a pageant for children. Before the altar stands a cradle with the Infant. Mary and Joseph are kneeling on either side. An adult, perhaps Luther himself with his fine tenor voice, takes the part of the angel and announces: “From heav’n above to earth I come to bear good news to every home.” The shepherds and the children meanwhile have been waiting not far from the cradle. “These are the tokens ye shall mark” is their cue. They take up the song, “Now let us all with gladsome cheer go with the shepherds and draw near.” Singing, they approach the cradle, and then singly or in unison they take up those stanzas that marvel at the Christ-child and invite him into their hearts. Then all together, angels, shepherds, children, and adults join in the closing doxology, “Glory to God in highest heaven!” What childlike faith!

Once a year a catechism examination was held in the Luther household. The younger members had to recite portions of the Catechism and from the Gospels. Together they would sing psalms. In Luther’s later years when sickness forced him to steer away from public preaching in the town, he prepared sermonettes or “*Hauspredigten*” for the home. “If I cannot preach in a church,” he said, “I preach in my home, because of the office I hold and for my conscience, simply because as a family father it is my duty to preach to my family.” These family sermons were recorded by some of the listeners and are real gems of Bible preaching.

But now to complete the day in the home. The hours between the close of supper and bedtime were spent in playing with the children, or in singing, or in a game of chess. Luther loved to play the lute and to sing with

the family. To a composer he wrote, "We sing your song as well as we can at table and afterwards. If we make a few mistakes it is not your fault.... You composers mustn't mind if we do make howlers of your songs." The whole family also enjoyed ninepins (which Luther is said to have invented), various card games, as well as chess. He once warned his friend, Prince Joachim, to watch out for the chess-playing of a certain Franz Burkhardt: "He can manage the knights, take a castle or two, and fool the peasant pawns, but the queen beats him on account of his weakness for the fair sex, which he cannot deny."

Having been up since five or six o'clock in the morning, Luther made it to bed usually around nine o'clock. He would close the day by offering private prayers, again at the open window if that was possible. The father's day was done; he committed all into the hands of his heavenly Father. Thus Luther lived with the deep-seated awareness of his responsibility as a Christian father who must oversee his children in good days as well as cheerless.

No illustration of Luther's life bears out his ability to enter the feelings of a little child better than his charming letter to his four-year old son Hans. He was lodged in Coburg Castle at the time. The year was 1530, when the fate of the Augsburg Confession lay in the balance. He had just received news of his father's death, and himself was suffering from considerable pain. Yet he wrote tenderly to his son, back in Wittenberg:

"To my dearly beloved son, Hans Luther, now at Wittenberg:

Grace and peace in Christ! My dearest son I am glad to hear that you are doing well at your lessons and praying diligently. Continue so doing, my son, and make all the progress you can. When I return home I shall bring you a fine model of a fair.

I know of a most delightful garden where many children play. They wear little coats of gold and pick delicious apples from the trees, pears and cherries, golden and purple plums, while they sing and romp around happily. They also have handsome little ponies with golden reins and silver saddles. I asked the man who owns the garden whose children they were. He answered, 'They are the children who pray gladly, do their lessons, and are good.' Then said I, 'Dear friend, I also have a son called Hanschen Luther. May he not also come into the garden, and eat such lovely apples and pears, and ride such fine ponies, and play with these children?' The man answered, 'If he gladly prays, does his lessons, and is good, he, too, may come into the garden, Lippus and Jost as well. When they come along, they too shall have pipes and drums, lutes and all kinds of musical instruments. They too may dance, and shoot with the little crossbows.'

Then he showed me a smooth lawn in the garden prepared for dancing, where golden pipes, drums and fine silver crossbows were hanging from the trees. But it was still early, and the children had not yet had their meal. I could not wait for the dance to begin and said to the man, 'Dear friend, I will go at once and write to my beloved son Hans about this, so that he will pray diligently, learn his lessons well and be a good boy, and come into this garden. But he has an Aunt Lena. He will have to bring her along, too.' The man replied, 'Yes, of course. Go and write to him about these things.'

Therefore, my dear little son Hans, study and pray cheerfully, and tell Lippus and Jost to study and pray, too. Then you can all come along to the garden. Herewith, I commend you to the love of God. Greetings to Aunt Lena and give her a kiss from me.

Your dear father, Martin Luther.
The Coburg, 19 June 1530 (W.Br.S. Nr.1595)"

Here was a man who wore his heart on his sleeve, whose faith was so deep and transparent that all around him knew of it. No wonder this father felt such great sorrow when his fourteen-year old daughter Magdalena, who had captured her father's heart, died. "I love her very much," he confessed. And as she lay on her death-bed, he asked, "Magdalena, my dear little daughter, would you like to stay here with your father, or would you willingly go to your Father yonder?" "Darling father," she replied, "as God wills." Then he

reproached himself for not wanting to let her go. "I love her very much," he repeated. "If my flesh is so strong, what can my spirit do? God has given no bishop so great a gift in a thousand years as he has given me in her. I am angry with myself that I cannot rejoice in heart and be thankful as I ought." He then fell down on his knees and wept bitterly and prayed that God might free her. She fell asleep in her father's arms. As they laid her in the coffin, Luther said: "Darling Lena, you will rise and shine like a star, yea, like the sun I am happy in spirit, but the flesh is sorrowful and will not be content, the parting grieves me beyond measure.... I have sent a saint to heaven." So beat the heart of a Christian father who was greatly concerned to provide a home for his family where Christ and the Word of God held foremost place.

