Martin Luther, The Reformer in the Making

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Five Essays Considering….

I. His Parentage, Birth, and Childhood

II. His Early Education –
Mansfeld, Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt

III. His Monastery Days and Conversion

III. His Reaction to Non-Catholic Opposition –
Erasmus, Zwingli, Calvin, the Mystics, the Anabaptists, and the Peasants' Revolt

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Young Luther, The Reformer in the Making

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An Essay in Three Parts….

I. His Parentage, Birth, and Childhood

II. His Early Education –
Mansfeld, Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt

III. His Monastery Days and Conversion to Faith in his Justification by Grace –
the "Righteousness of Christ"

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Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

I. His Parentage and Childhood

When Jeremiah, the great prophet of Old Testament times, introduced himself to his readers, these are some of the words he wrote by inspiration: "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.'"

All who read thoughtfully the story of especially the younger years of Moses, the great leader of Old Testament Israel, will surely want to agree that he was chosen and carefully prepared for his great work by the Lord God Himself.

When St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, introduced himself to his readers, he told them not only of the fact that he had been converted by the Lord Jesus in a miraculous, post-Ascension appearance, nor only of the fact that he had been trained by none other than the Lord Jesus Himself in the wilderness, but, in order to do full justice to the place of God's grace in his life, he explained that the Lord God had set him apart for his service from his mother's womb.

When considering these remarkable accounts from Holy Scriptures and, you will want to agree, we could add quite a number of others, we find it easy to believe that the Lord has done much the same thing for His servants throughout the history of the Church, yes, that he does so even today—namely, that He chooses them for given assignments, watches over the course of their lives, leads them in their training, and blesses them along the way.

It is in the atmosphere of such a conviction that I should like to approach the assigned theme for this series of lectures:

Young Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

Let us apply that approach in this first lecture to *the times* in which he was born, to *his parentage and family background*, and to *his childhood*.

It has been said that "times make the man." There is much we could say to favor of applying that cliche to Luther, the reformer, and his times. Of course, all the while we occupy ourselves with such a thought in Luther's case, we find ourselves preferring to say that God makes the times and in so doing makes the man.

It is always a thrilling experience for a history student when he comes upon an occasion in which he finds the Lord showing His hand very plainly in readying the world for some great event in the history of His Church. Now surely, these occasions are not always as clear as in the case of His getting the world ready for the birth of the Savior, so that an inspired Paul could speak of it as "the fullness of time."

But when we look at the times immediately preceding the birth of Luther, the period of the Renaissance, it seems pretty easy to believe that everyone in this audience, every member of which has had quite a bit of training in that period of cultural awakening, would want to admit the impression that the Lord was mightily active in preparing the world for the kind of man and the kind of activity which we find in Luther and the Lutheran Reformation. We dare not allow ourselves the time here to do any more than to remind you of a very brief selection from the long list of things we have in mind. We think of the end of the dark ages, the revival of learning, the study of the classical languages, the development of the fine arts in ever so many fields, improvement in transportation, discoveries, and a long list of inventions, among which we feel compelled to mention particularly that of printing. Nor let us forget to emphasize the discovery of the new world. Humanly speaking, one finds it difficult to imagine how Luther might have become the reformer we know him to have been, or how his reformation could have had such a wide influence without the Renaissance.

There is one other matter which comes to one's mind when thinking of the time in which Luther was born. We refer to the condition of the church of that day. Much of what we might discuss to this connection will find its way into our lectures as we proceed in these five essays. But one specific matter might be mentioned already now, one which surely sounded an alarm for young Luther as he grew up in such times. We refer to the situation into which the papacy had got itself by this time. It has been said by many an historian that it had fallen to its all-time low!

Every church historian who speaks of the Renaissance popes realizes that he is speaking of a despicably sorry lot. One finds it hard to understand how they could have possibly thought of themselves as clergy, to say nothing of being the head of the church. It is equally hard to understand how the people of that age could have put up with them in that role, except for the fact that they did so in ignorance and superstition and, of course, being pitifully deceived.

We take time to mention only a few of the men whom Luther either heard about as a boy while listening to his parents talk around the supper table, or with whom he came into contact during the Reformation itself. We think of Alexander VI, a member of a wealthy family in Spain, the Borgias. His reign as pope was marred by adultery, deception, and murder. The support he gave his depraved son Caesar Borgia, whom Machiavelli used as his model for the memorable prince in his book by the same name, "The Prince," and his tolerance toward his daughter, Lucretia, an acme of immorality, brought his papacy to be known as the all-time lowest point for that office. Luther was a young lad of nine when Alexander started ruling and was already a student at the University of Erfurt by the end of that reign. What unfortunate reports he must have heard about the pope and his family!

The next pope, Julius II, gave the church of his day little to be happy about. History calls him the "warrior pope" and his reign the "pontificate terrible." He tried to keep Rome impressed by marching his armies through the streets of the city. Those who know the stories of the League of Cambral and the Holy League know of his unreasonable international intrigues in the interest of increasing his secular power. The great Humanist, and I suppose we might say humorist, Erasmus, saw him on one occasion marching his army through the streets of Rome. Later he wrote a play in his usually satirical style in which he pictured Julius being rejected by Peter at the gate of heaven. In the scene Erasmus tried to show how much the papacy had deteriorated between the reigns of Peter and of Julius. He pictured them as two popes who could not understand each other. When Peter told Julius that he would need faith to enter Paradise, Julius pleaded that he had never heard of faith. And when Julius threatened to excommunicate Peter, the latter said that he was unable to understand what he meant since excommunication was not known in his day as pope. Julius was still pope when Luther visited Rome as a young monk in 1510, but the two did not meet.

The next Renaissance pope, Leo X, was a member of the wealthy Medici family at Florence, a son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. While it is true that his contacts with Luther post-date our interest at this point to

young Luther, yet as we study the general theme, "Luther the Reformer in the Making," we may state already now that those contacts could only have strengthened him in his conviction that the Reformation was indeed necessary.

Spoiled completely by his wastefully wealthy background, Leo was determined to complete and far exceed the plans of Julius for a new Vatican and St. Peter's Cathedral. Having spent his own share of the family fortune at the races and on women, as one trusted historian puts it, his need drove him into the context of the well-known story of the sale of the plenary indulgences, which so strongly irked Luther.

There is one other significant event which we ought mention when speaking of the measure of discredit to which the papacy had fallen when history approached the day of the Reformation. We refer here to the fact that about 40 years before the birth of Luther, the Renaissance scholar from Spain, Laurentius Valla, revealed the spuriousness of a document known as the Donation of Constantine. This document was a forgery which the gullible, medieval mind believed all during the Dark Ages. It did have a predecessor, they believed, in the form of another document, the Donation of Pippin. That Donation was genuine. Some of you may recall from your study of Medieval History that the first Frankish Carolingian, Pippin the Short, had been called on for help against the troublesome Lombards in northern Italy by the Bishop of Rome, Stephen II. When Pippin had conquered the Lombards, he realized that he could hardly hope to rule them adequately all the way from Germany, North of the Alps. For that reason he turned over what became the Papal States to the Bishop of Rome. Now that was a genuine donation, we said. Charlemagne renewed it later, as did Otto the Great.

After about five centuries, however, it happened that the Roman Catholic Church of the West was in danger of falling apart into a welter of tribal, royal, or feudal churches. In that day of confusion a document appeared, known as the Donation of Constantine, which claimed that Constantine, away back in the early fourth century, wanting to show his gratitude to the Bishop of Rome for healing him from leprosy, issued this Donation to the Bishop of Rome and his successors. It claimed to include his successor's palace, the city of Rome, and all the provinces, districts, and cities of Italy—in other words, all of the territory that made up western Europe, the western half of the empire which Constantine had ruled.

This document, as already pointed out, the gullible folk of the Dark Ages believed for about eight centuries. It was, of course, a cleverly contrived document. It followed lines similar to the real Donation of Pippin and it sounded a little like a decree which Constantine did actually issue when he moved his capital from Rome to Constantinople, in which he said that the Bishop of Rome might use state authority in the West to enforce the doctrine and discipline of the church. But this latter decree was a far cry from telling the Bishop of Rome that he should be the ruler of the western world.

Coming as it did at about the same time when the papacy was behaving at its all-time low, the revelation of Valla, showing the Donation of Constantine to be a forgery, must have been pretty much of a last straw to be heaped on the camel's back of the papacy's reputation.

Do we about now hear someone asking: "Haven't you wandered a bit too far from your theme?" Then let us be reminded that to demonstrate Martin Luther, the reformer in the making, we need surely to include showing, as we have done, some of the advantages of the times which encouraged and equipped him, as well as the crying need which motivated him in the direction of such reform. Having done that, let us at this point turn to the reformer himself whom we find already in the making in his family background and in his childhood.

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483—at least, that is the date quite generally agreed on by his biographers. There has, however, been some doubt about that date. A few later biographers have said 1484. Spalatin, a good friend of Luther's, used that year in his Annals. One of the Table Talks states that Luther's parents had already moved to Mansfeld when their first-born son, Martin, was born. That would suggest that Luther would have been born in 1484. And most strangely, while Luther's own mother was completely sure of the date, November 10, and of the time of her son's birth, between 11 and 12 at night, even she was uncertain about the year. She, too, thought that it might have been 1484.

But Luther's brother Jacob was quoted as saying that the general impression of the Luther family afterward was that it had been 1483 in which Martin was born. That was the year substantiated by the *Liber Decanorum*, the Dean's book at the University of Wittenberg. Modern historical research has discarded as

spurious many of the suggestions concerning the year of Luther's birth and has almost uniformly accepted the date which Luther's one contemporary biographer, Melanchthon, set, namely, 1483.

It seems likely that some of you might want to interrupt about now to suggest that it does not really make a whole lot of difference which year is thought of for Luther's birth, whether 1483 or 1484. And your remark would be well taken. One thing we do learn from all of this, however, is that some of the facts and details concerning Luther's early life want to be scrutinized very carefully. His youth was spent in a day of little exact record keeping.

It was a custom in that day that a child was baptized, if possible, on the day following the birthday. In keeping with that custom, Martin was brought to the lower Tower Room of St. Peter's Church in Eisleben to be baptized by Pastor Bartholom❶us Rennebacher. It was the day of the Festival of St. Martin. For that reason the Luthers' first-born was named Martin.

Research concerning the family name of Luther can become a pretty detailed and complex study, most of which would benefit us little here. Suffice to say here that it carries us back to the early medieval times in western Europe, to the name Lothar, or Lothaire, a name once used by a less known emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. It seems to have found its way through the medieval centuries to the day of Luther by way of a number of spellings such as Luder, Ludher, Lauther, Lueder, Leuder, Lutter, and others. In Luther's day it was quite consistently spelled Luther or Lutterus.

Luther's forefathers were a sizeable relationship, living either in or around the community of Moehra, an insignificant village, pretty much in the very center of Germany, in the midst of the hills of Thuringia, about eight miles from Eisenach. Boehmer, in his very helpful book, *Der junge Luther*, encourages us in that impression that the Luther relationship was a large and widespread one. He tells us that when Luther visited that area later in 1521, as a man of 38, he was of the impression that "*sein Geschlecht nehme fast die ganze Gegend ein*," that his relationship occupied the whole community.

Luther's ancestry itself was made up of peasants. And they remained peasants. Martin once said to Melanchthon, his very good friend in later years: "I am a peasant's son, my father, my grandfather, and all my ancestors were thorough peasants." Bainton, the familiar and prolific author concerning Luther and the Reformation, says that Luther's parents were sturdy, stocky, swarthy German *Bauern*. In fact, Otto Scheel, in my estimation the most detailed and satisfying German Luther biographer, a professor at the University of Tübingen shortly after the turn of the century, says that the people who visit the rural areas for soma distance around Eisenach to this day (his day, of course) find Luther families living there still. Many of them, he said, even resemble pictures which we have of Luther.

The community to which we are referring was given principally to two industries, namely agriculture and the mining of copper. These two industries seem to have rewarded the hardworking people of the community in Luther's day with moderate means for a fairly comfortable living. More of this later.

When now we focus our attention more directly on the parents of Luther, in order to get a clearer picture of the home in which Luther grew up, we find ourselves in the company of what must have been and still is a number of unhappy biographers. It is to be regretted that there remains a great lack of the kind of information we should like to have about Luther's parents and the home which they maintained for their seven children—four sons and three daughters. It is hard to understand that a home and the parents in that home which produced such promise should have remained the objects of so little description and recorded information at the time.

Even Luther's Table Talks, written largely by Wittenberg University students, who gathered around Kate Luther's supper table very frequently, do not give us much information concerning Luther's childhood or parentage. In addition to the little we glean there, there are a few bits of information which come our way from the contemporary friends and associates of Luther, such as his physician, Ratzeberger, and his one student, Mathesius. His very good friends and coworkers in later life, men like Spalatin and Melanchthon, are quoted on occasion concerning things which Luther revealed to them concerning his recollections of his childhood and home-life. Of this, too, we shall say more in a later context.

Luther's father was Hans Luther, the oldest of seven children, as we heard earlier. In some other accounts we find him referred to as *der grosse Hans*. That was to distinguish him from *klein Hans*, a younger

brother with the same name. To have been the oldest boy in a peasant family in those days was neither all good or all bad. For one thing it meant that the family homestead was not a part of his inheritance. That was reserved for the youngest son, so that the parents could draw their livelihood from the income of the family holdings as long as possible. Another advantage of such an arrangement would be added security for the continuance of the inheritance of the estate within the family. But there was some advantage in this arrangement also for the older sons in the family. It lay in the fact that such an older son was free to leave his home earlier, usually as soon as he was ready to marry. More than that, it gave him the right to choose his vocation.

Now the vocation which Luther's father chose was mining, the vocation which was most highly regarded among working people, because in many cases it led to financial prosperity. But mining, it seems, was not flourishing, as he would have wished it, in the Moehra area or the greater Eisleben community. It seems that too many miners had moved into the area just at the time.

For that reason, apparently, it was that Hans Luther moved with, his young wife, Margaret, and his 6 ½ month-old son, Martin, to Mansfeld, about five or six miles away, farther into the Thuringian hills, the Harz Mountains. The first years here in Mansfeld, the years of Martin's first six or seven years, were very difficult for the young family. To quote Otto Scheel: "*Sie haben es sich lassen blutsauer werden.*" (things became bitterly difficult for them).

It stands to reason that it would have taken young Hans some time to establish himself in the new community. Since the Luther family spoke on occasion of those early years in later life, it seems that hasty biographers of Luther allowed the impression to grow that Martin grew up surrounded by intense poverty. Such an impression has been found to be erroneous by more thorough research. That impression was undoubtedly encouraged by reports in later years that Martin's mother joined women of the community to gather wood for fuel, carrying it home on her back, and that Martin, when he went off to school, sang for money in the streets. Again more thorough research indicates that it was a custom for many women, even wives of the city's burghers to carry wood from the forests on their backs to keep the home-fires glowing. And as far as the other matter was concerned, students singing in the streets, we learn, that this was often asked of the students by the school involved, especially if the school was connected with the church, with a religious order, as was the case with most of the schools which Luther attended. James Mackinnon has this to say of this matter: "The description of the straitened circumstances of the household applies at the most only to the first half dozen years after settlement at Mansfeld." In his Table Talks Luther speaks of his father's poverty only as a young man, in adolescence. Street singing for philanthropic or religious purposes was customary among the children of even the affluent burgesses. It was a pious exercise in connection with the church festivals. Luther's reference to it in his Table Talks shows that he took part in it for this purpose.

When introducing Luther's father a few minutes ago we pointed out that as the oldest brother in his family he was spoken of as 'der grosse Hans', and that his younger brother, also named Hans, was called 'Kleinhans'. If now we direct our attention a little more directly toward this pair of brothers, we might at first reading get the impression that both of them had a number of skeletons stashed away in their closets. Closer research seems to establish the fact that in the case of Grosshans' brother, Kleinhans, such a thought was justified. In the case of Luther's father, der grosse Hans, however, the thought was quite unjustified.

The court records of Mansfeld mention Kleinhans quite frequently between the years 1499 and 1515, to be exact - eleven times. They picture him as a man who frequented the taverns to excess, arranged deals which were usually too cleverly planned in his own favor. He was in the habit of stopping brawls by pouring beer over the head of the participant with whom his sympathies did not lie. On other occasions, he struck his opponent over the mouth, gave him a bloody head by breaking a beer stein over his head, or slapped the opponent's hand with the sharp edge of a sword. If you recognized the dates mentioned a few moments ago, during which these things were recorded on the court records in Mansfeld, then you perhaps concluded, and rightly so, that those things were transpiring after Martin was already gone from home. These dates cover his happy days at Eisenach, his University years at Erfurt, his monastic years, even the early years of his teaching at Wittenberg University. Our point is this that all such goings-on could hardly have affected Martin very much, if indeed he knew anything about his wayward uncle's behavior.

When now we turn our attention to the elder brother, der grosse Hans, the father of Martin, there is one story which we should like to discard at once, and feel justified in doing so. We refer to the story that Hans once killed a man in Moehra, and that that may have been the reason for his moving with his family from Moehra to Mansfeld. Perhaps we should not refer to this matter as a story, for there is actually no story told which includes surrounding circumstances and instances. It consisted really only in an accusation which in Luther's later life his Catholic opponent Witzel called out to Luther's good friend Jonas, while in a heated quarrel, saying, "I might call the father of your Luther a murderer." Twenty years after that an anonymous author of a polemical book which appeared in Paris actually called the Reformer "the son of the Moehra assassin." With these two exceptions, not a trace of any story of this kind, in writing of either friend or foe, can be found in that or in following centuries. Early in the 18th century a statement was found in a report on mining in Moehra stating that on one occasion Hans Luther had "accidentally" killed a peasant who was minding some horses. Some of the inhabitants repeated oral reports of the incident imagining that they could recognize the fateful field described in the reports.