Luther, as Teacher

The broad home experience helped Luther as a teacher in the classroom. While lecturing on Ecclesiastes, he could declare, "A woman handles a child much better with one finger than a man does with both fists." Even before his marriage, the young professor, filled with the Gospel insights, began to develop new methods and ways that helped him become an outstanding teacher.

In the full sense of the word, Luther was a teacher of the church at large. Many of his efforts in writing, preaching, and lecturing were directed to a wider audience than the university students. Yet, in point of fact, Luther's position was that of Lecturer on the Bible at Wittenberg University. If we were to divide this professorship into the two Biblical disciplines as we do today, we would have to call him a Professor of Old Testament Exegesis rather than of the New Testament. Out of a thirty-two year career as lecturer, he spent only three or four years treating the New Testament. The remaining time was devoted to Old Testament books. His sermon work was in just the opposite proportion.

According to the University statutes, Luther's teaching load was set at an hour lecture, four days per week, with Wednesday as the free day. Within this schedule the professor exercised much freedom. He chose the subject matter to be treated during each course. In most cases he broke fresh ground each term and did not repeat the same course year after year. No attempt was made to cover a major portion of the Bible for every student who graduated. It was not uncommon, therefore, for Luther to break off his lecture series very abruptly, as he did in Genesis. By mid-December he had reached chapter 37. Suddenly one day he announced to the class, "Now that the nativity of our Lord is approaching, which should be celebrated with joy in the church,...if my health permits I shall suspend my lectures on Joseph and we shall speak during these days of the incarnation of the Son of God." He took the students into Isaiah 9 for a month and then returned to pick up the train of thought in Genesis again. He did the same thing at Easter time. "I have decided to treat Isaiah 53 at this time because it has been specially appointed and so that we may meditate on the passion and resurrection of Christ and may give thanks for His unspeakable gift."

The lectures themselves were an experience. Spalatin reported how popular Luther's classes were. In 1520 he reported around four hundred students from all over Europe attending them. Students were attracted by Luther's great earnestness and by his certainty in delivering the Bible message. Thomas Blaurer from Constance attested: "I consider myself fortunate, that under God's guidance I have come to a place where, it seems to me, one can learn the Christian religion right; and where the only man is living who really understands the Bible, which fact I can daily witness here." Luther's colleague, Melancthon, was even more lavish in his praise: "One is an interpreter; one, a logician; another, an orator, affluent and beautiful in speech; but Luther is all in all—whatever he writes, whatever he utters, pierces to the soul, fixes itself like arrows in the heart—he is a miracle among men."

Granted the ability of Luther, we should not imagine that his work came without effort. Luther prepared well for his lectures. We have already noted his work and study habits at home. He was a bear for work. Already early in his career, he mentioned to a friend. "I need a couple of...secretaries, as I do almost nothing the livelong day but write letters...I an convent preacher, a reader at meals, am asked to deliver a sermon daily at the parish church, am district vicar, ...business manager of our fish farm..., lecturer on St. Paul, assistant lecturer on the Psalter... You see how idle I am!"

The results of faithful work showed in the lecture. Luther's presentations were fresh and crisp, no mere regurgitation of dry facts or the views of others. He spoke clearly, concisely, and directly. Melancthon confessed that "he was of such high and keen understanding that he alone could, in confused, obscure, and difficult disputes, see quickly what was to be advised and done." Yet the Doctor did not overawe his listeners. He allowed for divergent opinions on the part of students and others when the issues were not clear. "This is obscure," he said with reference to a passage in Zechariah. "It has been expounded by others in many different ways, and as a result it has become even more obscure. I allow everyone to have his honor and thank him for his efforts. I shall also present what I understand the meaning to be until somebody else does it better."

When Luther entered the lecture hall, he carried with him the text on the Biblical book on which he was speaking together with notes and outlines written on scraps of paper or on the book margin. Some of these notes are still extant. They reveal how he used the Hebrew and Greek texts and noted the key words on the margin. The notes served as memory pegs from which the professor extemporized, elaborated, and applied. He became so personally involved that Melancthon noted, "His words seemed not merely to pass from his lips but to flow from his heart."

In the sixteenth century world of academe, Luther delivered his lectures in Latin. He spoke rapidly and fluently. In a moment of self-criticism he mentioned, "These lectures were delivered in an extemporaneous and popular form, spoken rapidly just as the expressions came to my lips, mixed with German, and surely more verbose than I should wish." When contemporary comparisons or personal feelings came to mind, he used them on the spot. Mount Hermon was like the Thuringian Forest. On one occasion he flatly claimed that if he had been in Noah's place before the flood, he would have thrown up his hands in despair. At another time he insisted that he would not have been so easily deprived of the promised Rachel. At times his presentation grew exceedingly colorful, especially in the retelling of a Bible story. On the destruction of Sodom, he said, "The Sodomites drank, danced, rejoiced. They would not have wished Lot a penny—just like our burghers, peasants and noblemen today. Lot said: 'God will submerge you in fire.' Then they laughed at him and replied: 'You dear old simpleton!' What happened? Early in the morning, as the sun rose above the horizon, the heavens turned black; a great tempest arose. Splash! Dash! -- they were in hell."

Such teeming levity did not detract from Luther's presentation. It rather enhanced the students' respect for him. They got to know him both in and out of the classroom as being genuine, natural, and of great insight and humor. His speech betrayed the workings of his mind. His talks and conversations were full of contrasts, analogies, and illustrations. So "original sin in a man is like a beard, which, though shaved off today so that a man is very smooth around his mouth, yet grows by tomorrow morning." Concerning one's sins and the devil's temptations he maintained that we cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from making a nest in our hair. "The attention of the common man is aroused by illustrations and examples more readily than by profound disputations," he explained. And then continued, "He prefers a painted picture to a well written book."

Many of Luther's illustrations were drawn from his love of nature. Birds were favorites of his. Noting how they fly away when we approach them, he was led to comment, "These birds lack faith. They do not know how glad I am to have them here nor that I would let no harm be done them. Thus do we act toward God, who loves us and who has given His Son for us." These same birds were nonetheless objects of God's abundant care. "No one is able to calculate the wealth God spends feeding the birds," he said, even the useless ones. "I fancy it costs God more than the revenue of the King of France for one year to feed the sparrows. And what about other birds, larger and more rapacious?" His love for birds even made him their spokesman. Once he wrote to his caretaker, who was a bird-trapper, a complaint of the birds: "We, thrushes, blackbirds, finches, linnets, goldfinches, and all other pious, honorable birds, who migrate this autumn over Wittenberg, give your kindness to know, that we are credibly informed that one Wolfgang Sieberger, your servant, has conceived a great wicked plot against us, and has bought some old, rotten nets very dear, to make a fowling-net out of anger and hatred to us." The letter concludes, "Written in our lofty home in the trees with our usual quill and seal."

Melanchthon was often upset by Luther's buffoonery. When Martin was married to Katie, Melanchthon wrote to a friend, "I have hopes that married life may sober him down, so that he will disregard the low clownishness, which we have often censured." Alas, it was not so! Luther would continue to call the would-be reformer Caspar Schwenckfeld by the name Stenkfeld (stinky-field) instead. Even in a serious moment, like St. Paul, he was not above punning. When he had to quit working because of a ringing in his ears, he wrote to Melanchthon, "My head is now a mere heading, soon it will be a paragraph and then a bare sentence."

Although Luther's professorial style was alive, such animation only served to enhance the serious intent of the subject matter with which he was dealing. Reading the commentaries on Genesis, for example, we are impressed by his thorough treatment and personal concern. Using the story of Lot again as reference, we see how Luther treats Lot's plea to the 'men' who rescued him from Sodom in Genesis 19. He uses the occasion to offer a lovely discourse on prayer, the requirements of a good prayer, and the parts of such a prayer. Since immorality and homosexuality has become a much discussed topic today, an extended sampling of Luther's lecture style from the Sodom story gives us the flavor of his classroom.

Moses proceeds with a description of a terrible sin. I for my part do not enjoy dealing with this passage, because so far the ears of the Germans are innocent of and uncontaminated by this monstrous depravity; for even though this disgrace, like other sins, has crept in through an ungodly soldier and a lewd merchant, still the rest of the people are unaware of what is being done in secret. The Carthusian monks deserve to be hated because they were the first to bring this terrible pollution into Germany from the monasteries of Italy. Of course, they were trained and educated in such a praiseworthy manner at Rome. But this passage contains a necessary and profitable doctrine. We see that when sins become the fashion and human beings smugly indulge in them, the punishment of God follows immediately. Therefore, let us learn to fear God and to arm ourselves against the flesh and the devil, in order that we may not fall into similar disgraceful sins which God cannot allow to go unpunished. Moses describes the wretchedness and misfortune of the human race in strong enough terms. After the angels had eaten, he says, they undoubtedly talked about various things at table—about the fear of God, about righteousness and about the corruption of morals and the collapse of discipline; for perhaps saintly Lot complained about these matters. Peter does not state without cause (2 Peter 2:8) that the soul of righteous Lot was tortured day and night because he was compelled both to see and to hear shameful things. Therefore, Lot's mouth spoke out of the abundance of his heart (Matt. 12:35), and he could not control his grief when such saintly guests had arrived at such an opportune time. After they had finished the meal and the time called for sleep, what happens? The men of the city, the men of Sodom (this repetition serves to aggravate the sin), are in such a frenzy that they not only showed no courtesy toward the guests but did not allow the tired men to rest even for an hour in someone else's house. They vent their rage upon the weary men before these men go to bed and they begrudge them their sleep. Is not this extraordinary rudeness and cruelty? But it is more serious and altogether unheard of for them to demand the men for their sensual desire. It is the men of the city who do this, not the unimportant people of the populace—hirelings, slaves, and sojourners—but the foremost citizens, whose obligation it was to protect others and to punish similar crimes in the case of others. Accordingly, this, too, serves to make you realize that there were not ten righteous men in the city. These were the foremost citizens. They had wives. They had children and domestics, and they should have ruled these and accustomed them to discipline and modesty. But what are they themselves perpetrating? What are they attempting to do? And that in public and against innocent guests."