There is, however, no authentication of the story. No reference to it can be found in any of Luther's statements in the *Table Talks* or elsewhere. The thought that this matter might have been a reason for the Hans Luthers' move to Mansfeld, five or six miles away, is completely absurd, even in that day of little communication between neighborhoods. The whole matter does not hold up in the light of the trusted and respected reputation Hans Luther built up for himself so quickly in his new surroundings in Mansfeld. We need, to consider, too, the fact that Luther's enemies later never made any use of the matter. Had there been any truth to the matter it is easy to imagine what use the enemies would have made of it.

The information which has come down to us concerning Luther's father leaves no doubt concerning the fact that he was a man of fine qualities. Melanchthon, Luther's good friend and co-worker, spoke of Hans Luther as being a man who, by purity of character and conduct, won for himself universal affection and esteem. It becomes quite clear from such records that Hans Luther was also an industrious and diligent man. When young Martin was about eight, his father Hans was already one of the respected citizens of Mansfeld. In 1491 he was named to be one of four citizens in the city council of Mansfeld, whose duty it was to protect the rights of his fellow burghers. The picture we are given of Hans Luther is that of a rather thrifty, steadily rising young man, respected and accepted by the whole community. According to Mathesius, Luther's earlier pupil and later his contemporary biographer, we learn that as early as 1502 Luther's father ventured into the mining business for himself, leasing several mines and smelting plants. There was an oft repeated saying at that time which reflected the prosperity of the mining industry to the Mansfeld area. Some said that Luther started the saying, others attributed it to Camerarius: "*Wen der Herr Lieb hat, dem gibt er eine Wohnung in der Grafschaft Mansfeld*." (Whom the Lord loves, to him He gives a home in the county of Mansfeld.) Hans Luther seems to have been one such. Mathesius struck the same note when he wrote as follows: "God blessed the mining industry" of Luther's father and that Hans Luder brought up "his son in a respectful atmosphere, using the money he had rightfully acquired as a miner." When Martin later matriculated at the University of Erfurt, the records classified him as being from a family of means. At about the same time his father purchased a respectable home in a good part of town. And when, a few years later, Martin was ordained as priest, we are told that his father rode into the monastery court with a company of twenty horseman and then made a donation of 20 gulden (about $300) to defray the expenses of the festive dinner. Though Hans Luther never became immensely wealthy, at his death he left an estate of some $18,000, which for that day was indeed a tidy sun.

It has often been said of Hans Luther that he was an exceedingly stern man. Some of the recent biographers of Luther get little farther in the analysis of his father than to refer to that sternness and severity. Such an approach to his character gives us an unfortunately incomplete picture of Hans.

It was true, as Koestlin reports in his fine biography of Luther, that his father, who spent long days at hard work and persevered at it with unflinching severity, maintained an unusually earnest and severe tone in his household. The upright, honorable industrious father was honestly resolved to make a useful man of his son and enable him to rise higher than himself.

It was true, too, as we learn from a quote of Luther himself, that on one occasion his father flogged him so severely that he fled from his father and bore him a temporary grudge, and that this stern discipline caused him to be shy and timid during his boyhood.

But on another occasion we find Luther saying that he realized that his parents meant their discipline for his best. On several occasions he is quoted as saying that in rearing children the apple should be placed next to the rod. One gets the impression that the disciplining Luther's parents carried out was not the result of an unloving severity which blunts the spirit of a child. Their strictness was rather well intended and proceeded from genuine moral earnestness of purpose which in later years made him deeply and keenly sensitive to every fault committed to the eyes of Cod.

Yes, there was definitely another side to all of this emphasis which the biographers of Luther place on the severity of Hans Luther. Scheel tells us in his exhaustive biography of Luther that it is totally wrong to believe that all Luther could do was to speak of his father's strict discipline. And Koestlin related a fact, which we find substantiated also in the *Table Talks*, that in later life Luther recorded in touching language instances of his father's love and sweet intercourse he was permitted to have with him. There are statements on his part that he loved his father very dearly.

There is one other thing which perhaps should be mentioned in this connection. Quite a number of the better biographers of Luther speak of his father's considerable sense of humor. There were occasions of cheerful, jovial talk in the home in which both Hans and Margaretha took part over a stein of beer. They enjoyed singing as a family. Some of the jollier occasions took place, it might be said, when Hans returned home after having stopped at the tavern and imbibed somewhat beyond the urge of thirst. Friedenthal reports that his son Martin has told us himself that like all miners his father liked a good drink and sometimes returned home a little the worse for it. On these occasions, however, he walked in erect and pleasantly tipsy and not like a savage. One thing seems certain, sill quoting Friedenthal, that Hans was never a drunkard. His contemporaries would never have entrusted him with the responsible position and shown him so much respect if that had been the case.

When, now, we turn our attention to Luther's mother, the wife of Hans Luther, we find ourselves confronted by a problem. We need to ask, "Who was she, Margaretha Ziegler or Margaretha Lindemann?" And it becomes pretty necessary for the scholar, who wants his research concerning the life and person of Margaretha to do her justice, that he make up his mind which of the two possibilities he wants to accept.

And doing that does not become easy for the researcher. For one thing, we have comparatively little information concerning Margaretha. Even Luther and his colleagues made very few remarks about her family background. Furthermore, it is not just a pedantic argument concerning a surname, which we must settle, if, indeed, we can. There is much involved in the question as to which family she came from. The thing that makes the problem all the worse is that the thinking to the matter has shifted from side to side almost like the way in which fashion designers treat the fads where women's clothing are concerned.

The earliest sources give only her first name. Luther himself gives her name simply as Margaretha. More often than not he called her by his favorite nickname, "Hanna." We have found no reason for that name. Pardon a guess: Could it have been because when he came upon the whole Bible for the first time, he happened first upon the story of Hannah and was so enthralled with it that he read it over and over? Melanchthon, in his biographical preface to the Wittenberg edition of Luther's works, Mathesius, Luther's former student and later his contemporary biographer, and a number of such very early writers use only the name Margaretha. The first time we find her surname used came in 1558 in an invitation as Luther's widow to the funeral of Luther's nephew. The second time we find it in the register of Wittenberg University. On both of these occasions the name Lindemann was used, and in that latter case she was specifically described as having been "born into the Family of the Lindemanns, a cognate relative of the very distinguished man, Dr. Laurentius Lindemann (a former Rector of the University)."

From the 17th through the 18th centuries a majority of biographers favored the name Lindemann. Then toward the end of the 18th century the consensus shifted to Ziegler, and it became fashionable to say that "her

maiden name was Margaretha Ziegler (not Lindemann, as often given)." Half a century ago the tide turned back in favor or Lindemann.

And now, it 1981, Fortress Press printed a book for author Jan Siggins with the title "Luther and His Mother." His list of acknowledgements for his book contains the names of a long list of recognized Luther scholars. In his preface, author Siggins writes confidently about how his research led him to the information which convinced him that Margaretha was indeed a Lindemann and not a Ziegler. In fact, his book uses its centerfold for showing the family true of the Lindemanns.

It is to be regretted that it would require a disproportionate amount of time and space to relate here in a series of lectures like this a convincing portion of the facts and incidents which Siggins brings forward in an attempt to prove his point that Margaretha's family was one of means, one in which the men reached heights in education, politics, law, and religious positions. The family was at home in and around Eisenach. Melanchthon is quoted as saying explicitly that the reason Luther was sent to school in Eisenach was that "his mother had been born there of an old and respected family." Luther is quoted in saying in 1520 that "almost all of my kinsfolk are at Eisenach" and that there "one would call him 'nephew', another 'uncle', another 'maternal cousin' (I have many of them there)." Heinrich Schalbe, with whom Luther spent much time while at school in Eisenach is described as Mayor of Eisenach, closely connected with and even related to the Lindemanns. In Luther's first extant letter, inviting Vicar Braun to his first mass in Erfurt in 1507, he expresses gratitude to the "Schalbe College, those excellent people who from my point of view are as richly deserving as they could possibly be."

While all of this seems to be true, it is reported that the Zieglers were a farm family in Moehra. They were not cottagers from the landless ranks of poor peasant laborers, but landholders like Hans Luther's parents with stock and property assessed respectably. Now if Hans Luther would have married Margaretha Ziegler it would not have bean said, as has been reported, that "Hans Luther had married above his rank."

At this point someone may want to ask why so much is made of this matter as to whether Margaretha was a Ziegler or a Lindemann. We should like to think that a little thought will answer that question for you. Melanchthon has told us that Martin had been "diligently instructed at home in the knowledge and fear of God" as soon as he could understand, and also that his mother's own modesty, fear of God, and prayerfulness were especially obvious, and other women paid her attention as an example of virtue. We hear, too, that Luther demonstrated great skill in language and music at an early ago. Some hastily prepared biographies give credit for all of this to Ursula Cotta, giving no thought to the fact that it was his skill in singing that attracted her attention to him to begin with. And to give Frau Cotta credit for his fine language and correct manners in addition – all to have been accomplished during less than three years – is to give her credit for a remarkable but almost unbelievable achievement. That will become all the more clear when we talk about his stay at Eisenach and notice that those were busy years for Martin at school and at the homes of the Schalbes and with Vicar Braun.

But now, aside from all of this, what sort of person was Margaretha or "Hanna" Luther? Perhaps we shall appreciate some of the things her contemporaries said of her even more now that we know that there is the possibility that she was a woman of high birth.

Melanchthon, who came to know Margaretha very well and grew very fond of her, described her as a "worthy woman, distinguished for her many virtues, above all for her modesty, her fear of God, and her constant communion with God in prayer." Elsewhere Melanchthon spoke of her admiringly saying that she was "held in high esteem by other respectable woman as an example of a virtuous life."

Spalatin, Luther's good friend ever since college days, the court preacher and secretary to Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony, spoke of her as a "rare and exemplary woman." It appears that at times her modesty got away with her. Several biographers tell of the little ditty which she would sing occasionally for her husband. It went like this: "Mir und dir ist keiner hold, das ist unser beide Schuld." (Both of us must take the blame alone that you and I are loved by none.) Others have suggested that her singing of that ditty was an indication of her sense of humor.

Only a few writers have attempted to give us a description of Margaretha's appearance. Nor have many left us with descriptions of the appearance of Hans, Luther's father. Swiss Kessler tells us that both were small and short, far surpassed by their son Martin in height and build. They were dark complexioned. Cranach's familiar portraits of them show them both having a certain hardness, indicating severe toil on their part. The mother looks more wearied by life, but resigned, quiet, and meditative. Her thin face, with its large bones, presents a mixture of mildness and gravity. Spalatin, at first sight of her, was amazed to see how much Luther resembled her to bearing and features.

Just as in the case of Luther's father, so in the case of his mother, stories have been told of severe disciplining of Martin. The story told most often is the one concerning the occasion when for stealing one paltry little nut she beat him till blood came. Many of the other things reported concerning Margaretha, some of which we have already reported, lead one to believe that that story just told might be an exaggeration. The biographer Makinnon is quoted as saying: "Nor was his mother always scolding and thrashing her young brood." Luther himself told of jocose moments which his mother enjoyed with her children. Mackinnon reports further that the atmosphere of the Luther home in which she was ever present was a pious one. The children were taught by precept and example the fear of God and the observance of religious usages of the time. In his fine biography of Luther, Scheel says that it is simply wrong to think of Martin's childhood as being unhappy.

The people in Germany during the time of Luther's childhood were much given to witchcraft. That was true of pretty much everyone, regardless of walk of life or social station. But it was more true among the rural folks who thought that the witches worked through the forces of nature, especially through the destruction of storms. Luther's father, Luther himself, and Melanchthon all disappoint one by lingering far too long in the notion that ghosts had much to do with a person's life. And Luther's mother certainly was no exception to the rule. Luther often spoke in later years of the many things his parents had to say about the activities of devils, witches, and other unwholesome powers. When one of Luther's little brothers died, his mother is said to have cried out against a neighbor woman of whom she was convinced that she was a witch and had caused the little boy's death. Luther's father is said to have come home from the mine one evening reporting that one of his workers in the mine had been killed that day and that it had been the work of a witch. Some even said that the Sacraments had been given to the church to thwart the work of witches.

What shall we think of some of the things which we have heard about the Luther household, such as too severe parental discipline, lingering too long in the fear for witchcraft and superstition, and training children in saint worship and slavish respect for the merit of works? It may not seem the best excuse for us to use, living as we are in a day of such a great measure of enlightenment, especially where our religious understanding is concerned, but about the best we can say is that we ought keep in mind the situation in which the people of whom we are speaking were living. It has often been said that the discipline in the Luther household was quite in line with the manner of disciplining in that day generally. We can be happy to hear that Luther in later years expressed the certainty that his parents carried it out for his good. We shall need to approach the other matters in quite the same way. The day was one so shortly after the Dark Ages that in rural areas the enlightenment that might have resulted from the Renaissance had not penetrated as yet. And as far as witchcraft, saint worship, respect for merit of works, as well as superstition are concerned, let us be grateful that we know how the key to freedom from things like that was in this pre-Reformation period still being fumbled in the stifling hands of medieval Catholicism.

Before we leave the home of young Luther, there is one story that ought be reported in order to complete the picture which some have tried to paint; even though one wishes that one might forget all about it. It seems that some of Luther's enemies, wanting later to discredit him, concocted a wretchedly reckless story about the birth of Luther, a story which reflected especially an Luther's mother. It seems that these enemies were trying to convince people that Luther was the fore-runner of the anti-Christ. They alleged that before Margaretha's hasty marriage to Hans Luther, she had served as a maid in the public baths of Eisleben. There she was supposed to have yielded to the attention of a demoniac visitor, an incubus, by whom she conceived her firstborn son, Martin. Far quite a time a heated pamphlet debate raged concerning this ugly story between the enemies of Luther and his admiring defenders. This debate seems to have reached its climax about the time of Luther's

vital debate with Eck at Leipzig, when unscrupulous enemies like Eck and other subtle, learned Dominicans were trying their utmost to discredit Luther.

Luther himself mentioned the unfortunate attack on the integrity of his parents at least twice in his *Table Talks* and refuted it effectively each time. Any number of trustworthy men like Mathesius, Luther's former student and contemporary biographer, and Spangenberg, and others wrote any number of sermons and other accounts in convincing opposition to the efforts of Luther's enemies. Coelius, an ardent admirer of Luther went so far as to compare Luther with Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jeremiah. And Dr. Bugenhagen, Luther's long-time coworker and admirer, when delivering the German sermon at Luther's burial, on February 22, 1546, said of Luther that he was the angel referred to in Revelation 14:7 who flies through the heaven and has the eternal Gospel to proclaim to those on earth. In the light of such defenses the unfortunate allegations concerning Luther's mother were forgotten.

And for us who are studying the theme, Martin Luther, the Reformer in the Making, and who know from the Lord's Word how he chooses his servants while vessels of clay, then molds, shapes, cares for them so that they may accomplish the work he would have of them, let us thank God for his grace to his servant Luther.

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Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

II. Luther's Early Education

In this second lecture we want to shift our attention from the childhood home of Luther to his early education. Many of you will surely recall that the first school he attended was in the midst of the village of Mansfeld. There is some question concerning the age at which he started school, but when we take all that we can learn of the situation into consideration, it appears that he must have started when very young. The school at Mansfeld was one of the many so-called 'Latin' schools, to which boys were sent, who were to prepare for higher education. The suggested time for starting such a school was when a boy had reached seven. We believe, however, that Luther started earlier, for a number of reasons. For one thing, Melanchthon recalls that Luther told him that he had been so young and small that an older friend, Nicolaus Oemler, had to take him up in his arms and carry him to school. That would have been hardly necessary in the case of a seven-year-old boy, especially when we hear that the school was but a few blocks from the Luther home. So then the statement we find in the record, stating that Luther entered Mansfeld school on St. George's Day, March 12, 1488, when he was 4½ years old, brings things very much in line with the later information that Luther went on to his next school in Magdeburg at the age of 14, after completing eight years of schooling at Mansfeld.

What kind of a school was Mansfeld and how did Luther fare at that school? It goes without saying that we might hope to see progress, attitudes, and developments on the part of our precocious young friend which would cause us to say, surely this is the young reformer in the making. Eight years in the life of a boy make up a long period of growing and developing. He was approaching the middle of his teenage period, his formative years, when he left Mansfeld for Magdeburg.

Again, we are disappointed. The information we have, especially concerning Luther himself, is very scant. And some of that which we do have, some of it even from the pen of Luther himself, we are quite convinced gives us a faulty impression. Luther gave us the impression that he heartily disliked the Mansfeld school. He called it "an asses' stable, a hell and a purgatory." He complained about the whip, large as a broom, which was used for disciplining. He even went so far as to write: "We were martyrized there."

But now let us take a more careful look at these words of Luther. They were written in 1524, about 3 years after his days at Mansfeld – seven years after the 95 Theses, 3 years after the Diet of Worms, 2 years after his return from the Wartburg. The enrollment at Wittenberg, at which University Luther was teaching at this time, had fallen markedly. It had become widely known that Luther favored humanistic courses for the University by this time. All of the other German universities were still steeped in Scholasticism, as were those of Italy and France, of course. When Luther noticed that the enrollment had got down to about a third its former size, he decided to write a treatise to the Councilmen for Christian schools in Germany. It was in that document that he made the remarks quoted, and more besides. What he was really trying to do was to discredit the scholastic schools, of which Mansfeld had surely been one in the days when he attended there. He wanted to give the impression that now the humanistic schools were much better, lest the humanistic schools in Germany lose out entirely. Now the humanistic schools which Luther knew and in which he had some influence were still in that second phase of Humanism, the phase in which study of the classics was encouraged for the sake of students who wanted to get to know the languages of Scripture better. He seems to have felt that it was time to use strong language in this war against Scholasticism, and to quote Schwiebert at this point: "at that he was an artist." The thing that troubles us is that we fear that in his remarks about Mansfeld he may not have been speaking the truth while he did make his point. Pupils who matriculated in higher schools after attending Mansfield for a longer period of time did very well academically. That was indeed true of Luther whether at Magdeburg, Eisenach, or Erfurt.

Mansfield was a 'trivial Schule', one of the schools whose purpose was to teach the *trivium*, the first three of the elementary liberal arts taught in medieval schools. The *trivium* consisted in grammar, rhetoric, and logic. The other four of the seven liberal arts, the *quadrivium*, which were to be taught to the higher schools, were geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music.

Critics of Mansfeld claimed that as a school they did not teach the whole *trivium*. Luther, himself, in his critical moments, complained that he got very little Religion at the school and no History, that all that he got was Latin and music. But Otto Scheel in his most valuable biography of Luther gives us a very different picture of this. He tells us that while it is true that Mansfeld did not have all of the *trivium* formally practiced in their curriculum, they did teach a lot of Latin, and the Literature courses in connection with Rhetoric, including authors like Cato, Aesop, Boethius, Plautus, Terence, and others, were so rich in History and culture that in such respects he became a well-rounded and educated young man. Though there were few Religion courses at Mansfeld, so much religious training came through from the great number of masses, meditations, processions, singing, and applications in other courses, that he was well-versed far above the average in religion. Adding to all of this the benefit of the music his mother had taught him, especially religious music, and the understanding she had given him for literature, again especially religious literature, he excelled in many ways when his days at Mansfeld ended. The records at Erfurt as well as later at Wittenberg showed plainly, Scheel tells us, that the boys who matriculated at these schools with Mansfeld backgrounds came well prepared, and Luther was one of the leaders among such, though he did spend one year at Magdeburg and three at Eisenach before coming to Erfurt.

But let us take another look at Mansfeld from another angle, lest we give the impression that the words which Luther wrote in 1524 to the Councilors of all German cities were completely dishonest and Scheel's kinder words about the school at Mansfeld were entirely too complimentary.

On one hand, it remains true that at a 'trivial Schule' like Mansfeld there were customs in those days which educators in more modern times and certainly today would condemn outright for ever so many reasons. Two illustrations will perhaps suffice. For one thing, we think of the '*lupus*' slate, or wolf slate. Each time a student lapsed into speaking German, when only Latin was to be spoken, or each time when a student used profanity, his name was written on a slate, and he was called '*a lupus*', a wolf. Every eight days the slate was checked. The boys whose names appeared there were then spanked the number of times in keeping with the number of times the names had appeared. The other illustration would be the matter of the '*asinus*', the wooden donkey. When at the end of a recitation, or when an examination had been graded, the student who was of the bottom of his class was forced to hang a tiny wooden donkey around his neck. Every time a boy had to wear such an *asinus*, his name was added to the slate just referred to. In other words such marks on the slate added to the number of spankings the boy received. The story is often told of the morning Luther was spanked 15 times for not knowing his Latin declension. That must have been for a period of eight days. So you see, motivation in a school like that stemmed more from fear and shame.

Surely we incline toward agreeing that those illustrations point to intolerable practices. And yet, such practices were often encouraged and permitted by the parents and the city council. Most schools used definite systems of punishment which would fit types and numbers of misdemeanors. Parents who refused to give in to the type of punishments used by a given school were not permitted to enroll their children in such a school. It is interesting to note that while Luther was spanked on occasion for faulty declensions and conjugations, we read that the gentle and precociously brilliant Melanchthon was also given daily spankings during his days at school in Pforzheim. One author of that day was credited with writing that Latin was not really taught in that school system, it was rather pounded in.

When boys grew larger and the spankings were more difficult to administer and less effective at that, the boys were subject to fines instead. The system was referred to as '*Geldbussen*', a system which was maintained in German schools for many years after.

Before leaving this matter of discipline we ought add that in later years when Luther set up rules of discipline for schools which he established, we find him using the same kinds of rules which he had endured in his boyhood. That fact would seem to indicate quite clearly how he actually felt in later years about the order at Mansfeld. And that would agree with what Mathesius, Luther's student, said of him in his Luther biography, namely, that at Mansfeld Luther learned his materials "with diligence and great speed'.

In greatest likelihood it was the Easter season of 1497 when Luther left Mansfeld in order to enter the Cathedral school at Magdeburg. It happened that a good friend and schoolmate, Johann Reinecke, the son of a

quite well-to-do blast furnace superintendent in Mansfeld, made the same transfer at this time, and Martin decided to go with him. The two young men remained close friends for the rest of their lives.

Melanchthon tells us that it was Luther's father who sent him to Magdeburg since by now Luther's father was financially quite a bit better off and liked the idea of his son's being in the company of the son of the wealthy Reinecke. Mathesius, on the other hand, tells us that it was Martin's wish to enroll at Magdeburg since that school enjoyed a reputation "far above many others." That the reason might have been a combination of the statements of those two biographers seems entirely likely. Scheel gives Luther's father Hans the credit for the) decision. He had learned of the fine reputation of the Magdeburg school and proudly decided it was the school for his son. Scheel explains, too, that Magdeburg was a lot easier to reach than many other renowned schools.

At this point it should be said that it was quite a custom for young men of the day who intended to seek higher education to enroll at a number of trivial Schulen, one at a time, before picking their university. They became known as wandering students. While the seven fine arts, the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* pretty much made up the curriculum at each of the schools referred to, yet each had some strong suit of its own. To get the benefit of the strong suit of a number of these was reasonably thought to round out a better preparation.

Magdeburg at the time was a city of 12,000, filled with endowed churches and chapels, with many clergy reading masses before various altars. Many of the monastic orders of the day were represented in the city. The *Dom* or Cathedral of Magdeburg was a center of all this church activity. In the large area behind the Cathedral stood the Mosshaus, the palace of the Archbishop and the famous Cathedral School.

Magdeburg was a storehouse of relics. The city, because of all the church activity, was given to colorful processions on Palm Sunday and on Ascension. The body of the patron saint, Florentius, was entombed in the chancel of the cathedral. On his birthday the body was brought out into the nave. Easter Monday and Pentecost Monday were days of relic processions. One can hardly deny the impression this "Little Rome" must have made on young Luther. In one direction or another it must have had some effect on young Luther, "the Reformer in the Making."

It was here that Luther had an experience which he never forgot. Ho spoke of the haunting memory several times in later life, even in his *Table Talks*. It may have had something to do with his sudden decision later to enter the monastery. One day Prince William of Anhalt, a patron of the Franciscan Order, walked through the streets of Magdeburg, barefooted, begging alms. He had fasted to the point of looking like a dead man of sheer skin and bones. Ho died soon thereafter. All who looked on this illustrious figure in such a pitiful state were deeply moved at such a spectacle of penance and felt ashamed of their way of life.

One other matter of significance must be mentioned in connection with Magdeburg it has to do with an answer to several questions concerning Luther. One is the question as to which school it was that Luther attended there. There were many, and he never mentioned the school by name. But he did tell us that in Magdeburg he studied under Brethren of the Common Life, usually referred to as the "*Nullbrüder*" (the zero, or nothing, brothers) so called because of the low singing, the *lollen*, which they were often heard doing. No doubt, their humility had much to do with that name – their wanting to be thought of as worth nothing. Their order had been founded by Gerhard Groote and hailed from the Netherlands. They were forerunners of the Mystics and were known for their great amount of Bible-reading and their preaching of a return to simple, pious lives, for Latin clergy and laity. They did not have a school of their own at Magdeburg, but the Archbishop did permit a group of them to teach in the Cathedral School. It is for that reason that Luther scholars accept the thought that it was the Cathedral School which he attended.

And **that** fact is connected with another interesting fact, namely, this that it was in Magdeburg, in the Bible-reading atmosphere of the *Nullbrüder*, rather than in Erfurt later that Luther discovered the whole Bible for the first time. It would take us too far afield at this point to enter into that matter. More of that in a later context.

Before we leave Magdeburg, however, let us warn against a mistake which we believe many students of Luther make. Since he spent only one year there, they pass over that one year as having really little if any importance. We believe quite the opposite was the case. When we survey the year with its strong monastic and Cathedral atmosphere, with the Bible-reading influence of the Mystics, the *Nullbrüder*, and with the likelihood

of his coming upon the full Bible there for the first time, that one year appears to have been a pivotal year for him in his process of becoming the "Reformer in the Making"!

It was Easter time in 1498 when Luther's parents suddenly reached the decision that he should change schools in favor of finishing his preparatory education in another trivial Schule, namely, the one at Eisenach, a beautiful little city of about 4,000 among the Thuringian Hills, near the Wartburg.

We have heard earlier, you will recall, that it was quite a custom that students who were planning to go on for higher education would wander from one trivial Schule to another in order to get a full training in all of the seven liberal arts and related subjects before entering the university. If one asks the question as to why Luther was sent to Eisenach, one gets a variety of answers. Some say that this question has never been really answered. One such is Eric Erickson, the author of a fairly recent book, "Young Man Luther."

On the other end of the spectrum there are those who seem to know with certainty why that was the case. When one notices who some of these latter are, we are inclined to accept their statements. We think of the remarks by Melanchthon and Mathesius who said it was because his mother had been born there of an old and respected family. Luther himself remarked in later life that he had been sent to Eisenach because "almost all of my kinsfolk on my mother's side were at Eisenach."

So you see, we have run into the question once again as to who Luther's mother actually was, whether she was a Ziegler or a Lindemann. If the latter was true, then it becomes very easy to understand why Luther often spoke in later years of his three years in Eisenach as the best years of his life. For in that case he was living among quite illustrious relatives, the Lindemanns, Schalbes, and Cottas. They were all part of the same patrician circle of Eisenach burghers and were closely related to each other and even to young Luther through his mother.

It becomes very easy to understand, too, how it happened that when he became conspicuous in the streets of Eisenach for his fine tenor voice, which he did, he said, "not for penury, but because it was tradition that a student would sing" for his school, and when his praying and singing at church were recognized and appreciated in the church services, these cultured and fairly wealthy relatives took him into their houses. It seems that it was in the home of Heinrich Schalbe, his uncle, a wealthy burgher and son of a mayor of Eisenach, that he received most of his meals. It was in the home of the Cottas, Kuntz and Ursula, that he lived. He also became acquainted with his mother's uncle, Johannes Braun, vicar of St. Mary's, whose love for poetry and music and whose broader cultural interest attracted him very much. Vicar Braun seems also to have represented the Schalbe family's interest in the Franciscan monastery which the family had established at the foot of Wartburg hill, just outside Eisenach. And so he frequently brought young Luther into contact with the monks of that institution, the "*Barfüsser*'. It is said that Luther, serious and pious beyond his young years, became so interested in the priestly existence that on one occasion Ursula Cotta meaningfully quoted to him a well-known verse to the effect that nothing was dearer on earth than the love of a woman to him who could win it. Might we guess that she was already fearful that he might succumb to monastic life?

When, in years later, Luther expressed his appreciation to the school at Eisenach he referred to it as the "Schalbe College" and referred to his relatives and friends there with the descriptive compliment: "Those excellent people who from my point of view are as richly deserving as they could possibly be." Elsewhere he is quoted as saying that the three years at his "beloved Eisenach," were among the most pleasant of his life.

When one takes a careful look at some of the details of his experiences at Eisenach, one gets the impression again that here, we see young Luther coming another long stride toward being equipped for his destined role as the Reformer.

It was spring of 1501, when Luther was not quite eighteen, that we find him starting his university career. Erfurt was his chosen school. Although Luther's father still had at least seven children to care for at home, business find been so good during recent years that he felt sure he could raise the money for his oldest son's prolonged stay at the university. Hans and Margaretha thought the matter over very carefully until both agreed that he should enroll in the university. Martin was happy with the decision. Higher education had obviously been his goal for some time while studying at Magdeburg and Eisenach. His choice of curriculum seems to have proven that.

But how did it happen that he chose to attend Erfurt? Some say that he liked the proximity of Erfurt to Mansfeld. But that is not true. The Leipzig University would have been closer. We are told that Erfurt had a good reputation among the universities of Germany, better even than Leipzig at the time. The incident of this decision is one which we do not want to pass lightly. There were many occasions in the life of young Luther concerning which we want to say that the Lord must have been guiding and watching over him. But this is one concerning which our theme, "Martin Luther, the Reformer in the Making" comes back to us very forcefully, and we find it hard to refrain from crediting the Lord with having led in the decision. If Luther had enrolled at Leipzig, what seems to have been the other possibility, one is inclined to fear that there would never have been a Reformation. Leipzig was and remained a school ardently loyal to the papacy. It was the school at which the brilliant John Eck engaged Luther in debate a few years later. It was a Dominican school. The pope considered it his strong center North of the Alps. If Luther had enrolled at Leipzig, he might have become a monk, but it is almost certain he would never have become an Augustinian, but rather a Dominican. It seems most likely that then he would never have grown in his desire for the truth.

There is quite a bit of debate concerning the size of the city of Erfurt at the time of Luther's stay there, but after checking out several suggestions and their respective defenses it seems that it might have been a city of about 20,000. It vas a typically medieval city. It had no definite street plan. Streets were crooked; often dead ends, and very narrow. Because of the many hazardous streams and canals one needed to cross crude foot-bridges. There was no street illumination at night. Surely it follows that there was a minimum of night life in Erfurt.

As far as church activities in Erfurt were concerned, there was no end of such. In fact, the city was another to be spoken of as a "little Rome." There were, besides the Cathedral, two endowed churches, 22 cloisters, 23 cloister churches, 36 chapels, and 6 hospitals. Every order of monasticism was represented in the city. Majestic rites and colorful processions were nearly a daily experience. In later years Luther recalled having enjoyed the privilege of being involved in such dignified rites.

And these were not all of the things in Erfurt which kept Luther in the almost constant atmosphere of things monastic and priestly. When students enrolled at some German universities they had to join a 'bursa' or 'burse'. The social standing of a student at a university was closely associated with or related to the reputation of the burse to which he belonged. If he was not accepted into any burse, he was forced to leave the school. The burse to which Luther belonged at Erfurt was that of St. George, the dragon-killer. His roommate during part of his stay at Erfurt was rather a well-known Crotus Rubeanus. Students who know their Renaissance and Reformation well enough know something about the *Letters of the Obscure Men*. And Crotus has suffered suspicion for being one of the extremely clever and satiristic authors of those letters. Two of his best Erfurt friends were Spalatin and Carlstadt. Spalatin later became a priest, too, and secretary to Elector Frederic the Wise from which position he was able to suggest Luther for a position on the Wittenberg faculty. No doubt, all of you know something about the disappointment Carlstadt became for him – after teaching for years at Wittenberg with Luther, then, during Luther's absence at the Wartburg he turned radical and became a real source of heartbreak for Luther.

Now at Erfurt the burse system seems to have had a special organization, very close to the church. Try to imagine a present-day fraternity at one of our universities run according to strict monastic rules. It meant that Luther had to live in crowded quarters and under a special discipline borrowed from the monastery. The students wore dignified uniforms of semi-clerical design with a rapier, a long, slander two-edged sword with a cup-like hilt at his side. They were strictly supervised: up at 4:00 A.M., to bed at 6:00 P.M., lectures, seminars, and disputations were compulsory and began at 6:00 A.M. Prof. Scheel tells us that the food was good – a light beer was plentiful. Each burse had its own homemade beer. While it was consumed in moderate amounts, it was drunk frequently. The master of the burse always kept the key to the beer supply room. The cook and the brewer received high salaries.

Contacts with the outside world, especially occasions for meeting with women, were strictly controlled. Places which the students frequented were always supervised. Leaving the burse in the evening was difficult. It meant checking out a lantern from the rector's office and returning it immediately upon return.

Some of this information might seem a bit too detailed and unnecessary here. But when we realize that under circumstances like these it means much to us to read that Luther's record for his almost four-year stay at Erfurt is reported to have been very good throughout. Such information helps us very much in setting aside some of the accusations which his enemies brought up against him. The university statutes report a good recommendation for him.

There were those who reported that Luther's behavior at Erfurt was immoral and that it was his guilt that became a reason for his later entrance into the monastery and later making so much of "justification by faith." We shall explore that thought more later, but for now left us state just this – that Scheel, Böhmer, and Strohl, all three most dependable and thorough Luther scholars, have critically examined every existing source and have found absolutely no support for such accusations.

If you will permit a digression or an aside – graduates of Northwestern College or of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary might enjoy a description of the initiation which the burses gave its new members. It was spoken of as a deposition. It was arranged to be fun, but it did contain the element of "taking someone down a bit." When later, as an upper-classman at Erfurt, Luther was given the honor of making a deposition speech he traced in a humorous way the etymology of the ward "*deponere*" and spoke of that purpose of the initiation. And in later life he spoke of his youthful deposition as being good training for the heavier depositions of life. Does that defense sound familiar? Do you still recall the lagoon at the Seminary campus?

When Luther enrolled at Erfurt, the University was enjoying an enrollment of 2,000, one of the largest universities in Germany, if not the largest at the time. It was one of the old, well-established universities of Europe. As intimated, that may have been one of the things that encouraged Luther to enroll there. Upon his enrollment Luther entered the Liberal Arts Department preparing for his Bachelor of Arts degree. He had to spend a lot of time reviewing the *trivium* and then expanding his study of the *quadrivium*. When he applied for the Bachelor's examination, he swore to excessive reading in the fields of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, natural philosophy, spheric astronomy, philosophy, and psychology. Melanchthon implied later that Luther's education on this point might have been carried out more effectively had they let his genius at once master all of the arts and sciences instead of burdening him with "thorny dialectics." Still when now we review the Reformation career of Luther we cannot avoid the opinion that early, grilling training in dialectics stood him in very good stead. Think of Leipzig! Fortunately, the curriculum at Erfurt was such that a young man with primarily religious leanings would be given every conceivable encouragement.