Not only did the students enjoy the insights of such lecturing, but the Professor displayed great respect for his students. Perhaps in Luther's mind was the treatment he received from his teacher, Trebonius. The old man always took his hat off to his students upon entering the classroom, because, he said, he never knew whether one would be a future doctor or mayor. Luther, too, took personal interest in those he taught. He understood

their struggles and did not make them feel inferior. "Some teachers berate the proud youngsters to make them feel what they are," he remarked, "but I always praise the arguments of the boys, no matter how crude they are, for Melancthon's strict manner of overturning the poor fellows so quickly displeases me. Everyone must rise by degrees, for no one can attain to excellence suddenly."

Such a sympathetic approach to the student who makes mistakes moved him to instruct fellow students to treat one another the same way. For students can be overly sharp in their criticism of each other. In 1537 he tried to create a good atmosphere for a student presentation by saying, "We shall dispute without the least trace of pride or arrogance, attacking and finding fault with nobody, overwhelming nobody with jibes, as some do it another cannot fashion arguments as quickly as they can For we are not unaware of the old proverb, 'One learns by making mistakes,' ... It often happens that those who watch others in these exercises want to be seen or want to appear to be better, but when they are engaged with us in the same exercise and debate, they see that they, too, are lacking in persuasive proofs. Therefore, I wish in conclusion to remind you who are about to dispute that you rise confidently, spiritedly, and cheerfully and speak your piece before us, your teachers, for the sake of God and for the profit of the church, the state, and yourselves."

What a contrast to Melancthon, who would intimidate an ill-prepared student, calling him "a fool, an ass, a yellow-bill, a stupid dolt who has no sense." After all, Luther said with patient understanding, "nobody becomes a doctor all at once. There is no tree that was not at first a little shrub. It takes time." "If somebody advanced a weak, poor, or inept argument, Dr. Luther did not at once reject it, as Philip did, but he took over the argument and often gave it a better turn and shape than had been thought of by the opponent and then asked if this had not been the opponent's real meaning. When the opponent said, 'Yes,' Dr. Luther put the argument into syllogistic form so that everybody marvelled at it and had much to learn from it."

But not every teacher can be liked by everyone. The good Doctor was no exception. One student, after hearing Luther preach for the first time, reportedly said that if Luther preached that way again, he would take a stone and hit him on the head with it in the church. The Reformer recognized there were those who opposed him. "I maintain that there are many wicked knaves and spies here who listen to us and rejoice when scandal and disunity arise" was his observation. A lampoon of the Professor by an English student pictured him as a preacher who related old wives' tales in sermons and a man of little learning.

But students are students, and Luther was aware of their weaknesses. He saw through lame excuses to get off classes. One time when an epidemic was around, he wrote to the Elector and explained with transparent humor, "I have observed that many of the young students have rejoiced over rumors of pestilence, for some of them have developed sores from carrying their schoolbags, some have acquired colic from their books, some have developed scabs on the fingers with which they write, some have picked up goutiness from their papers, and many have found their ink to be getting moldy."

One might imagine that Luther's kindness made him a soft touch for the clever student. But he was too perceptive for that. When Hans von Auerswald, whose parents were footing the bill for his education, was not applying himself to his studies, Luther took him aside. "I shall not hear of this," he told him, "nor shall I suffer such an example of disobedience in my house and at my table, even if you possessed the wealth of a count. Pay heed to what I say, for I shall not stand for such conduct from you or from anybody else. "

When the Reformer heard that some students were consorting with prostitutes in the woods outside of town, he posted a warning: "As an old and faithful preacher I ask you in fatherly fashion, dear children, that you believe assuredly that the evil spirit sent these whores here and that they are dreadful, shabby, stinking, loathsome, and syphilitic, as daily experience unfortunately demonstrates. Let every good student warn his fellows. Such a syphilitic whore can give her disease to ten, twenty, thirty, and more good people, and so she is to be accounted a murderer, as worse than a poisoner... I must speak plainly.... You foolish young gentlemen think that you must not suffer, that as soon as you feel ardent a whore must be found to satisfy you The judgment of God stands: 'Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed.'"