As far as the philosophical point of view among the faculty at Erfurt was concerned during Luther's four years there, it seems to have been in a process of change. The day of scholasticism's great popularity and great admiration for Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus and the *Via Antiqua*, or the "old way," was pretty well past. They had gone so far as to try to harmonize pagan philosophy, notably Aristotle's, you will recall, with Christian revelation, as was evidenced especially by Thomas Aquinas in his long work *Summa Theologica.* The *Via Moderna* or 'new way' of William Occam and others had come to the fore, stressing that human reason is of no avail in the realm of faith. In fact, they separated philosophy into two realms. In the realm of faith, revelation could be the only guide; but to the matters of this world, human reason should be used to its fullest extent.

Luther for a time called Occam his "Master" and accepted without question the scholastic teaching of his Erfurt professors. During his four years at Erfurt a long list of Europe's great scholars found their places on the faculty at Erfurt for a time and then moved on. Two of them seemed to have stayed longest and won Luther as their student. He often spoke of them in later years. One was Trutvetter, a very able professor who deplored the hair-splitting type of argumentation of the Scholastics. He tried to simplify the dialectics of Occam, perhaps one of the reasons why Luther liked him. Luther did study Aristotle's physics, metaphysics, and the most modern point of view. He believed as did his teacher that the world is a sphere, the same as held by his contemporary, Christopher Columbus. The other professor whom Luther appreciated very much at the time was Usingen, a second Occamist who seems to have had great influence on Luther during these years. In theology he distinguished between Aristotle and the Bible. In matters of faith he accepted the Scriptures as an unerring guide to truth. It has been said that Usingen may have sowed the '*Sola Scriptura*' conviction in Luther and that

his criticism of Scholasticism may have had much to do with Luther's throwing the Scholastic philosophy out of Wittenberg later on.

Some say that Luther became a humanist already at Erfurt, but their claim does not bear up under most research. It is true that Humanism came to Erfurt toward the close of his Erfurt stay, but he never became a Humanist in the full sense of the term. The only reason ha appeared to some as being a Humanist was because all the while, even while he was slaving under his review of the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, he was reading the Latin Classics every chance he not mainly for the sake of language study. It was almost as though he knew that someday that knowledge of language should be of help in his life's greater purpose. In later years we hear him quoted that the curriculum at Erfurt was simply too heavy for him to read enough to become a Humanist. That statement sounds as though at that time he might have liked to do so. We are told that when he packed to leave for the monastery he did sell or give away all of his books, even his *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, he also disposed of his beloved lute, but he did take with him his worn copies of Virgil, Plautus, Cicero, and Livy!

Examinations for the Bachelor of Arts Degree were announced each fall and spring. Anyone, depending on the preliminary training with which he had come to Erfurt, might apply to take the examination. Most students would take it as soon as they could so that they might get started with work on their Master's program. Luther had been at Erfurt one year plus one summer in the fall of 1502 when he took the examination and earned his Bachelor's Degree. He ranked 30th in a class of 57. None of the sources which reveal that rather poor showing on Luther's part offer any explanation for his less than stellar showing – not even in the top half of his class. One wonders what the reason for this might have been, after reading so much about his diligence and hearing of how even modern analysts judge his record to be that of a top genius. There may be one explanation at the surface. We heard that candidates for the Bachelor's Degree applied on occasion as soon as possible, so that they might start work on their Master's program. Luther might have waited three more months that fall of 1502, but he took the examination at once. It may be that he should have waited. It may be that because of all his other reading he may not have done his reviewing as completely as he could have. The Bachelor's Degree qualified Luther for some teaching at the university. He assisted with the teaching of grammar and logic, but at once he began the courses for his Master's Degree.

The courses studied in preparation for the Bachelor's Degree, you will recall, were known as the '*trivium*' and consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. To these the student, if diligent, added physics and philosophy. Now, in preparation for the Master's Degree; the student concentrated on the '*quadrivium*', a set of four courses, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. In this case, too, if the student was diligent, he added courses like general mathematics, metaphysics, and ethics. The question is asked at times: was there no attention given to subjects which we pursue very much in our day, namely, literature, history, etc.? We may be sure that subjects like those were considered background material all the way through from the beginning of their schooling. They were expanded as the years passed and constantly reviewed, especially when preparing for their examinations for another degree.

In the spring of 1505, as soon as the required three years had passed since receiving the Bachelor's Degree. This time he fared much better. He ranked second in a class of seventeen. He had now earned both of his early degrees in the shortest allowable time. All of this was an accomplishment which only the most gifted managed.

His father was, of course, extremely proud of the oldest son. To be sure he was making further plans for his son. Since he had long known what it meant to earn his way by the sweat of his brow, he urged that he should begin the study of law. For centuries law had been the royal road to advancement for sons of the bourgeoisie, and he planned that Martin, too, should go this way and rise in the world of practical affairs. Law was the profession most highly regarded by nearly everyone in that day. Perhaps his son would even find his way into politics and to some position of great power and wealth on the European scene. Now that he himself had slowly climbed the ladder, so that he could afford it, he let his decision be known by buying his brilliant son a costly edition of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, a huge three-part text and training book in law which had been the authentic and official set of sources for law study ever since the days of Emperor Justinian, often referred to as Rome's greatest gift to posterity. More than that, Hans Luther's heart, nearly bursting with pride and ambition

wanted one more thing. Now that he was acquainted with and recognized by some of the well-to-do bourgeois families, he already centered on a daughter of one such family as a bride for his illustrious son.

Martin himself was, of course, very happy about his academic achievement, the Master's Degree. When in later years he spoke of that day in 1505, he said: "What a moment of majesty and splendor was that when one took the degree of Master, and torches were carried before, and honor was paid one. I consider that no temporal or worldly joy can equal it." Melanchthon tells us, on the authority of several of Luther's fellow students, that his talent was then the wonder of the whole university.

Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

III. His Monastery Days and Conversion

After Martin Luther received his Master of Arts Degree in the spring of 1505, there were three months before the lectures in Law at Erfurt University were to begin. It was during that time that people who were close to him began to notice a change in him. Hs seemed to be given to periods of melancholy and deep thought. What might the cause of this difference be in one who so recently had his happy moments and experienced the joy of life characteristic of the students at Erfurt University, especially during the days of graduation? Could it be that he was unhappy about the very thing which was making his father so proud and happy, namely, the fact that he was now to enroll in Law School?

It seems that Henry Lucas, in his thoroughly informative book on "Renaissance and Reformation" may have come upon much of the right answer. A number of other Luther biographers have agreed with Lucas. Now that he had a little time to reflect, his many, many contacts with priests and monastic personnel and atmosphere returned to his memory. Surely, you recall that every school which he had attended, all the way from Mansfeld through Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt, had been completely surrounded by the activities and atmosphere of the church.

When the time came, however, for the lectures in Law to start, Martin was at hand and enrolled. From no one do we get the impression that he enjoyed, even only liked his new curriculum. We recall that when Luther had pondered the question as to which course he should take after getting his Master's Degree, there were really only three possibilities at Erfurt: Medicine, Theology, and Law. And of these only Law was open to him, for there was no one enrolling in Medicine that term, and Theology would have required celibacy of him. To that his father would never have agreed. You will recall that he was already planning a marriage for his illustrious son, if possible into some family of means.

Soon followed the incident which is familiar to everyone who knows even only a little about Luther. His study of Law had lasted only five weeks when Martin seems to have felt the need for some more time off. He traveled home to Mansfeld to spend some time with his parents. He made the journey on foot, giving himself plenty time to think. It was June 30 when he started his trip back to Erfurt. On July 2, when he had come within a few miles of Erfurt, he was suddenly overtaken by a severe thunderstorm. He sought shelter under a tree near Stottenheim. Suddenly the tree was struck by a bolt of lightning, and Luther was thrown to the ground. Once again he was overcome by the fear which had long been nearly an obsession with him, a fear of sudden death brought on by his intense feeling of guilt caused by his consciousness of sin. Gripped by that fear he cried out: "Help, St. Anna, I will become a monk!" We understand why he prayed to St. Anna, since she was the patron saint of the mining profession and those engaged in it, his father's profession.

Luther believed implicitly that his oath to St. Anna was binding on him in the sight of God. Unless he should be granted a dispensation, it was his duty to fulfill it. He promptly repented of the vow, but, certain that God had spoken to him in the storm, he was determined to bow to God's divine will.

Two weeks later, on July 16, he invited his friends from the Bursa of St. Mary's, the Bursa in which he had lived since joining the Law School, to a farewell party in one of the Erfurt Inns frequented by students with their female acquaintances. Here he revealed the carefully kept secret concerning his plans to enter a monastery. The next day, July 17, he made his way across town to the Augustinian monastery. When the gate of the

monastery opened, Luther bade farewell to his friends who had accompanied him. They tried their best to dissuade him, but he replied: “Today you see me, but after this never.” They left in tears, while Luther disappeared behind the closed gates.

Before we go on with the story of Luther, we must admit that a number of questions suggest themselves at this point. We think of three.

For one, this question: Why did Luther decide to enter the monastery? Someone may want to say that we have pretty well answered that question by pointing to his fear for his sins and the judgment, his recent experience with the thunderbolt and his extreme fear for death, his many contacts with priests and monasticism wherever he attended school, his ardent love for literature in especially two fields, religion and the classics, fields of literature for which his present study of law left no time. And now if we imagine how all of this worked on him until that night in the storm we can appreciate the lines of Heinrich Böhmer in his book, *Der junge Luther*: “We can safely claim that inwardly Luther was already on the road to the monastery when the lightning at Stottenheim crashed down on him. The hysterical fear that came over him in that moment only hastened the decision; it did not create the attitude of mind out of which the decision was made.”

While suggesting an answer to that first question and referring to Luther’s fear for death and the judgment, to his unhappiness with guilt caused by sin, also to his experience in the storm at Stotternheim, we should complete the picture. Luther had two other very recent brushes with death which he found hard to forget. It was in the spring of 1502, the spring before he received his Bachelor’s Degree, that he had an experience which may have been the beginning of his serious thought concerning his sins and his terror at the thought of death and the judgment. While travelling home at Easter time, he accidentally wounded the main artery of his one leg with the rapier, or sword, which, like all students at Erfurt, he carried at his side for safety. He had gone about an hour’s distance from Erfurt when this happened. While a friend, who was with him, ran for a doctor, he pressed the wound tightly as he lay on his back with his leg lifted as high as he could in the air. The leg continued to swell. The doctor, it seems, was a bungler. By the time they managed to get Luther back to Erfurt, he had lost so much blood that he grew faint. He called upon St. Mary for help and lost consciousness. A few nights later the wound broke open again, and again he cried out: “O Mary, help me!” Veit Dietrich quotes him later saying: “If I had died at that time, I would have died in the name of Mary.”

Then it happened, too, that during that same period which we are talking about, a best friend of Luther died suddenly. There is some difference among biographers as to who that friend was, as well as to the manner of death he died. Melanchthon knew, he said, of the incident but did not claim to know the circumstances. He is quoted as saying, however, that the incident obviously made as great an impression on young Luther as the memorable incident in the electrical storm. Mathesius claimed to know that this best friend, a man by the name of Alexius, had been stabbed, which frightened Luther with the wrath of God and eternal judgment. Mathesius, too, felt that this incident had a devastating effect on Luther. There is still one more sudden death known of among the good friends of Luther at Erfurt at the time. It was the death of one Hieronymus Buntz, who died of pleurisy during Luther’s college days.

While still thinking of the question as to why Luther entered the monastery, it should be said that although monastic orders had by Luther’s day suffered with justice much criticism in the way of complaint and ridicule because of the deprivation of monastic life, its idleness, hypocrisy, and gross immorality, still many ware attracted by the thought that the solemn renunciation of marriage and the world’s goods, and the absolute submission of their wills to the commands of their superiors and the regulations of their Order constituted true service to God and raised them to a peculiar position of holiness and merit. In fact, it was said to young men pondering the possibility of joining that taking the vows would furnish the new monk with the blessings of a new Baptism. Luther tells us that he was assured of the same! The Luther of later years declared that his monastic vow was a compulsory one, forced from him by terror and the fear of death.

One question goes unanswered for the Luther researcher concerning Luther’s entrance into the monastery. It is this: Why did Luther wait two weeks after the storm at Stotternheim before entering the monastery when we know that he did not go home to tell his parents? Was it purely for the sake of thinking matters over and asking advice at Erfurt? He does say that priests and friends, especially Vicar Braun, tried to

dissuade him. Or does the thought which Dietrich Emme tosses out in his new book, "Martin Luther, Seine Jugend and Studentenzeit," have a hidden answer for us? The thought is that Luther might have wielded the dagger which killed Alexius. Emme offers no opinion, nor does he offer any of the circumstances.

Having become pretty well acquainted with Luther's father Hans along the way, we are quite anxious to ask the second question, "What was the reaction on his part to Martin's decision"?

According to the prevailing law, Luther was not bound to procure his father's consent for his entrance into the Order. To Martin, however, it seemed utterly impossible that to take such a step without the knowledge and approbation of his family. So even before the 17th of July, the day that he made application for admission into the monastery, he had doubtless informed his parents of his intentions and asked for their blessing. The answer which he received from Mansfeld shortly after July 17 exceeded even his worst apprehensions. Böhmer tells us that his father acted like a madman. We might want to say he hit the ceiling! When Martin received his Master's Degree, Hans had begun to address his son with the pronoun of respect for one's superior or elder, "Ihr." Now he promptly began addressing him with "du." He told him that he cut him off from all paternal grace and favor. His mother and the rest of his relatives also let him know that they would have nothing more to do with him. Martin feared that he was confronted by a dreadfully difficult choice, either to break with his family for good or go back into the world. Then, unexpectedly, a second letter arrived from Mansfeld relieving him of the dreaded choice. At the last moment, his father had given in. This dramatic change on his father's part is usually attributed to the fact that two younger sons had died suddenly of the plague, and a rumor had reached him that Martin, too, had bean stricken by the disease. When the rumor proved to be false, friends and acquaintances told the hot-tempered father that he was in duty bound to "offer something holy to God." Then he gave in, though "with reluctance and sadness." Later instances will reveal that Hans' attitude toward Martin became quite steadily more conciliatory. (More of this later.)

Our third question awaits an answer still. It is this: Why, of all monastic orders did Luther choose the Augustinian Eremites? Surely, even in the comparatively small city of Erfurt there was no lack of choices available for him, no less than six. In addition to the Augustinians at the Augustan Gate, there were the Benedictine Abbey on Peter's Hill, the Carthusians in the southern part of the city, the convent of Dominicans on the left bank of the Broad Creek, the Franciscans on the right bank, and the little cloister of Servites, or "Servants of the Holy Virgin," at the Kraempfer Gate. The "Black Cloister," the one which Luther chose, was not far from Lehmann's Bridge in the northeastern part of the city. So why did Luther choose this cloister?

To the best of our knowledge Luther never answered that question for us. But knowing Luther's problem at the time as we do, and knowing what we do about the Order at the time, some of the reasons become pretty apparent between the lines of our reading. For one thing the Order in Erfurt was the most important Augustinian order in Germany, considered the foremost center for cultivation of the ascetic ideal, and had, therefore, for years enjoyed the greatest prestige. It was said that among the Augustinians at Erfurt Luther could hope soonest to reach the goal of "evangelical perfection." To what extent Luther knew at this point the thoughts and writings of Augustine we do not know, but it does seem reasonably sure that after his four years of university training he might have known them well, and that would have been indication enough that Luther preferred to continue in what he thought might be the footsteps of Augustine. One other matter might pertain at this point. Schaff-Herzog tell us that to the Thuringo-Saxon province of Augustinian Order belonged some of the most famous theologians of the day and some of them were members of the Erfurt faculty. One such was Proles, who had founded the congregation of Observantine Eremites according to strictest principles; another was Johann Staupitz, whom we all know; and still another was Von Paltz, the famous Erfurt professor and pulpit orator. And when then we hear that Luther did not just join the Augustinians, but among them even Observantines, who were bent observing all of the strictest principles of the Order, then we see what Luther was looking for. Here again we might say that we find our theme coming to the fore: "Martin Luther - the Reformer in the Making."

It may be that still another matter had something to do with Luther's choosing of the Augustinian Order. While it is true that the Augustinian Eremites, or Hermits, were a mendicant, or begging, order, the Erfurt monastery was so wealthy that its inmates had long since ceased begging for a living. They no longer recruited

from the lower classes but rather from the middle and higher classes of the population. Illiterates were admitted only as monks of the second class, as *fratres*, or lay brothers, who were expected to perform the menial tasks. Only the monks of the first class were entitled to vote and were known as *patres*. These were educated men and clerics, occupied largely with singing, praying, and other ascetic practices.

What we have just heard will help us understand that the Augustinians would be very cautious when admitting a new member into their fold. When Luther first applied for membership on July 17, he was not admitted at once. He was first assigned to the monastic hostelry for observation of the state of his soul. His authorities wanted to assure themselves that "his spirit was of God." He had to be given the opportunity, as a guest of the monastery, to examine himself earnestly to see whether he could endure the "harshness" of the Order and abide in his purpose.

So it was not until early September, a month and a half later, that his reception took place in the monastery church with the customary formalities. There on the steps of the altar sat the prior, before whom Luther prostrated himself. Then the prior asked: "What dost thou desire?" Luther replied: "God's grace and mercy." Thereupon the novice was raised from the floor and asked by the prior if he were married, had any attachments, or any disease. Then he was told of the severity of the Order and asked whether he could undergo all such hardships with the help of God. During the singing of the hymn, "Great Father Augustine," he removed his secular attire in favor of his *MönchsGewand*, his monks' attire. In the meanwhile, the prior chanted the words: "The Lord attire you in the new man."

The new habit which Luther now wore consisted of a white house-dress, over which he wore a black scapular, a sleeveless cloth vestment, falling to the floor in front and back. The latter was girded with a leather belt. This garb he was to wear at all times, even while sleeping. It was because of that garb that the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt, as well as its counterpart in Wittenberg, was called the "Black Cloister."

When one reads the many accounts of Luther's stay in the monastery, a number of questions arise in one's mind. One such has to do with the matter of his needing to perform a great number of menial tasks. Some accounts give one the impression that he did spend a lot of time doing so, hoping that such behavior might bring him to the realization of his much sought-after peace of mind, that 'new Baptism'. One is also given the impression that the older monks ridiculed him for such diligence. Scheel tells us that such oft-repeated accounts are grossly exaggerated, that they do not ring true to the record. We are expressly told that for the first, at least, the university interceded on his behalf as a member of their own body for some relaxation from such tasks. And in later years he is known never to have complained about any vexations and burdens. In fact, it seems to have been the case that on occasion Luther made such severe demands on himself that his superiors needed to discourage him from such self-abuses.

It is true, of course, that while he was a novice he was obliged to learn how, when, and where to bend the knee, throw himself to the ground, walk around with eyes downcast, refrain from laughter and speaking, except for given periods for doing so. He did have to clean his cell, but that was not really a menial task. His cell was only seven by ten feet. It had in it a minimum of furniture: a bed, a table, and a chair. Some help was needed in the kitchen from time to time, and there was need for training in the liturgical parts of the chapel services.

Of course, that does not mean that life in the monastery was not difficult, especially during the year of his novitiate, and particularly for a diligent man like Luther. During that year there were seven or eight appointed hours of daily prayer – during each of these the young monks who were not priests as yet were required to say 25 *pater nosters* with the *Ave Maria*. The priests had more ample formulas for those hours.

Just at this time in the history of the Erfurt monastery a new Vicar-General started making his regular visits at the monastery, namely, Johann Staupitz. He introduced a new code of statutes. One of these was an assiduous program of Bible-reading. He saw to it that every monk upon reception into the monastery received a Bible of his own – to make it distinctive, it was bound in red. Before long it was spoken of as the "Red Bible of the Augustinians." We know, of course, that Bible-reading was no new experience for Luther. He had been doing piecemeal reading of the Bible ever since his early schooldays all the way through Mansfeld, Magdeburg,

Eisenach, and even Erfurt. But now he did it so eagerly and learned it so devoutly that he knew large portions of his Red Bible by heart. This was, to be sure, in the Latin text.

Staupitz, the new Vicar-General, soon took note of the melancholy young monk, Martin Luther. He treated him with fatherly confidence. He taught Luther that repentance, to the Scriptural meaning, was an inward change and conversion, which must proceed from love of holiness and of God. For peace with God we must not look to our own resolutions to lead a better life, which we do not have the strength to carry out of ourselves. We should trust rather with patience the mercy of Christ and see in Him the One whom God permitted to suffer for the sins of man – not the threatening judge, but rather the loving Savior. Luther, both then and throughout his life, spoke of Staupitz with grateful affection as his father and thanked God that he had been helped out of his temptations by D. Staupitz, without whom he would have been swallowed up in them and perished.

Luther also was required, though this, too, he did willingly, to meditate upon the state of his soul, so that he might be in condition to "confess aloud discreetly, and humbly" to the praeceptor at least once each week. Confession was always ready for him. Once a week, at least, each brother had to attend the private confessional. All sins, then, without exception, had to be revealed. Luther would try his best to unburden himself from his childhood up. But this was too much, even for a priest. There were occasions when Luther strove so hard to recall all his sins that Staupitz would tell him "to go his way and come back another day when he really had some sins to confess." Let him distinguish between what were really sins and what were not.

We should not think, as we might have been inclined to do to the case of a strong, healthy young man like Luther, that his constant efforts to confess resulted from sensual appetites. Luther does not seem to have been much troubled with that weakness. His problem was rather with the passions toward anger, hatred, envy, and the danger of pride. Faults of that description in thought, word, and deed were to his conscience as deadly sins, though to the priest who listened to him at confession they seemed too trifling to call for enumeration.

At the end of the novitiate Luther promised faithfully to live according to the rules of the holy father Augustine and render obedience to Almighty God, the Virgin Mary, and the prior of the monastery. Before doing so he put on a new dress of his Order which had been consecrated with holy water and incense. The prior received his vows, sprinkled holy water on him as he prostrated himself upon the ground in the form of a cross. When he arose his brethren congratulated him on being now like an innocent child fresh from Baptism. He was then assigned a new and somewhat better cell. It looked out on the cloistered yard of the monastery. Unfortunately for researchers, that cell cannot be found. It was destroyed by fire in 1872.

What was required of monk Luther now in the way of ascetic practices was not excessive. He probably accustomed himself very soon to eating only twice a day, and only once on the more than a hundred fast days. Perhaps he minded more the fact that his cell was not heated. The rules of the Order forbade any decorations of the surroundings. The monk was not permitted to remove his attire, even at night, and he had to wear his little cap even within the cell. Any noise or conversation in the halls was strictly forbidden. To exercise, the brethren walked up and down the cloister by twos.

Perhaps some of Luther's greatest hardships while in the monastery were the hardships which he brought upon himself. His great unhappiness over his sins and guilt drove him to thinking that if he were to torture himself, he might be able to drive evil out of his body. He was known, too, to fast far beyond the required fasting mentioned earlier. The story is told so frequently that, although it is not documented, it is regarded as history, telling of the evening when Staupitz missed Luther in the supper lineup. He had heard that Luther had been fasting excessively. This evening he decided to go to Luther's cell to investigate. Upon his arrival he found him lying prostrate on the cell floor, looking emaciated and half-conscious, with a knotted scourge lying beside him. That is usually reported as one of the many occasions when Staupitz urged Luther to trust in the wounds of Christ more than in his self-abuse.

There was still one other way to which Luther chastised himself, one might say, though he would never have considered it that. In addition to all of the other time-consuming practices mentioned above, he held himself to a right and lengthy schedule of reading and study, most of it Bible-study. It soon became known that his superiors had him in mind for the priesthood. Needless to say, he wished that himself, if, for no other reason,

then certainly for this that then he might still realize the promised joy of that new Baptism which the monastic existence was to bring him, but had not done so in nearly two years.

For most of his second year in the monastery he had been preparing devotedly for the day when he might become a priest. He read the great works of Gabriel Biel, who followed the teachings of Occam, who taught that only Scripture revealed spiritual truth. He successively became a subdeacon, a deacon, and next he would become a priest. On May 2, 1507, the great day had come. He was ordained and given the opportunity to celebrate his first Mass. It was a day he would remember all the rest of his days, sad to say not too pleasantly. The hoped-for joy and peace was not realized. Overwhelmed by the sacredness of the moment when he was to offer the blood of Christ as a sacrifice to the Lord God, he faltered in the Mass. Had it not been for his assistant at the altar, he was sure that he would have run from the chancel. To falter in any of the many forms of the Mass was considered to be sin!

One thing about the day did give him some satisfaction, though not unmixed with regret. For the first time since he entered the monastery, he saw his father, who rode into the monastery courtyard with 24 horsemen and a caravan of carriages carrying relatives and friends. His father came equipped to pay approximately $300 for the dinner he had ordered. Also, his mother's uncle, Vicar Braun, came to attend, having been specially invited by Luther. At a proper point in the program Luther's father arose to speak. He scolded the personnel of the monastery, who were present to full numbers, for having admitted his son into their midst. He reminded them of the fact that the Scriptures include the Fourth Commandment. They should have reminded Martin of his duty to his father two years earlier. Luther was pleased to hear his father quote the Scriptures in such a gathering.

Now that Luther had become a priest, his time became more his own. That means that he had more time for Bible-study on a more advanced level. Now his teaching assignments began, first at Erfurt, then at Wittenberg. (More on this in a later context.)

There was one part of Luther's stay at the monastery as a monk to which we want still to give some attention. We refer to his last year or more in that situation. It was the period during which he found his situation increasingly unbearable. Luther's biographers all speak of it. They refer to it with a great variety of titles. They place an equally varied and lengthy list of interpretations on it, some of them bordering on the supernatural when trying to describe it. We hear them speak of "the monastic struggle, the period of the inner light, the inner conflict, *die Bekehrung*, the conversion, *die Katastrophe*, the catastrophe, *die Turmereignis*, a tower experience, the quest, *ein Durchbruch*, the new theology," and others.

What are all of these terms trying to refer to? Let us hope that they will come quite clear to you as we continue. If you merge them all into one term that befits the context, you will find that they do a pretty good job of telling us that Luther came to a point where he could not endure his situation any longer; they point us secondly to a number of voices which gradually brought Luther out of his unhappy lot; and thirdly, they point us to the day when Luther finally was in a position to proceed positively with the newfound light.

It seems very likely that all of us find it a bit hard to understand how it happened that Luther lingered so long and so miserably in his intense unhappiness with the guilt of his sins, so that he nearly reached the point where he was about to lose what faith he had. But let us keep in mind that that experience on our part wants to point us to a good fortune for which we want to be eternally grateful to our gracious God. I refer to the fact that from the day of our early Baptism we have been constantly growing in faith and understanding, thanks to a wide and constant variety of good fortune: God-fearing parents, Christian homes, training in church and school, the Bible and a wealth of helps with it in our own language, and the privilege of living in a day and in a country in which, no matter how much we need to warn at times against their temptations for us, we are surrounded by enlightening culture. A comparison of all of this with the situation to which Luther grew up is hard for us to imagine. We think of his growing up in a church which taught, yes, insisted on a theology that ran in the opposite direction from the direction to which it should have been leading its people. The result was that he grew up to a home given too much to witchcraft, saint worship, the use of relics, and faith in salvation by works, with both state and church standing guard to defend these falsehoods rather than to welcome and investigate fairly any better exposition of the Gospel and its precious truths.

Realizing these things we bring ourselves to the point where we do not fault Luther for not progressing faster toward understanding. He searched the Scriptures, but for a time, because of the guidance he had, they led him to hate some of its finest statements. When the Psalmist prayed, "Deliver me in your righteousness," he came to hate the precious word "righteousness," because he thought it warned that he should produce a perfect righteousness like the perfect righteousness of Christ before he could be judged in it and find salvation. He actually came to fear if not hate Christ, for the thought of His judging him in righteousness filled him with utter despair.

To make matters worse, there were enemies of Luther in his own day who blamed Luther for all of this, saying that his reports about soul anguish were exaggerations and lies. You know some of them – men like Eck, Aleander, Duke George, Cochlaeus, and others. There were even such during the centuries since among the Catholic biographers – men like Denifle, Grisar, and others.

But, as we said, there were voices breaking through to rescue Luther. One such came to Luther through his avid reading of his works. We refer to the great church-father in the ancient church, Augustine. More than a thousand years had passed between their respective times, but Augustine had a message for Luther. Not that Augustine could be followed in all he wrote, but he did write well concerning the sovereignty of God, the fall of man, and then above all his helpful statements concerning the righteousness of Christ. Luther is quoted as saying that he was happy to find that the early church had such a clear understanding of grace in Christ. Luther's most helpful voice, however, was the object of his increasingly diligent study, the Word of God itself. Though it is true, as we just observed, that he did not grasp the meaning of the Word fully at once, yet he soon found that he was in the workshop of the Holy Spirit.

His personal study room at the time was in the tower-room at the Black Cloister. During the summers of 1513 through 1515 he worked on his lectures for the coming school terms, first on Psalms and then on Romans. Each time he came upon the expression of the "righteousness in Christ" he paused to ponder and examine the exegesis more in detail and with an open mind. Gradually, to his extreme joy, the meaning came through to him with the help of the Holy Spirit. The passage that unlocked the mystery for him was Romans 1:17. Suddenly he saw that if the righteousness of Christ is revealed in the Gospel, then that righteousness in which we are justified is not the absolute righteousness which we must achieve to be judged in it, but it is the righteousness which Jesus accomplished for us on Calvary. That is the message of the Gospel: And if the just are to live by faith, then righteousness, Christ's righteousness, is ours through faith; this, too, is a gift of grace!

No, the *Turmerlebnis* (the Tower experience) was no miraculous, supernatural revelation on a given date, during a given hour, or in a given place; it was the Holy Spirit's work blessing the many hours and long study of the Word by his faithful servant Martin Luther.

Now Luther became an evangelical preacher and an evangelical teacher. His sermons attracted many hearers. His lectures attracted large enrollments to Wittenberg University. His was a new theology indeed: Luther spoke of it in words something like those St. Paul used, when he, Luther, spoke of it as "our Gospel." Indeed, it was new, old as the Garden of Eden, of course, yet new – it was no longer the message of the anti-Christ, salvation by works. It was the Gospel of Grace in Christ, yes, salvation in the "righteousness of Christ."

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in Norfolk, Nebraska,
Reaching the point of agreement in Luther's career with the theme of the convention:
Justification by Grace through Faith.]

Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

IV. His reaction to Non-Catholic Opposition

It is entirely likely that everyone present in our gathering here is quite knowledgeable concerning Luther and the Reformation. And yet, if we were to ask each of you to tell us what you consider the most important facts about Luther and the Reformation, we believe that you would, in most cases, mention things like his publishing of the 95 Theses, his producing the Catechisms, translating the Bible, taking his stand at the Leipzig Debate and at the Diet of Worms, and being largely responsible for confessional statements like the Augsburg Confession and the Smalcald Articles. Your answer to that point would be right good, except that you ought not stop there. The point we want to make in this essay is that there are quite a number of other events which follow and are of great importance to the Reformation itself and among the results of the Reformation.

Martin Luther was hardly more than beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel as far as his reformation of the Catholic Church was concerned, when he began experiencing subtle and annoying opposition from non-Catholic sources. His dealing with these and his way of winning the day over against them are as important to us today especially in some communities, as are his victories over the falsehoods of Catholicism. In fact, to some communities they seem to be of even greater need.

Let me give you one illustration of the kind of situation I am referring to. It happened just twenty years ago last Reformation that I was requested to preach the sermon for a Reformation rally in Norfolk, Nebraska. While driving through a sizeable city in central Iowa on my way to Norfolk on the day before Reformation Sunday, I happened to round a corner on which was located a Methodist Church, undoubtedly the largest in that city. Out on the yard in front of the church the people of that church had erected a very large, temporary billboard. On it was read easily, even from the street, that this church would be celebrating the Reformation Festival on the next day. Not only were they going to hold several services with guest speakers, but in the evening they were also going to show the movie, "Martin Luther," the movie which the Synodical Conference folks got out in the early 50's. I had just shown it the previous week myself at Northwestern to the Reformation course.

As I drove on, thinking about the somewhat puzzling experience I had just had, the thought occurred to me that they might indeed enjoy that film, since it pictured well the break with Rome, but, agreeably for them, it omitted entirely the important scene at Marburg, Luther's debate with Zwingli, one of the earliest fathers of their church, and the sad fact that only eight years after the Diet of Worms, Luther needed to break fellowship with Zwingli, too.

I wonder how many of you pastors have had this experience that you speak with parishioners who are very clear concerning the Reformation of Luther where the Catholic Church is concerned, but then on another occasion find the same people unwilling to see that there dare be no fellowship between us and the Protestant churches, sometimes even Lutheran churches, which surround us on every hand. Let no one misunderstand us, we have in no measure lost our respect for the doctrine which Luther restored to us in the Reformation, namely, that the papacy is the very anti-Christ. But let that doctrine not deter us from recognizing the fact that many of the doctrines of the sons and daughters of Zwingli and Calvin are today quite as Christ and Cross-denying as those of the Church of Rome. For that reason, while developing the general theme for our five essays, "Martin Luther, the Reformer in the Making," it seemed good to find, while working on the essays for this occasion, that this 'making' included his becoming a consistent and thorough reformer. So then, let us take up our theme for this essay:

Luther's Reaction to Non-Catholic Opposition

As we begin the body of our essay let us recall a few lines from several Church historians with which we find ourselves in agreement. First of all, the words of Latourette in his *History of Christianity*:

> Outstanding though he was as the great leader of the Reformation, Luther did not long carry all those with him who wished for change. Probably no one could have done so. So vital a movement inevitably had many expressions. Since they all had in common the repudiation of Rome, they were without an administrative head to enforce outward unity. Luther would not have done so even had he possessed the power. Before many years, numbers who at the outset were more or less sympathetic separated from him.

Then, none of us will want to disagree with the observation of Schwiebert in his *Luther and His Times*: "In the early stages of the Reformation Luther received an almost universal support in his challenge to Rome and its indulgence traffic; but as he matured as a Reformer and his convictions crystallized, he began to encounter disagreement and opposition."

It was during the period referred to by these quotations just heard that voices were heard more and more and in increasing numbers in opposition to or differing with Luther and his reformation. More and more they originated among non-Catholic groups or leaders.

We want to pick out a few of these voices whose followers are with us still in our communities. Since we want to discuss a number of them, we dare not allow ourselves the time for details. Let us do enough to help us recognize them to their counterparts today. And let the other be this that we observe how Luther reacted to each, in that way becoming the thorough and consistent reformer over against them just as he had done in the case of the Catholics.

The first such opposing voice originated, it is true, from within the Catholic Church, but soon we find him so noticeably alienated from Catholicism as such and strongly surrounded by another movement, that we must think of their combination as a non-Catholic opposition. The man of whom we speak was, of course, Erasmus; and the movement was Humanism. Erasmus had not been the founder of Humanism, but by the time he comes to our attention here, he is known as the 'Prince of Humanists'.