Such parental concern on his part was coupled with positive guidance for the student's academic career and interest in the student's welfare. Luther recommended that students read a few books well rather than many

cursorily. “A student who does not wish to squander his efforts ought so to read and re-read some good author that the author enters into his flesh and blood. Reading many books will confuse rather than instruct” was his observation. When a promising student became needy, Luther helped to secure financial aid. He believed that often the poorest young men made the best students, because “aristocratic fellows who carry heavy purses and provisions do not study.”

All this attention helped the Professor gain a good rapport with his students. Toward the end of his life, when Professor Luther entered his classroom, the students rose from their seats. Melancthon had suggested the practice, but Luther modestly wished he had not. “On account of this rising of the students, I have to pray more often,” he confessed, “and if I dared, I would sometimes leave without lecturing. He who seeks honor will not attain it, or if he does, it brings great danger with it.”

For all his labors, as teacher, Luther took little special compensation. The Elector provided his home, the Black Cloister, which was deeded to him in 1532. His professor’s salary was adequate for such a large household. He might have realized large profits from his writings. But he took not a penny royalty from them. The printers collected instead. Nor did he accept the usual ‘honorarium’ or stipend that students were to pay their teachers. The Elector offered Luther a share in a rich silver mine, but he declined the offer. When the city magistrates offered him tax exemption, he insisted on paying taxes like anyone else. He could have earned a mint on the translation of the Bible which did secure him world fame. “I have not taken a single heller for it,” he made known, “or sought one, or made one by it -that God, my Lord, knows—but I have done it as a service to the dear Christians and to the honor of One who sitteth above, who blesses me so much every hour of my life that if I had translated a thousand times as much or as diligently, I still should not deserve to live a single hour.”

For many years Luther served as assistant pastor at the City Church in Wittenberg. He declined remuneration for the many hours of extra work, saying, that since his salary was sufficient, he “did not want to preach for money.” To his friend Link, he confided the reasons: “Money and goods I do not have and do not desire. If I formerly possessed a good name and honor, these possessions are now being very energetically ruined. Just one thing remains, my weak body, rendered dead tired by constant adversity. If they take that, according to God’s will, by cunning or force, they will perhaps deprive me of an hour or two of my life. But I am satisfied with the possession of my sweet Redeemer and Propitiator, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall joyfully sing as long as I live.” The Professor fulfilled that vow. He remained a dedicated teacher of the Gospel, not for personal gain or fame, but because he rejoiced in the tremendous work that another man, the Son of Man, had done for the world at the cost of his own life.

3. The dual role: Luther, as Educator

Wittenberg students did not only carry evangelical doctrine from the lecture halls of the University. They also spread Luther’s philosophy of education. At the opening of the sixteenth century, learning had fallen into contempt. The old scholastic ways were ridiculed by the Humanists as ossified. To open a new path, Luther issued his Education Manifesto in 1524 in a *Letter to the Aldermen and Cities of Germany on the Erection and Maintenance of Christian Schools*. “We learn,” said the author, “that throughout all Germany the schools are declining, the universities becoming weak, and the cloisters are ruined.... Now I beg all of my dear friends not to think of this matter so contemptuously as many do who do not see what the prince of this world intends. It is an earnest and great matter, deeply concerning Christ and all the world, that we should help and counsel the young people.”

It is interesting to note how Luther approached the problem of educational reform. He did not formulate systematically laws to govern learning or teaching. Nor did he write books on education or educational psychology in the technical sense. Nor did he wish to perpetuate an institution. His approach was more practical than theoretical. To him the core of all learning “is to know Christ and know Him well.” He himself had come to know Christ as the one who frees us from all bondage so that we might truly love God and serve one another. His whole educational philosophy reflected this attitude. Already in the *Address to the Christian Nobility* he had counseled, “Everyone not unceasingly busy with the Word of God must become corrupt.” Whatever educational

directives we meet in Luther's writings, therefore, come from the depth of his Christian faith and out of his understanding of the needs of the people in their daily life.

The summary goal of education, as Luther saw it, was simply 'love,' even as Christ had said love was the fulfilling of the Law. A liberal education in itself will not truly free us, because it does not bring us the basic fear and love of God. "True it is," Luther once observed, "that human wisdom and the liberal arts are noble gifts of God... But we never can learn from them in detail what sin and righteousness are in the sight of God, how we can get rid of our sins, become pious and just before God, and come to life from death." For this reason "the foremost and most general subject of study... should be the Holy Scriptures."

Implicit in learning the fear and love of God is service to one's fellow man, for "where the heart is right with God and this (the first) commandment is kept, fulfillment of all the others will follow of its own accord." On this account, Luther gave the advice to parents, "See to it that you above all have your children instructed in spiritual things, that you first give them to God; then to secular pursuits."

Luther had learned from his study of Scripture that the key to education is faith or trust. In writing on the Apostles' Creed, he spoke of two ways of believing: "The first (is) about God, that is when I believe what is said concerning God is true. A faith of this kind is more knowledge or information than faith. The second way of believing is this, that I not only believe what is said about God to be true, but I put my trust in him, and dare to go ahead and deal with him. Such faith which ventures everything on what it has heard of God, be it in life or death, constitutes the Christian man, and it receives everything it desires from God. Such a faith cannot tolerate a false and wicked heart; it is a living faith, such as the First Commandment enjoins." This living faith shows itself in the actions of daily life. For, Luther observed, "a Christian lives in this temporal world, builds, buys and sells, deals with people, and does everything necessary for this world."

Hand in hand with the foregoing aims of education was the development of character and conscience. Luther was well aware of youth's penchant to ignore law and to be disobedient to those in authority. What was needed to counteract was a training "by studying, reading, meditating, and praying to be able in temptation to teach and comfort your own conscience as well as the conscience of others and to lead from the law back to grace, from active justice to passive justice." In so doing, the Christian will learn to thumb his nose at the law for the sake of Christ. "Say thou," Luther said, "O Law, thou wouldst climb up into the kingdom of my conscience, and there reign and reprove it of sin, and wouldst take from me the joy of my heart, which I have by faith in Christ, and drive me to desperation, that I might be without all hope, and utterly perish.... Trouble me not in these matters, for I will not suffer thee, so intolerable a tyrant and cruel tormentor, to reign in my conscience, for it is the seat and temple of Christ the Son of God, who is the king of righteousness and peace, and my most sweet savior and mediator: he shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel."

The great challenge of educational reform brought with it a change in methodology. Formerly, instruction in vogue in elementary and secondary schools was stiff, formal, and unpedagogical. Teachers read from the text, lectured and dictated, and pupils learned by rote.

At the university level, the laborious method of glossing the text prevailed. According to this method, the teacher gave a brief explanation of the text, the so-called 'glossae' or marginal notes. These the students were supposed to copy at once in a notebook especially prepared for that purpose. After this bit-by-bit study, the instructor dictated his comments on a longer section of material that had been glossed. These 'scholia' or summary interpretations were sometimes long, sometimes short. They highlighted passages that seemed important to the teacher. The commentary usually presented the text in a fourfold meaning: the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical (that is, the text was interpreted literally, figuratively, morally, and mystically). Needless to say, this chopping-up method often left the students confused and bewildered.

As the meaning of the Gospel became clear to Luther, his presentation also changed. Available student copies show drastic changes in methodology. The 'glossae' and 'scholia' were discarded. The four senses of Scripture were displaced by the literal and spiritual. The grammatical-historical method became the accepted practice in his class. As a result, the presentation hung together, flowed, and was clearer. The 'new' Scripture

insights, especially with regard to justification by faith, can be easily singled out. Luther interacted often with those who interpreted the sense of Scripture in many ways.

Luther transferred his insights on methodology to the elementary level of teaching. His practical mind led him to get away from mechanical and uninteresting methods. "Good method in teaching," he remarked, "Should note differences in character of students." The teacher must also become childlike to children. On one occasion he taught the meaning of faith and love by using two little bags with pockets. "Let no one think himself too wise, and disdain such child's play," he explained. "When Christ wished to teach men, He became a man. If we wish to teach children, we must become children. Would to God we had more of this child's play. We should then see in a short time a great treasure of Christian people, souls rich in the Scriptures and in the knowledge of God."

Such pleasurable teaching applied to all subjects. "Since young people must run and jump or have something to do which they enjoy ... why shouldn't that type of school be provided and such arts and skills be provided them? This is especially so since it is ordered by God's grace that children can learn with joy and play, whether it be language, other skills, or even history."

In awakening the student's interest on the meaning of a subject, Luther understood the value of the question. The questions and answers of the Catechism were to serve such a purpose. To teach in this way, those who give the instruction should take care to keep the questions simple and to repeat both questions and answers in the same terms. "For young and inexperienced people cannot be successfully instructed unless we adhere to the same text of same forms of expression," Luther wrote. "They easily become confused when the teacher at one time employs a certain form of words and expressions, and at another, apparently with a view to make improvements, adopts a different form. The result of such a course will be that all the time and labor which we have expended will be lost." In adhering to this advice has come the success of Luther's Small Catechism, as the "layman's Bible" in the Lutheran Church.

Change in methodology also signaled a change in the whole educational program. "If I had children and could accomplish it," he said before his marriage, "they should study not only the languages and history, but singing, instrumental music, and all the branches of mathematics." The most comprehensive statement of Luther's views on curricula is found in the *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors*. Drawn up by Melancthon and endorsed by Luther, this work divides the schools into three classes. (See Luther's Works, Vol. 40, pages 314-320 for details)

The beginners' division were to learn to read and to write and to sing music. They were expected to read a primer containing the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and prayers for various occasions. Two popular medieval textbooks were selected for this level, a grammar by Donatus (*Ars Grammatica*) and a work by Cato.

The second ability division consisted of those who could read and were ready for a more in-depth study of language. In addition to the music hour in the morning, they were to advance their Latin study by using Aesop's fables; two modern texts from Mosselanus (a grammar) and Erasmus (a collection of dialogues); and two classical authors, Terence, the play-wright, and Plautus, author and translator of stories. Religious instruction included Bible study, Catechism recitation, and learning passages from the Psalms.