Humanism, you may recall, was the increasingly popular and intellectual movement which spread up out of Italy into western and northern Europe during the days of the Italian Renaissance. It fostered the study of the classics of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It came as a relief to many who had grown bitterly weary of the old stereotype into which the Scholastics had largely reduced Christianity by trying to reconcile the ancient Greek philosophy with Christian theology. What the Scholastics, 'Schoolmen', as they liked to be called, did to Christianity for a bit over five centuries under the powerful leadership of particularly the University of Paris and a strong monastic order, the Dominicans, became a stifling pity from which the Catholic Church has never recovered to this very day.

Little wonder that when Humanism came along with the enjoyment of the classics men found it a relief. It did a number of things for them. For one, they enjoyed the classics. Furthermore, it aided them linguistically in their approach to the Scriptures. There was a short time when some of his contemporaries spoke of Luther as a Humanist. It is not hard for us to believe that with his love for languages he would appear to be one of them. There were others like him. We think, for instance, of the fine scholar and teacher of St. Paul's Letters, especially Romans, at Oxford – namely, John Colet.

But soon Luther was opposed to Humanism. For one thing, we find him saying in his *Table Talks* that he was much too busy during his early teaching days at Wittenberg and Erfurt to have become greatly involved with the movement. But more than that, he soon sensed that Humanism was taking a very wrong turn. While enjoying the adventures and accomplishments of men as heroes in the reading of the classics, and while enjoying the classics' description of the virtues of man, they soon became convinced that man should be thought of as being able to accomplish great things not only physically and socially, but also spiritually. When placing their new-found notion alongside especially St. Paul's exhortations toward sanctification, they arrived at the opinion that man could at least help toward working out his salvation, if not indeed completing the task himself.

No wonder that Luther soon led the opposition to Humanism. And now, that is where we find the clash forming between Luther and Erasmus. After all, the latter was soon to be known, as we have heard, as the 'Prince of Humanists'.

When Luther and Erasmus first became acquainted with one another it appeared that they admired one another and that they might walk together in common cause.

If we may digress for a moment and look at Luther's behavior generally while getting to know quite a number of men from whom he had later to part company, we find a behavior worthy of note. He, in quite a number of cases, gave them a very fair chance. He studied their words and works, entered into exchange of such with them; but then, and only then, when he found a break necessary for the truth's sake, did he promptly and definitely take such a step.

And so it was with his behavior toward Erasmus. Erasmus first noticed Luther when his name was heard throughout Germany, after the appearance of the 95 Theses. Erasmus accepted him as a fellow-worker for the reform of the Roman Church. He regarded Luther as the champion of the Gospel and the deliverer of Germany from the bondage of Rome.

At first, Luther counted on the support of Erasmus, and not without reason, for Erasmus spoke well of the Theses and the commentaries Luther had written in Wittenberg. In 1519 Luther addressed a letter to Erasmus speaking of him as "our glory and hope," acknowledging his indebtedness to him and even asking for his support.

It was not long after this letter, however, that we find Luther's enthusiasm for Erasmus cooling markedly. We read from Luther's pen: "I am reading our Erasmus, and my opinion of him becomes daily worse. He pleases me, indeed, for boldly and learnedly convicting and condemning monks and priests of inveterate ignorance, but I fear he does not sufficiently advance the cause of Christ and God's grace."

And it was just to that area of grace that the basic difference between the two men turned into a need for separation. Without wanting to be too brief or to oversimplify, the clash reached a climax in the matter of the freedom of will and predestination. For a man like Erasmus, the Prince of Humanists, who in that role expressed great enthusiasm for man's ability to achieve great things morally, it would need to follow that he believed that man had the freedom of will to choose the morally good thing and accomplish it – hence his thought soon included the thought of working along in the achieving of his own salvation. That thought led to another, namely, this that God would be unjust and immoral if He were to order the universe in such a way that man could not of himself fulfill the conditions which God ordained for salvation and then were arbitrarily to choose some to be saved and by doing so condemn others to hell.

Erasmus argued further that man's will must have the power to choose between good and evil, otherwise God would not have asked him in the Scriptures to choose the good. Further he argued that the fall of Adam had merely dulled man's moral faculties, but that he could refrain from evil and choose those things which led to his salvation.

These were some of the thoughts which Erasmus placed into writing in his book, *The Freedom of Will*, to 1524. Many agreed, not only Luther's enemies, that Erasmus' book was a most remarkable document, clear, clever, and tactfully written.

At the time Luther was too preoccupied with the Peasants' Revolt to reply. But in due time, in fact, one year later, he did so in his book, *The Bondage of the Will*. In this book, Schwiebert tells us, Luther reached his peak as an able and well-balanced controversialist. Preserved Smith evaluated it as "tone of the roost important of all 15th century works." The book was widely read, for seven Latin and two German editions were printed within a year. In later years Luther remarked himself that he would be willing to have all of his works perish except the Catechisms and *The Bondage of the Will*.

Those of you who have read Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*, and in a gathering like this it seems that an assignment at school might have put many of us into such a class, you will know that it is not the kind of book which one can summarize easily in a few short paragraphs, nor is that called for in an assignment like this. But let us say just this: In this book Luther takes Erasmus' aberrations, one by one, and in what for Luther seems a calm manner and with a wealth of Scripture references sets each of those arguments of Erasmus aside.

Frequently he turned to Romans 3 with its very familiar passages like: “There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” Or to add I Corinthians 2:14: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Let these suffice to indicate the way in which Luther shows that natural man suffers the bondage of the will and does not have the freedom of the will to choose.

It is at points like that that Luther goes on to show that salvation is by God’s grace through faith in the atoning Savior, the work of the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith through conversion. It is true, then, that the new man takes over in us to lead a godly life. But just at this point Luther stresses two things – namely, one, this is still not man’s choosing but the Holy Spirit in us, and, two, none of even these deeds of the new man have anything to do with salvation; they are the expression of thanksgiving and love of the new man for and to the Lord Jesus.

Who of us does not know that truth in any number of statements on God’s part: “Even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” And when Christ said, “it is finished,” man needed no longer partially to redeem himself, as Erasmus claimed. You may at this point be reminded of that “new theology” which Luther was employing here, a theology the very opposite of the Catholic theology. Here we see that it is different, too, from the theology of the “Prince of Humanism,” Erasmus.

Erasmus never gave up his unfortunate contentions. Though he never really broke formally with the Catholic Church, yet he needed to wander unwelcomed from pillar to post: Paris, London, Louvain, and Basel. Some think that it may be significant that before he died he did return to Basel, his favorite stopping place. Basel was Protestant, of course, though not Lutheran. Though he returned to Basel, the ironic thing was that the pope was wooing him to the hope that he would accept an important position. That did not reach fulfillment either. He died at Basel to 1535. He was buried to a crypt in the Basel cathedral. Nine years later, when the Council of Trent started meeting, he was posthumously excommunicated and dubbed a heretic.

When Luther’s reformation became more widely known beyond the boundaries of Germany, another non-Catholic opponent appeared on the scene. We refer to Huldretch Zwingli, who lived in Switzerland at the time. Let us give some thought to the way in which Luther reacted to him.

Zwingli was born seven weeks after Luther on January 1, 1484, in a mountain village in the Toggenburg Valley of St. Gall canton to Switzerland. The story of his life started out very differently, however, from that of Luther’s. He came from a locally prominent family. His father was the bailiff of the village. His one uncle was a priest and later a dean, first at a school to Basel and then at a school in Bern. This uncle was overly protective of his nephew, influencing him to study under him at each of his schools, first Basel and then Bern. Zwingli was a brilliant lad – consequently the Dominicans tried to lure him into their monastery. When his father and uncle became aware of this they took him out of the city and sent him to the University of Vienna, a renowned school at the time. After Vienna they sent him to Basel, the university at which he took both his Bachelor’s degree and his Master’s degree in prompt succession. While attending Basel he taught on the side at St. Martin’s School. He was unlike Luther in several other ways. He never became a Doctor of Divinity, though this did not keep him by any means from continuing to be a scholar, studying Hebrew and Greek, pretty much on his own, and avidly reading the works of Erasmus. Most unlike Luther, Zwingli grew up a happy boy with no great sense of sin. Like so many priests of his day he did not observe the clerical obligation of chastity. When later his request and that of ten other priests asking that the rule of celibacy be abolished was denied, he married a widow secretly to spite of that fact and kept the marriage a secret for two years before he revealed it.

In 1506 Zwingli was ordained a priest and became the pastor of a country parish at Glarus. Here he worked for ten years. His stay here gave him a good chance to continue his private study. While here at Glarus, however, a double interest got Zwingli into trouble. He had kept up his interest in Humanism ever since his university days. As a freeborn Swiss he also kept very close to the democratic system of Swiss government. That social Gospel approach to church work was largely responsible for what happened. The men of Switzerland had for some time given in to the practice of being hired as mercenary troops by surrounding rulers. It was a constant practice for years that especially the pope maintained his papal states with the help of mercenary troops from Switzerland. Zwingli was sure that the practice was demoralizing to the men of his

parish, and if to the men, then certainly also to the families. It ought to be noted that in great likelihood Zwingli knew what was involved, since for a period of time during that Glarus ministry he had served as a Chaplain for the Emperor's troops in the battle of Marignano. This had given him an excellent opportunity to learn to know the life of his military companions. Before long, while still at Glarus, Zwingli began to speak out against the mercenary practice. Relations became strained. When he received a call to move to Einsiedeln to preach, he was relieved. Einsiedeln was but a short distance away. It was a pilgrimage center for pilgrims from Switzerland, France, Alsace, and South Germany. The attraction was the famous shrine in which was housed a black image of the Virgin Mary.

While here at Einsiedeln he met the erstwhile famous teacher, Thomas Wyttenbach. Under him he studied St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, hearing him say that only the Holy Scriptures, and not the pope, were the supreme authority – also that only the price of Christ had been paid for the remission of sins and that, therefore, indulgences were superfluous and that remission is unlocked to us by the key of faith and not by the keys of Peter or the church.

It should be obvious that in an assignment like this we dare not allow ourselves the luxury of telling the whole story of the clash between the reformation of Luther and that of Zwingli. Let us, therefore, do just two things – one will be to show how such a clash could easily come about; the other to take a look at the climax of Luther's reaction to Zwingli's theology at the Marburg Colloquy.

To cover that first point, here are a few matters to consider. Do you have a mental picture of the map of Switzerland, couched in the hills southwest of Germany, straight south of the Netherlands, and immediately west of southern France? How easy then to understand that antipapal feelings had been running stronger in Switzerland for nearly a century. That is, if you remember the Council of Constance and the Council of Basel which were held in Switzerland in 1415 and 1432, respectively. If you do, then you will remember either what a rough treatment the papacy was given at those councils, or the unpopularity which must have resulted for the papacy. Do you recall? The ouster of three popes, the burning of John Hus in the hope of ferreting out heresy, the near ouster of Pope Eugene IV, and finally their failure to reform the church. True, the Swiss were not involved at the time, but they were immediately at hand to be most aware of what was transpiring and of the vulnerability of the church.

Then surely you recall our learning a few minutes ago that one of Erasmus' stopping places for a longer time, in fact, his favorite one, was Basel, a Protestant city in sympathy with Zwingli. We heard, too, you recall, that we have record of a strong friendship between these two brilliant men as they looked askance not only at Catholicism, but also later at Lutheranism.

Nor let us forget that those were also difficult days for the Lutheran Reformation. They kept Luther from giving Zwingli's movement a sufficiently thorough and prompt reaction. Experiences like Carlstadt's behavior, the Peasants' revolt, the behavior of the Anabaptists, the Zwickau Prophets, and the Mystics brought Luther back from the Wartburg at a time when it was widely known that he was still under the Edict of Worms. What is more, the fact that the Anabaptists and the Mystics were active also in Switzerland and had won the support of Zwingli for a time did not make the relationship between Luther and Zwingli any smoother. We shall say more of these things in a later context. But now to get back to the relationship between Luther and Zwingli. Zwingli's prominence on Europe's theological scene started to become known soon after he began his ministry as parish priest at the Great Muenster of Zürich, the largest church in Switzerland. Although his first sermons there indicated that he was still Catholic in name, they did demonstrate that he was exceptionally able at explaining the Bible in a direct manner, free from scholastic explanations and legendary examples. Already they showed a determined interest in uncovering ecclesiastical abuses. It was largely through his preaching that the selling of indulgences was prohibited in Zürich.

In the meantime, Luther's attack upon indulgences up in Germany and his break with Rome gave him a large following in Switzerland. Many of his writings were printed in Basel and sold throughout Switzerland. Among his most interested followers was Zwingli, who embraced evangelical doctrines in the latter half of 1519, after he had barely escaped death during a plague which took the lives of nearly a third of the population of Zürich. At this point Zwingli considered Luther a good friend.

And for a brief time there were reasons for Luther's watching Zwingli with a measure of approval. As we heard, Zwingli stopped the use of indulgences in Zürich. He preached against fasting, private confession, the Mass, monasticism, celibacy of the clergy, the use of pictures and music in the church services, and the custom of fasting during Lent. In 1523 he suggested that all issues at stake should be clarified and settled at a formal disputation. In preparation for that disputation he prepared his well-known 67 conclusions.

In issuing these conclusions to 1523 he used a format much like the 95 Theses of Luther. They agreed also on many points with Luther's theology, for instance, with regard to indulgences, Christ the only Savior and Mediator, the supremacy of the Word, rejection of the primacy of the pope, the Mass, the invocation of saints, the merit of works, the fasts, pilgrimages, celibacy, purgatory, and others. In fact, Zwingli was quoted once as claiming that he was already preaching the Gospel as early as 1512, before he had ever heard of Luther. But the statement was reported as one having only his word as basis.

Almost from the beginning, however, Luther continued to be wary of Zwingli. The friendship which Zwingli felt toward Luther, which we mentioned before, was never really fully returned. Luther noticed at once a radical approach on Zwingli's part toward pictures, music, ceremonies, etc… He felt he noticed too much of the humanistic and mystic approach in Zwingli's theology, too much by way of mixture of Church and State. And when, as Schaff so typically puts it at the beginning of one of his paragraphs: "The Mass was gone," and Zwingli and his followers began celebrating the Lord's Supper, talking about it, writing about it, and disputing about it. The problem which was to produce the break between the two Protestant bodies came into the clear. It was the 'Sacramentarian' or figurative interpretation of the Lord's Supper – the thought that the Lord's Supper was only a commemorative ceremony, the bread and wine only representing the body and blood of Christ. Such a thought was just too far removed from what Luther and his followers believed the Lord's Words said – that at the Lord's Table we receive the true body and blood, that it is a truly spiritual experience, that there we receive the assurance of the forgiveness of sin and the strengthening of our faith. Luther could simply not countenance any part of Zwingli's thinking on that point. Several public disputations concerning the matter of the sacrament between followers of the two opinions were held beginning as early as 1523. The first celebration of communion after the Reformed usage was held during Holy Week of April 1525 in the Great Muenster Church in Zürich.

Now if you are recalling the mental picture of the map of south-central Europe which we tried to conjure up for you a few minutes ago, you will notice that Hesse, the German state over which Philip was landgrave, was directly on the route between Switzerland and the Netherlands. That placed it on the route traveled by Erasmus and the Humanists as well as by the followers of both theologies, that of Luther and Zwingli. We shall call the followers of Zwingli the 'Reformed' at this point. By this time Zwingli's theology had developed far enough for us to recognize him as the forerunner of a modern liberal theology which in our time has produced a whole school of Protestant churches which we speak of as the Reformed churches.

Philip of Hesse was a German and a follower of Luther, but he was not above being impressed enough by the fact that Zwingli, as we have seen, did embrace many of the same doctrines as did Luther. He came to deplore the division which was becoming more and more noticeable and, as he saw it, regrettable for the people of his principality. He encouraged, therefore, that there be a colloquy between the two leaders.

Luther and the Wittenbergers had come to the conclusion that it would be of no avail. Luther was quite convinced that Zwingli and his followers had displayed a spirit which would not bend, and he, Luther, could not yield an inch. But so much was being written on the matter, and enthusiastic followers of Zwingli were boasting so much that they would soon swallow up all of Luther's followers, that five princes, including Saxony and Hesse, urged that a meeting be held. In fact, the Elector of Saxony commanded the Wittenbergers to attend. The five princes now requested the drafting of articles which became known as the Schwabach Articles on which to base their arguments with the Zwinglians. Luther drafted the articles, 17 in number, and they took their name from the place at which the German princes and theologians met to hear and approve of them. Philip offered his beautiful castle for the meeting at Marburg. The year was 1529. The Zwinglian delegation arrived on September 27. The principal men in that group were, of course, Zwingli and Oeccolampadius, a brilliant theologian, as well as Bucer, an earlier friend of Luther but now a disappointment to him. The Wittenbergers arrived three days

later. Chief among their group were Luther, Melanchthon, and Jonas. Philip of Hesse welcomed the two groups to his Marburg Castle. Zwingli reported that 25 listeners gathered to hear. Another reported 50 to 60.
The debate at Marburg revolved largely about the Savior's Words of institution, more especially the word "*ist*." Did it mean "is," or "represents"? As the debate began Luther is said to have written the words of institution on the tabletop before him and then placed the cloth over them. On occasion, however, he lifted the cloth to point out that he wanted no deviation from those words.

As Luther searched the Scriptures while the debate went on, he spoke up to point out that he had found the clearest passage of all, namely, I Cor.10:16. If there were no other passages, this one would be sufficient, he said, to persuade all his opponents: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ, the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

For five days the debate went on. Since Prince Philip knew that Luther and Zwingli were hot-tempered, much of the debate went on between pairs, Luther against the even-tempered Oeccolampadius, and Zwingli against the gentle Melanchthon. But when the five days were over, the meeting ended in an impasse. And yet, of the 15 articles which Luther had drawn up as the debate ran its course, only one part of the 15th article, that having to do with the actual presence, had not been agreed on. The two groups shook hands with one another as they parted, not to fellowship but merely to friendship.