In the third ability division, only the brightest who had learned their grammar well were included. They were taught music, Virgil, Ovid, and Cicero; composition; dialectic and rhetoric. By this time, they were expected to speak Latin as well as they could.

At another time, Luther suggested a work-study program for those who would learn a trade. "My idea is to let boys attend...school for one or two hours a day and devote the rest of the time to working at home, learning a trade or doing whatever their parents desired, so that study and work might go hand in hand while they are young and able to do both." To this he added that "a girl can surely find time enough to go to school one hour a day and still attend to all her duties at home; she sleeps, dances and plays away more time than that." Here we will have to remember that Luther was among the first to advocate schools for girls.

Surveying Luther's curricula suggestions, we find he advocated a broad curriculum of studies for all schools, from primary through university. The humanistic approach to learning was incorporated into schools

founded in the emerging Lutheran church. Probably the best examples were the Wittenberg Latin School founded in 1533, as well as the Wittenberg Girls' School started the same year. From 1533-1536 the University of Wittenberg itself received a new set of statutes to make it the first University to carry through a curricular reform along Luther's lines.

In all training, the study of language arts was basic. "The science of grammar" was necessary, according to Luther, because it "teaches and shows what words are called and what they mean." "But when a knowledge of the subject is lacking, then a knowledge of words is useless." So grammatical study is best conducted in the context of the subject matter. At the same time there should be a continued study of logic and rhetoric. By learning them, "people are wonderfully fitted for the grasping of sacred truths." When both are taken captive by the spirit of the Gospel, they are helpful. "Logic teaches," he observed, "and rhetoric moves and persuades. The former appeals to the understanding, the latter to the will." As an example, "Dialectic (logic) says 'Give me something to eat.' Rhetoric says, 'I have had a hard road to go all day long, am tired, sick, hungry, etc., and have eaten nothing; dear fellow, give me a good piece of meat, a good fried chicken, and a good measure of beer to drink.'" Yet, all in all, simple language is best. "One should accustom himself to good, honest, intelligible words."

The good Doctor was great in his praise of history. To him "historians are the most useful people and most excellent teachers, whom we can never sufficiently honor, praise, and thank." It requires "a superior man to write history," he felt, "a man with a lion-heart, who dares without fear to speak the truth." The reason for such high praise for true historians was that "history describes nothing else than the ways of God, that is, grace and anger, which we should believe as if they stood in Scripture." The study of history, therefore, was not only to be a source of illustration for life, but above all a picture of God's wonderful dealings with men and a leading source of human knowledge. "When one thoroughly considers the matter, it is from history, as from a living fountain, that have flowed all laws, sciences, counsel, warning, threatenings, comfort, strength, instruction, foresight, knowledge, wisdom, and all virtues; that is to say, history is nothing else than an indication, recollection, and monument of divine works and judgments, showing how God maintains, governs, hinders, advances, punishes, and honors men, according as each one has deserved good and evil. And although there are many who do not recognize and regard God, yet they must take warning from history." In short, history is a slice of life. In it God acts, often contrary to all reason. So all should learn from it.

The place of music in the curriculum was retained and expanded. To the musician, Lewis Senfl, in Munich, he wrote, "I really believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology, there is no art equal to music, for it is the only one, except theology, which can give a quiet and happy mind... This is the reason why the prophets practiced no other art, neither geometry nor arithmetic nor astronomy, as if they believed music and divinity nearly allied." Not surprisingly Luther urged using cantors in all Lutheran schools and encouraged princes and city councils to secure outstanding organists for their churches. His own efforts in hymnody are well known. "It is right that we retain music in the schools," Luther commented. "The young are to be continually exercised in this art; it makes good and skillful people of them."

Most unusual for his day and age was Luther's praise of science. He always stood in awe of God's wonders in nature and observed them closely. "Pious people," he said, "look upon birds and flowers filled with wonder and learn from both to say 'If God does such fine things for his creatures, will he not clothe and feed me?'" After a fishing expedition with Katie, Luther rejoiced in the catch and said, "Many a skinflint sits the midst of the greatest luxuries and yet can't enjoy them with pleasure. It's said that the ungodly won't see the glory of God; in fact, they can't even recognize present gifts because God overwhelms us so much with them See how well a little fish multiplies, for one produces probably a thousand Consider the birds, how chastely their reproduction takes place! The rooster pecks the hen's head, the hen lays a little egg nicely in the nest, sits on it, and soon the young chick peeps out. Look how the little chick is hidden in the egg! If we had never seen such an egg and one were brought from Shangri-la, we'd be startled and amazed. And all the philosophers couldn't offer an explanation for these creatures. Only Moses gives an explanation: 'God said, and it was so.'" With such simple faith, he rejoiced in the study of nature. "We are at the dawn of a new era," he stated, "for we

are beginning to recover the knowledge of the external world that we lost through the fall of Adam. We now observe creatures properly, and not as formerly under the Papacy.”

To foster scholarship, Luther advocated the growth of libraries. “No effort or expense should be spared to found good libraries,” he advised in a letter *To the Councilmen*, “especially in the larger cities, which can well afford it.” The carefully selected acquisitions to these libraries should include Biblical books and commentaries written in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German and other languages; books from heathen and Christian authors; works on the arts and sciences, medicine and law, and chronicles and histories of all kinds.

But Luther also saw the need for body care and recreation, for student and teacher alike. After the trying meeting at Augsburg where the Lutheran Confession was presented, Melancthon was so engrossed in thought that he was writing during the meal. Luther walked over to him and took his pen away from him, saying, “God can be honored not alone by work but also by rest and recreation.” He did not forget the lesson himself and often advocated “manly bodily exercises” to the students. Students frequently played ball in the square in front of the castle gate, engaged in fencing, and went swimming in the Elbe. “It was well considered by the ancients,” he related, “that the people should practice gymnastics, in order that they might not fall into revelling, unchastity, gluttony, intemperance and gaming. Therefore, these two exercises and pastimes please me best; namely, music and gymnastics.”

In addition to sports, Luther also felt that dramatics and dancing were worthy extra-curricular activities. When asked whether secular drama was proper for a Christian audience, Luther replied that such plays would be of great educational value to actors and audience alike. They are a mirror of life, he maintained. Nor ought Christians to be held to avoid them because at times coarse jokes and objectionable love affairs are found in them. If a man insists upon taking offense, even the Holy Bible may give him occasion to do so, he reasoned.

The university statutes permitted the students to attend dances on occasion “for the sake of honest discipline” and because they could learn “reverence and modesty in conversation and deportment.” The reasons given already suggest the nature of the dances. “We shall severely punish those who foolishly cause disturbance at such gatherings” the statutes continued, “and especially those who are immodest in their dancing and lead girls in gyrations beyond the common harmony of modest dancing.” During his term as rector at the University, Melancthon posted a notice on indecency in dance, and concluded with a summary intent of the Christian school: “We ask you to remember that a school is a laboratory of virtues, and in a Christian school we ought especially excel in piety, lest evil examples give the teaching of religion a bad report.” It was his concern, as it was Luther’s, not to add a stumbling block for others to what was already the offense of the cross. The plea was for decency.

Conclusion

We have come a long way in our visit with Luther, as father and teacher. In our own way, we may have sympathy with Katie, who once said after her husband’s death, “Our Lord God has taken from me, and not from me only, but from the whole world, this dear and precious man.”

Luther himself would be uncomfortable with such honor. “What is Luther?” he once said of himself. “The doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anybody....I am nobody’s master and do not want to be. I, and with me the whole church, possess the only doctrine of Christ who alone is our Master.”

It is for this very attitude that we have come to honor him.’ It is in support of the truths he taught concerning the centrality of Christ in home and school that we bear his name.

“Let each his lesson learn with care
And all the household well will fare.”

¹ The *Bibliography of the Continental Reformation* (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1972), which contains an exhaustive list of Reformation materials available in English, list under Education only three books, besides work on the Catechism of Luther. These three are:

Bruce, Gustav, *Luther as Educator*, (Minneapolis, 1928).
Kretzmann, P.E. *Luther on Education in the Christian Home and School* (Burlington, 1940).
Painter, Franklin *Luther on Education* (Philadelphia, 1889).

Kretzmann's compilation was not available for me. In addition to Painter's little classic review and Bruce's historical biography, the following volumes have been most helpful for this topic, as primary source material:

_____*Luther's Works*, American Edition, (55 vols.), esp. pp. 48-50, *Letters*, and *54 Table Talk*.
Plass, E. *What Luther Says*, 3 vols., (St. Louis, 1948).
Smith, P. *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (New York: Barnes and Noble, reprint, 1968).

Add to the listing these secondary reference works:

_____*Luther and Culture*, (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1960)
_____*The Mature Luther*, (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1959)
Asheim, I., *Glaube und Erziehung bei Luther* (Heidelberg, 1961)
Bainton, R., *Here I Stand*, (New York, 1950).
Bainton, R., *Martin Luther Christmas Book*, (Philadelphia, 1948).
Bornkamm, H. *Luther and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1969)
Chadwick, O. *The Reformation*, (Baltimore, 1964).
Ebeling, G. *Luther*, (Philadelphia, 1972).
Kittel, H. *Der Erzieher als Christ*, (Goettingen, 1951).
Meuser/Schneider, eds. *Interpreting Luther's Legacy* (Minneapolis, 1969).
Plass, E. *This is Luther* (St. Louis, 1948)
Schwiebert, E.G. *Luther and His Times* (Concordia, 1950)

² The quotation appears in Bruce, p. 11

³ Painter, pp. 166-168.

⁴ This assessment comes from an article by Richard Friedenthal, "Das Evangelische Pfarrhaus im Deutschen Kulturleben", found in the magazine *Luther* from the *Luthergesellschaft*, 1971, pp. 1-15.

⁵ Smith, p. 322.

Note: Because of the extensive use of Luther quotations, the writer chose not to clutter the manuscript with numbers and hence the identification of these quotations is lacking.