It is often reported that in parting with Zwingli Luther spoke the familiar words: "You have a different spirit from us." It should be said that the record does not support that story. It does record Luther's speaking those words, but to Bucer, the same man whom he refused to greet when arriving at Marburg, but passed him shaking his finger at him and saying: "You are a rogue." You may remember that Bucer was the former friend who had come to Luther's side as early as the Augustinian Diet at Heidelberg to hear Luther in 1518. During much of the Reformation he was a loyal friend and supporter of Luther. Now during the Sacramentarian controversy he switched his allegiance to Zwingli. On two occasions after that he used his position as an editor, to whom the confidence had been granted that he might alter manuscripts without submitting them first, to betray Bugenhagen on one occasion and Luther on another, giving the impression that they had written statements favorable to the Sacramentarians. It seems, however, that on the day after the colloquy, in retelling the Marburg story, he (Luther) may have allowed the impression that he had spoken those words to Zwingli. Surely, we can understand that that was the way he felt about Bucer as well as Zwingli.

Zwingli's day as leader of one side of the Reformation strife did not last long after Marburg. Two years later, in 1531, we find him fighting in the battle of Cappel in a bloody war between the Protestant cantons and the Catholic cantons of Switzerland. It was there that he fell at the age of 47. Fanatic and foreign mercenaries among the enemies would not spare the dead bodies. Zwingli's was quartered, burned, and the ashes, mixed with the ashes of a pig, were cast to the wind.

The religion of Zwingli, destined to be found in our day in one form or other among the many Reformed churches of our day and country found a new leader in John Calvin, the man of France, who authored the famous work: *Institutes of Christianity*, accepted today as the basic confession of the Reformed churches. True, there were differences between Zwingli's and Calvin's theologies in approach, doctrine, and especially practice. There were also some years needed by Calvin before he found himself comfortable and quite unopposed in the place of leadership in the church of Switzerland, which position he filled from Geneva. And from that center the Reformed churches spread under a variety of names and under leading disciples of Calvin, one of them being John Knox, to France, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland. From those countries they spread to the New World, in turn, so that it is spoken of today as the international Protestant Church.
Calvin was 25 years younger than Luther and Zwingli. He really belongs to the generation to follow. It is, therefore, hardly warranted that we consider him as belonging to the generation in which Luther was "the Reformer in the Making."

It is true that their lives did overlap for a short time, and the two men did get to know about one another. In 1528, when Calvin was obliged to live in Strassbourg, both because of his exile from France and his already having had trouble in Geneva during his first stay in that city, he and Luther did have an opportunity for corresponding by pamphlets. During that short acquaintance Luther seems to have admired Calvin because of

his brilliance, his piety, his sincerity, and his integrity. Those last three characteristics he had never been able to believe of Zwingli. And while Calvin did regret when speaking of Luther that the latter often spoke too harshly, he expressed happiness over the fact that Luther never came down heavily on him. But surely, as time passed, only eight years to be exact, Luther did find fault with Calvin's extreme legalism when he got back to Geneva and even more so with his having embraced the theology of the Sacramentarians. But those were years during which Luther was overwhelmed by a volume and variety of grave, on-going responsibilities. His health was often not good. It may be that under such circumstances he let Calvin go his way because he surmised that Calvin would do so anyway.

While speaking of Luther's dealings with non-Catholic opposition there is one combination of such that still awaits our attention. We refer to the Mystics and a number of people and movements which grow out of Mysticism only to give Luther no end of trouble. But let us identify the Mystics first.

Their movement started back in the 14th century in Holland and Germany principally. Later they spread into France and Switzerland, later still into England. They were a group very concerned about the reform of Christianity along the medieval lines. They sought religious satisfaction primarily by stressing pious living and closeness to God.

You may recall men like Master Eckhart, who liked to talk about an "inner light" and believed he had direct experience with God. Then there was his disciple Tauler, an earnest preacher and leader of a group known as the "Friends of God." He also emphasized very much striving to live to a personal, popular piety. More likely you recall Thomas à Kempis, the author of a work you may have read, *Imitation of Christ*, in which he urged that Christians must live a Christ-like life, copying the Sermon on the Mount. And just to mention one more, Gerard Groote, who devoted his life to reforming the clergy and teaching young boys. He is said to have been the founder of the "Brethren of the Common Life," a semi-monastic order of clergy and laymen which grew from Holland into Germany. They concentrated on the education of young boys. That interests us, since you will recall that Luther studied under several men of their order in the Cathedral School at Magdeburg. In other words, he had his contact with the Mystics during their earlier and less offensive existence and during his youth. That contact, I believe, we dare not regret. When we think of Luther's rearing during his early school days, in the scholastic stereotype of Catholic theology and compare that with the very wholesome and heartwarming way in which he handled sentiment and emotion in his hymns, his presentation of the Gospel, and in his appealing counseling on frequent occasions; then we are inclined to ask, did Luther learn some of that approach from his earlier contact with the Brethren of the Common Life, the Mystics?

Not many years passed, however, before the Mystics experienced a big change to personnel and behavior. They became a dismaying nuisance to the Reformation with their excesses and radical measures. They made it necessary for Luther to react to them in firm and outspoken rejection.

Let us pin-point a few of the instances we refer to:

Unfortunately, even Carlstadt, a coworker of Luther on the faculty at Wittenberg, was pitifully misled by their thinking during the absence of Luther at the Wartburg. He fell into the trap of minimizing the importance of theological scholarship, of accepting the thought of continuing revelation, and of being hasty, radical, and disruptive in his approach to reforms which were in due time to be tactfully undertaken. Carlstadt was soon followed by Zwilling who, though an Augustinian monk, became, with his fiery, emotional preaching, the leader of reckless bands of enthusiasts who literally rocked the monasteries of Wittenberg with destruction. It should not surprise us that a descriptive name for these men just named and others to follow came to be used quite inclusively when speaking of them, the name '*Schwaermer*.'

About the time these men just under discussion were reaching the climax of their unfortunate behavior, still another group came to the land of the Reformation. We refer to the Zwickau Prophets who came north from Zwickau on the border of Bohemia. Leaders in their group were men like Stueber, Storch, and an unidentified third. These men went Carlstadt and Zwilling one better, to put the matter into colloquial cliche. They, too, insisted that they possessed the gift of continued revelation, of personal prophecy, and even undermined the value of the Scriptures. They were heard declaring that if God had wanted man to have the Scriptures, he would have handed it down from heaven. While these voices were causing all manner of unrest and radicalism in the

matter of the Reformation, it hardly surprises one to hear that other voices began to speak up against social and political order. The peasants expressed discontent with their lot in life. Unfortunately they misunderstood much of Luther's emphasis on freedom in his preaching and writing, not realizing that it referred to freedom in the Gospel from the endless man-made ordinances of the church. To prevent the havoc which resulted from the unrest of the peasants and was gaining momentum steadily, leaders among the peasants under the leadership of one Hans Mueller drew up the so-called 'Twelve Articles'. Most of these articles were completely reasonable – asking for the privilege of congregations to call their own pastors, the reduction or elimination of certain taxes, and increased privileges for the peasants where hunting and fishing were concerned.

Another leader came to the head of the Peasants' Revolt. He was Thomas Muentzer, a very able and highly educated member of the lower classes. Luther had earlier recommended him as pastor at Zwickau. But there he embraced the Zwickau doctrines concerning the 'inner light', continuing revelation, and radicalism in general. One Sunday, while preaching a violent sermon in Eisleben, the Elector of Saxony was in the service. He denounced Luther and called out to the Elector to establish an apocalyptic kingdom. The Elector summoned him to Weimar for a hearing. Muentzer decided to flee to the peasants' uprising. Soon it was in full swing pretty well all over Germany. After having written several pamphlets, which were given less than desired attention, Luther wrote his sharp exhortation to the princes to bring the peasants in line. It was entitled *Against the Murdering Hordes of the Peasants*. The peasants felt completely disillusioned. Not understanding him, they began to speak of Dr. Luther as 'Dr. Luegner'. They thought he had gone back on them.

People often criticize Luther for his part at this point for confusing Church and State. What they fail to realize is that the Catholic Church with its great amount of political clout had literally taken over much of this part of Germany. People who understand the Church/State picture of that day hardly have cause to fault Luther. That his suggestions may have been among the harshest that Luther ever issued is understandable, too.
Later that same year the Emperor's army was returning from the Battle of Pavia in which they had defeated the French. As they made their way back through central Germany, Elector John of Saxony, Landgrave Philip of Hesse, and Duke Henry of Brunswick, whose states were much affected by the revolt, defeated Muentzer. Although Muentzer and Mueller were beheaded, the princes showed moderation in punishing the peasants.
We dare not fail to mention one more group. Since most of the Mystic leaders whom we have mentioned did include in their too long list of aberrations the thought that child-baptism was neither necessary nor effective, it was to be expected that a group of their kind would gather, spoken of as Anabaptists. Since they identified themselves with such abuse of child-baptism, one can easily accept the fact that mature and firm rejection on Luther's part, of which we spoke a moment ago, was strongly applied to them as well. It was largely because of that rejection that the Anabaptist movement was destined not to thrive long or well, in spite of the fact that for a short time they attracted some attention in Wittenberg under the Zwickau Prophets and in Zürich under men like Hubmeier and Grebel. Our assignment does not ask of us to take the time to trace them into semi-oblivion after the need for re-baptism was no longer popular or much called for, and they made their dwindling way to other countries, even the New world, under the name Mennonites, taken from the name of their later organizer, Menno Simons.

At the beginning of this essay I told you that there were two things which we hoped to achieve during its course. One was to take a look at Luther's reaction to non-Catholic opposition. The other was to give enough of a description of the sources of that opposition to enable us to recognize their counterparts in our day. In closing, let me ask, did we succeed in that latter goal?

It seems unlikely that any of you will want to deny that we still have much evidence of the fact that the Humanists are still very much with us, and that in their most damaging stages. Believing as they do that man is capable of choosing and achieving the good in all areas, they want us to join them in the thought that the calling of the church lies in the area of making this world a better place in which to live. We speak of them on occasion as the preachers of the 'social gospel'. And notice, if you will, the way in which they literally glorify man, his talents, his pleasures, his skills, his achievements, and his possessions.

The counterparts of the followers of Zwingli and Calvin are also very active still in almost countless church bodies all about us, with their use of reason in their approach to the miracles of Scripture, and with the

sacramentarian view of the Sacraments, if, indeed, they still observe them. And does anyone of you feel inclined to agree that we find ourselves living in a day when the counterparts of the Mystics are becoming one of the more formidable foes of fundamental and conservative Christianity? Every few seasons, if not every season, another group of them turns up under a new name or with a new way of working on the feelings and emotions of those who will lend an ear. They seem to turn their attention most dangerously toward our young and intelligent people as their prey.

Yes, we still have them all with us simply because their thinking in any case is exactly that of the evil nature of natural man.

May our gracious God, who led Martin Luther into the Word and through it to firm faith in which he withstood, remember us in His grace, keeping us alert to their temptations and strong in our faith through His Word to resist as well.

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Martin Luther, Reformer in the Making

V. His Career as a Teacher

When Johann von Staupitz urgingly suggested in 1508 that Martin Luther accept a position on the faculty of the University of Wittenberg, little could he have realized what an important turning point he was suggesting to his young friend – an important turning point for Luther, of course, but an important turning point also in the history of the Christian Church, yes, even of the western world.

We must grant, of course, that hypothetical thinking is almost always of little importance, since it almost always deals with facts which never occurred. But isn't it interesting, nevertheless, to ask the question: What if Luther would not have become a professor at Wittenberg, had not become a teacher? What if, after his monastic training had made a priest of him, he had gone on into the parish priesthood, never to have been drawn into the great Reformation by the set of circumstances which resulted almost directly from his role as a teacher?

Since Luther's teaching career, which spread over nearly 38 years, was spent at Wittenberg, except for nearly two years at Erfurt and one at the Wartburg, let us take a brief look at that university and at the man whose university it was. Doing so will possibly help us understand a bit better Luther's importance as a teacher. The man we refer to was Elector Frederick the Wise, Duke of Saxony. As one of the electors, one of the seven princes in a Germany of well over 300 states, one of seven who were powerful enough to claim the right of sitting in on the election of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, you may be sure of his being a powerful man where military strength, access to wealth, influential leadership, and even inspiration for his state's culture were concerned. Frederick was a prince who took good care of his state and of his subjects, especially those who could be of benefit to him in turn. He loved knowledge and demonstrated a deep religious feeling. It goes without saying that enjoying the friendship and admiration of such a man, as Luther did, was a great advantage. It explains, too, how it happened that in a day when the university movement was extending itself among the states of Germany, that a man like Frederick would want a university in his state.

And so it happened that the University of Wittenberg was founded in 1502. It was, of course, a little university for some time. In fact, the city of Wittenberg was a small city with only about 3,000 inhabitants. But Elector Frederick seemed determined to change all this. He surrounded himself with able men, into whose hands he entrusted great responsibilities. These, in turn, were very careful to select talented and trustworthy teachers for the new university.

The supervision of theology was entrusted by Frederick to Johann von Staupitz, whom he personally held in high esteem. Since this is the man who had so much to do with the development and course of Luther's teaching career, let us take a better look at him. Staupitz was by no means an ordinary man. To begin with, he had received his Master's Degree in theology and became reader and prior of the monastery at Tuebingen. The very mention of Tuebingen reminds one to this day of a community of excellence in scholarly pursuit. The following year he became a Bachelor of the Bible. A year later he had mastered the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard sufficiently well to be declared a *Sententiarius*, one qualified to teach that immense volume of Christian doctrine: Before long we find him earning his Doctor's Degree in theology and with it his licentiate, the privilege to teach theology. While serving in his next appointment as prior of the monastery in Munich, Staupitz was made Vicar-General of all the Augustinian Observantist monasteries in Germany. That gave him the responsibility of visitation also in the monastery at Erfurt in which Luther had chosen to get his training as a monk and a priest.

Let us explain that the Augustinian Order of monks was a conservative order, founded on the theology of the great Saint Augustine about a century later than the famous Franciscans and Dominicans. It was founded in order to stem some of the deteriorating trends in the older orders. And among the Augustinians the Observantines were a set of monks, especially conservative, who organized in a group less than a century before Luther's day. They were committed to 'observing' all the rules of the Order.

Impressed as he was with the record of Staupitz, Frederick the Wise wanted him to direct his newly founded University of Wittenberg. To use our present day language, one might say that he became the Dean or

President of the University of Wittenberg. Such was the man who learned to know Luther during his visitation at Erfurt Monastery. Having recognized his abilities and talents, it does not surprise us that he wanted Luther at Wittenberg, and subsequently, in 1508, he recommended Luther to Frederick the Wise for becoming a teacher at Wittenberg. Again, we might say that being recommended by such a man as Staupitz says much for the obvious talents and training of Luther for his role as teacher.

That does not mean to imply that Luther already had all the formal training needed for that lofty position of being a university professor. That was especially true since we know that Luther was not completely happy with his first assignment at Wittenberg, that of teaching philosophy – Aristotle's ethics, to be exact. No doubt, he had done sufficiently well, having earned his Bachelor's Degree and then his Master's Degree while still at Erfurt before entering the monastery. But that was not now his favorite discipline. His great interest in Bible-reading even as a child at the Cathedral School in Magdeburg and then, certainly, during those good *gymnasium* days at Eisenach, to say nothing of his avid searching of the Scriptures during his monastery years, caused him to nurture a strong desire for teaching theology. Obviously, Staupitz noticed this as they worked together at Wittenberg during that school year of 1508-9. You will recall, we heard that Staupitz had become the first dean or president of Wittenberg. He saw that Luther, while teaching Aristotle, used all the time he could manage at an intense study of the Scriptures, and the university granted him his Bachelor of the Bible degree in the spring of 1509. And now he saw to it that Luther should get his chance to teach theology. That explains the fact that in the fall of 1509 we find Luther back at Erfurt. Here, for a period of two years, interrupted only by a four-month leave for a trip to Rome, he threw himself wholly into theology. He studied the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard thoroughly, earning as a result his title of *Sententiarius*, giving him the right to teach the *Sentences*.

Shall we digress for a few minutes to take a brief look at two matters which we have just mentioned in passing?

One of these was the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. What made them the object of careful study on the part of every medieval theologian? Peter Lombard was the man who during the 12th century compiled in dialectic format a full list of the accepted doctrines of the church. In four long books he listed and treated them, taking his readers through a positive as well as a critical treatment of every doctrine of the Catholic Church – from God, the Trinity, and the angels, all the way through to the Sacraments and the four last things: death, the judgment, hell, and heaven. These *Sentences* continued to be respected and studied as the basic textbook of doctrine in the church throughout the centuries from Lombard's day till the Council of Trent ca. 1565.

The other matter which we mentioned was Luther's trip to Rome. One might justly ask, how would it have happened that by the fall of only his second year of teaching at Erfurt he would be asked by Staupitz to make a journey to Rome for the Order. The fact points clearly to the great respect and confidence which Staupitz had for and in Luther. It happened that there were Augustinian Observantine monasteries to Germany which favored a union on their part with the headquarters at Rome. Staupitz favored such a union. Luther opposed it. And yet, Staupitz did send Luther as one of two representatives to the Holy City to handle the matter. We know little about Luther's assigned partner for the journey beyond his name and the impression that he was a man who favored the union. At first glance it appears fair on the part of Staupitz that he sent one man of each opinion in the matter. Otto Scheel, in his detailed and very dependable biography of Luther, suggests that, since Luther was young and did not know his way around in Rome, he was not expected to speak at Rome. It was a custom that monks and priests always traveled in pairs on longer journeys. Scheel was also of the opinion that the real leader of the pair was a man from Nuernberg by the name of Anton Kress. In the light of all this, one wonders whether Staupitz was hoping that Luther might come back convinced that he ought support the union.

For Luther and the Reformation, this trip had a very important significance. It went a long way toward making Luther the reformer. When he undertook the assignment, he was enthusiastic about what a visit to 'holy Rome' would mean to him by way of peace of mind and satisfaction with his lot as clergyman. His first shock befell him already when the two travelers reached Milan. Luther thought he would like to read a mass at Milan to express his thankfulness to the Lord for bringing them safely through the long dangerous journey over the Alps. He found, however, that the Milanese were extremely proud of the fact that the great St. Ambrose had

been their bishop at one time and that he had left them the Ambrosian chant. They told Luther to be on his way. “You cannot celebrate mass here. You are unable to perform the Ambrosian liturgy.”

When their journey brought them to their first sign of the ‘Holy City’, Luther experienced the devotion of a pilgrim. He had for so long regarded Rome with holy veneration. He fell upon the earth, raised his hands, and exclaimed, “Hail to thee, holy Rome.” But he added later with indignation for himself how he had run like a crazy saint on a pilgrimage through all the churches and the catacombs. How he wished that his parents might already have died so that he might have performed some special act to release them from the pains of purgatory. But in all of this, he felt no peace of mind. On the contrary, his soul was stirred to the consciousness of another way of salvation which had already begun to dawn upon him, namely, justification by faith. While climbing on his knees, in prayer, and with a papal promise of absolution from the pope, the sacred stairs which were said to have led to the judgment hall of Pilate, he was reminded of St. Paul’s words, “The just shall live by faith.” He tells us, too, that he was shocked at the immorality of the clergy which he encountered. He complains of the priests scrambling through the mass as if they were juggling; while he read one mass, he found they had finished seven. He was horrified at the way the priests joked during the mass, garbling the words of the mass in such a way that for one standing close enough one understood them to say, “Bread thou art and bread thou shalt remain.” He did express happiness concerning the trip in later years because if he had not seen what he did in Rome, he might have in later years feared lest he might be doing the pope an injustice. Now he could speak, as he had seen.

The plan because of which Luther had been sent to Rome, namely, the union of the German Augustinians with the headquarters in Rome, failed. When Luther returned to Erfurt to resume teaching, it seems that, although he and Staupitz were still friends, the strained feelings between the monks of the two sides in the union matter caused Luther to feel considerable discomfort. Although for nostalgic reasons, he was unhappy with the thought of leaving his beloved college town, he was nevertheless relieved when, at the end of his second school year of teaching there, Staupitz transferred him back to Wittenberg.

Here he lived and worked for the remaining 36 years of his life. Those years were extremely busy with many things: preaching, counseling, traveling, and attending conferences in the interest of the church, an unbelievable amount of writing, and even serving as vicar of the Augustinian Order throughout his district of Germany from 1515 to the Diet of Worms to 1521. There was only one interruption to those 38 years. We refer to his memorable and familiar stay at the Wartburg. The fact remains, however, that all 38 years belonged to his tenure as teacher.

Immediately upon his return to Wittenberg during the summer of 1511, Luther entered fully upon all rights and duties of a teacher of theology. He began by lecturing on the Psalms. While lecturing on a given book of the Bible, such as the Psalms that first year, he studied and presented the book with such diligence and such depth that in later years he often spoke of or identified a given year by the name of the book he was teaching during that respective year.

When Luther arrived back at Wittenberg, it was again Staupitz who influenced Luther’s decisions. It was at first Luther’s thought to leave Wittenberg and devote himself to his office in the Augustinian Order. But Staupitz urged, as his superior, that he use his talents and abilities at the university. And Elector Frederick, having been deeply impressed by one of Luther’s sermons, agreed wholeheartedly. There were times in later years, when surrounded by trials and dangers, that he regretted having given in to that request. He was quoted as exclaiming, “if I had known then what I know now, not ten horses would have dragged me into it.”

When assuming his full professorship at Wittenberg, it was required that Luther hold one more title and one more degree. The required title was that of licentiate. It amounted to a license showing him ready and privileged to teach the Bible at the university level. The ceremony included a solemn oath on Luther’s part, promising to defend with all his power the truth of the Gospel, and was sworn on his beloved Bible to preach it faithfully and in its purity. This vow proved to be a genuine source of strength and comfort in the coming years. There was a delay of several weeks before Luther was granted his last degree, that of Doctor of Theology. The delay was caused by a lack of finances. But when Elector Frederick heard what the problem was, he was prompt to offer Luther the sum, a considerable one, so that his university could boast having another doctor, and at that,

one already so famous. The oath as doctor bound Luther to abstain from doctrines condemned by the church and offensive to pious ears. Obedience to the pope was fortunately not required at Wittenberg, as was the case at other universities at the time.

The story is often told of Luther's first reaction to Staupitz' urging that he become a doctor and a preacher. The story may be a favorite because it demonstrates so clearly what a modest and humble man Luther really was. He and Staupitz were sitting under that familiar pear tree in the garden at the Black Cloister in Wittenberg. When Staupitz had stated the urgent request, Luther at once cited no less than 15 reasons why he did not find himself fit to be a doctor. Upon Staupitz' further encouragements, Luther exclaimed, "Herr Staupitz, you will bring me to my death. I will never endure it for three months." To that Staupitz replied in kindly humor, "Don't you know that our Lord God has many great matters to attend to? For these He needs clever people to advise Him. If you should die, you will be received into His council in heaven, for He, too, has need of some doctors." After this, Luther had to acquiesce, willingly or not.

When speaking of Luther in his role as teacher at Wittenberg, we should be unfair to one person if we were not to add a few lines concerning his contacts with Luther during that time. We refer to Philipp Melanchthon. True, we should have to add volumes, were we to follow the contacts of Luther and Melanchthon throughout the whole Reformation. Here, however, we are interested only in contacts as co-workers on the faculty at Wittenberg.

Looking at Melanchthon in that role, we find him a very unusual young man. In childhood he had been precocious where learning was concerned. Soon thereafter he displayed similarly unique intelligence when studying Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It ought to be mentioned that he was greatly influenced by his great uncle, Johann Reuchlin, the great humanistic scholar in Hebrew and Greek literature. At 13, Melanchthon entered Heidelberg University. His age gave him no problem when he applied for his Bachelor's Degree. But when he applied for his Master's Degree at the age of 16, he was refused. This may have resulted, we are told, from his very youthful appearance. He did receive that degree, however, at the renowned University of Tuebingen three years later.

It was Melanchthon's great-uncle, Reuchlin, who recommended him to the Elector of Saxony for a position on the faculty at Wittenberg University. He entered that faculty early in his 21st year. For many of his early years at Wittenberg, he and Luther worked together in a firm bond of friendship and admiration for one another. Each complemented the other in a way that made of them an incomparable pair of teachers. James Richard, a biographer of Melanchthon , has this to say: "Luther loved Melanchthon as a son, and yet often he sat at his feet as a pupil. Melanchthon learned his spiritual apprehension of divine truth from Luther." It is our impression that what Luther sought of Melanchthon was further training in Greek and Hebrew, and the theology which Melanchthon sought of Luther was in most cases practical theology."

Would you consider us justified if we suggested this thought at this point: fortunate are the co-workers in the Lord's work who, when recognizing the stronger talents and skills in their fellows, will, rather than envying them, seek to enjoy the benefit of the same. And if there is a possibility of enjoying some mutual exchange, all the better.

In his very recent article in the August, 1983, Issue of the ELS Lutheran Sentinel, Dr. Neelak Tjernagel, our schoolmate during our days at the Seminary at Mequon, caught very well the importance of Melanchthon at Luther's side at Wittenberg during his teaching days: "In his public support of education, Luther had a skilled and effective associate in Philipp Melanchthon whose leadership in education had earned him the title, 'Praeceptor of Germany'. The author of many textbooks and the organizer of practical educational programs, Melanchthon had added much to the initial impetus of Martin Luther's sponsorship of education."

We now have spent considerable time getting acquainted with the schools at which Martin Luther served as a teacher. We said something about how he happened to teach at each of them and about his tenure at the same. We looked briefly at his preparation for these assignments, his schooling, and additional degrees on his way to becoming a University professor. Now let our attention turn to that which we may be sure the theme of this essay asks of us: What kind of a teacher was Martin Luther?

Perhaps one should start the answer to that question by saying that he was a most enthusiastic and consecrated teacher. He was convinced that being a teacher was a precious calling, of all callings second only to that of the ministry, and even then second by very little. These are some of Luther's own words:

> "I would briefly say that a diligent and pious school teacher or master or whoever the person is who faithfully trains and teaches boys can never be sufficiently rewarded and repaid with any money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Yet this work is shamefully despised among us as if it were nothing whatever. Still we want to be Christians. If I myself could or should be obliged to leave the office of the ministry and other duties, I would rather have the office of schoolmaster or teacher of boys than any other office. For I know that next to the ministry this work is most useful, the greatest, the best. In fact, I do not know which of the two is the better; for it is hard to tame old dogs and to make old rascals pious. Yet this is the task at which the preacher must labor and often labor in vain. But one can bend and train young trees more easily even though some of them break in the process. My friend, let it be considered one of the greatest virtues on earth faithfully to train the children of other people. Very few people, in fact, practically none, do this for their own children."

And to that let us add this thought: A teacher who finds his motivation stemming from such a conviction concerning the value of teaching will most certainly be an enthusiastic and consecrated teacher – a good teacher.

Luther was a praying teacher. We read that he spent long hours in prayer. He was overheard and quoted on a number of occasions praying out loud, though alone in his room. He would discuss with his heavenly Father the problems which weighed heavily upon his heart, asking the Lord to guide him in giving the best advice at all times either to his students or to his parishioners. The thought is easy to accept that a teacher who makes his work the object of his prayers will be a sincere teacher.

We have already made the point and feel that it warrants being repeated that Luther was a teacher eminently trained for his work at very turn along the way. He experienced a genuine love and capacity for learning. He was quite at home with four languages: German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Even while lecturing extemporaneously (though he always prepared an outline for his lectures to guide him in their course), he would switch from one language to another with interesting effect, either to speak in one or the other of the first two, or to illustrate his exegesis in either of the latter two.

His learning was widely admired and appreciated, not only by his friends and students, but even on the part of some of his opponents. Erasmus, the 'Prince of Humanists' and sometimes called the most learned man of his century, when asked by Pope Adrian VI to address himself in opposition to Luther, replied, "As to writing against Luther, I have not learning enough." James Froude, considered one of the greatest British historians, once said of Luther, "Luther's mind was literally worldwide; his eyes were forever observant of what was around him. At a time when science was scarcely out of its shell, Luther had observed nature with liveliest curiosity. He had anticipated the generative functions of flowers. Human nature he had studied like a dramatist. His memory was a museum of historical information, of anecdotes of great men, of old literature and song and proverb. Scarce a subject could be spoken of an which he had not thought and on which he had not something remarkable to say."

One author (the source escapes your essayist) has tailed Luther the 'Thomas Edison' of his day. People of his day regarded him as a genius. Modern writers in this computerized age have declared him the same. Melanchthon, the good friend and coworker of Luther later once said of Luther at a time when he, Melanchthon, was still quite an admirer of Erasmus, "Luther is too great, too wonderful, for me to depict in words. One is an interpreter; one, a logician; another an author, 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."

Luther was an inspiring teacher – his lectures were so inspiring that we are told that some of his students failed to take notes lest they miss a word. He was ready to admit that some of his earlier lectures were not as well done as he wished, but that realization brought him back all the more promptly to his study in order to delve more deeply into the beloved Scriptures and prepare better for the next lectures. Especially after he had found the true understanding of the Gospel and the righteousness of Christ imputed to us did his evangelical lectures attract more and more students from all over Germany, even from other European countries. Just as the famous Abelard once became the attraction at the University of Parts four centuries earlier, so that people said that Abelard became the university, so it was with Luther at Wittenberg. At the end of its first year to 1503, the enrollment at Wittenberg was only 416 and even dropped during the year following. But during the ten years after Luther came to Wittenberg in 1508, the enrollment increased steadily until it numbered over 1,000. Some 400 of these men attended Luther's classroom only. That enrollment of more than 1,000 compared with an average attendance at Leipzig University of 100 and only 50 at Erfurt.

Unlike many other university professors of the day, Luther drew many of his students into a bond of friendship. The slow student was given helpful attention. Luther often went out of his way to find some merit in that which such a student had to offer, if he recognized honest effort on the part of that student. The intelligent or advanced student was given a challenging approach. He kept his presentation, however, for the most part at the level of the average student. He was ready at all times to counsel his students cautioning them against the pleasant temptations and vices of youth and maturity. The students were often known to seek his fatherly advice and counsel. He was their mentor both in and out of the classroom.

We do not want to encourage the impression that all students necessarily liked Luther. He said himself that that would be too much for any teacher to hope. We have statements from Luther himself indicating that he was aware of the fact that some of the students resented his earnest efforts to accomplish a lot with them. Nor do we want to give the impression than his friendliness and concern for the students made him a soft touch. He was too clever for that. He could become very sharp at times. Knowing Luther as we do as a man capable of frank, even strong language at times, we can understand that on occasion he disciplined in a way that blistered some. Luther hoped that in later years, when they matured to the point of knowing that what he had done was for their own good, they would still think of it all in the right spirit.

At the same time, we find Luther to have been a modest and humble teacher. He expressed his unhappiness with the students' custom of all arising in respect when he entered the room. He said he wished that custom might be turned about so that the professor would bow to the class. He said that the professor could never know but what there might be a future mayor, a doctor, or a lawyer in his classroom. His heart went out to the students who, because of lowly background or poverty, had difficulty staying in school. He was known on occasion to have helped such out of his own funds, even when he found affording such generosity difficult.

As a teacher, Luther was untiring in his efforts to accomplish an unbelievable volume of work. He was known at times to have carried a load even under physical handicaps that would have incapacitated the ordinary man. His teaching load may have appeared to be light, four lectures a week, one on each of tour days, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, with Wednesday as a free day. But we must remember preparation for those lectures during the early years of his career meant constantly preparing new material until he had worked through the entire Scriptures, to say nothing of the volumes of theology and church history. Then, too, he altered the courses he presented every school year. Let us not forget either that his 38 years of teaching were paired at the same time with a pulpit responsibility, first at the Black Cloister, then at the City Church, and then for many years at the Castle Church of the Elector. This preaching schedule, especially during its latter years, called for as many as two and three sermons a day. Sometimes the festival seasons called for even more. And who of us has not marveled in sheer humility when he stood before the shelves which house the collected writings of this man Luther?

We must add to all of this the fact that he considered it his duty as a teacher to furnish all who followed him or studied under him an in-depth analysis and, if necessary, a refutation of the whole gamut of theories or trends which popped onto the scene during his long career. Time does not permit us to enter into these here, but just let a sample list of such run past your memories for a moment: scholasticism, humanism, mysticism, the

indulgence problem, the troublesome views of an Erasmus, the sharp attacks of a John Eck, the fickle view of Henry VIII, the sacramentarianism of a Zwingli, the legalism of a Calvin, the misunderstanding of the peasants, the radicalism of the Zwickau Prophets, of Zwilling, Carlstadt, and the Anabaptists and others. Each of these necessitated study, writing, meetings, travel, and more preaching and teaching, to say nothing of long hours of counseling and guiding. Have we perhaps gone far enough to have won your agreement when we say that it simply boggles the mind of any one of us when trying to imagine a university teacher satisfying such demands?

In closing, there is one thing about this teacher, Martin Luther, which surprises one somewhat. It is the fact that, although teaching was close to his heart, he never put down in writing a formal list of directives which might be called his philosophy of education or methodology. One would need to read very widely, taking copious notes, working his way through Luther's *Table Talks* and many other volumes written by him, and then come up with only a handful of his statements concerning the importance of education and the things that ought to be taught, but not with enough of what could be termed a philosophy or methodology for teaching. The best one can do on that score is to read about his teaching and imagine being in his classroom. Some of you appear to be old enough to have read the book of last century by Painter under the title *Luther on Education*. If you have read it, then you will agree that it uses many more pages describing the times of the Reformation and the kind of schools which they had in those days than pages on which it gives the reader preparation for entering the classroom as a teacher. Some of the thoughts one does gather after reading considerably in Luther's works, looking for suggestions for the teacher, seem to crystallize into what one might consider his suggestions to others. But let no one think that we present this brief accumulation of his statements to be considered as any more than a mere sampling. Since each is very deserving of thought, however, here are a few:

> Let the teacher know his students as well as possible. Let him teach them as individuals for **their** good rather than to build up his own reputation or for the good of the school in which he serves.
>
> One of the worst sins parents can commit where their children are concerned is that they do not give them proper education.
>
> Where God's Word does not rule, there do not send your child. All true education must be oriented with religion.
>
> Education at the elementary level ought be universal. Young men beyond the elementary level who find higher education difficult or distasteful should be given vocational training, so that they might learn a trade and become valuable citizens.
>
> Aside from a strong emphasis on religion and history, education owes another debt to parents and the state, namely, to train the young, wherever possible, in things cultural – music, the arts, etc., so that they might use their talents and skills to the glory of God and toward the welfare of their fellow man.

Luther, the teacher! May our dear Lord help us, who are all active in the same vocation as he, whether pastor or teacher, to find in him an example inspiring to us in the way he studied the Word of the Lord, in diligence, consecration, humility, and sincerity, and in the way he approached his Heavenly Father in prayer for help toward such faithfulness.

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