

THE LIFE AND WORK OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

- 1483 - Martin Luther was born November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, the son of Hans and Margareta Luther. He was the oldest child of the Luthers. He was baptized the next day, and, since it was St. Martin's Day, they named him Martin.
- 1484 - The family moved to Mansfeld the following year, where the father sought better employment. He later did succeed and bought a factory.
- 1489 - Martin Luther began school at the age of six. He was placed in the Latin school, where all the work was done in the Latin language. He remained in this school in Mansfeld until 1497. He was sent to the school at Magdeburg. Here he had to sing on the streets for money and food, since his father couldn't support him. He became ill, and his father removed him from this school after one year.
- 1498 - Luther was placed in a school in Eisenach. This was the home town of his mother, and they thought the relatives would help the student, but they didn't. The city was at the foot of the "Wartburg" where Luther would live later on in his life. Here he sang in the streets for food. A kindly lady, Ursula Cotta, heard him, and liked his appearance. She took him into her home and treated him like a son. He lived with this family as long as he was in Eisenach. He could apply himself to his studies, and did very well.
- 1501 - Luther entered the University of Erfurt, as he planned on studying to be a lawyer. In 1502 he had earned enough credits to receive the Bachelor of Arts Degree. Through continual study, he advanced and in 1505 he received the Master of Arts Degree. It was at the University of Erfurt that he found a Bible in the Latin language for the first time. It was chained to the wall of the library.
- 1504 - While on his way home to Mansfeld, a small sword, worn by students, fell on his foot and he nearly bled to death. He prayed to Mary for help.
- 1505 - Luther visited his parents. On his way back to Erfurt a lightning bolt struck near him and he prayed to St. Anne for protection. He said if his life was spared, he would become a monk.
- Luther had been troubled about sins and wanted the forgiveness of sins, but had not been taught anything about the love of God or the Savior of sinners. He was taught, as all the people were, that the life of a monk or a nun was holier than the ordinary life, and that to enter a cloister made one holy. On the evening of July 16, 1505 Luther told his closest friends what he planned to do. They tried to stop him, but his mind was made up. The next morning, July 17, 1505, he entered the St. Augustine Cloister in Erfurt. He did all the lowly and hard tasks, such as scrubbing the floors, digging ditches, carrying out garbage. He went from door to door in the city begging for food for the monks in the cloister. He was especially mistreated by the other monks because he was a college student, and most of the other monks were not educated and were jealous of him. He was willing to accept all this because he hoped to gain forgiveness of sins and be saved through this hard and lowly work and life.
- 1506 - After his year of probation was ended, Luther was received as a full-fledged monk of the Augustinian Order.
- 1507 - Luther was ordained to the priesthood, since he had studied and had all the qualifications.

- 1508 - When Luther was 25 years old, he was appointed to lecture on philosophy at the University of Wittenberg. He also preached in the chapel. His preaching attracted attention. One learned man whose heart was touched by Luther's words said: "This friar will confound all doctors, bring a new doctrine, and reform the church; for he stands on the writings of the prophets and apostles and relies on the words of Christ." Here Luther received the Degree of Bachelor of the Bible.
- 1509 - He was transferred back to the University of Erfurt. Here he taught 1509 - 1512.
- 1510 - Luther and another monk were sent on a business trip for the Augustinian Order to Rome. He was glad, since he thought Rome was a holy city. He found the priests and monks very corrupt, as they ridiculed the Word of God and all things sacred, and lived . . . immoral lives. This trip made an impression on him for the rest of his life.
- 1512 - At this time he was transferred to the University of Wittenberg, this time to teach theology. He lectured on the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans and Galatians.
- 1512 - While he was a professor at Wittenberg, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity. For the next 5 years, until 1517, he taught religion. He was greatly troubled all this time by the thought of forgiveness of sins and the way to salvation. He was constantly seeking the truth. Now a problem arose. The Pope was building a large cathedral in Rome, St. Peter's Cathedral, still standing today. In order to get money to pay for it, he sent priests and monks into all the lands. They were to sell 'indulgences' to the people. According to the Church, some people were better than they needed to be in order to be saved. Their "extra merit" could be transferred by way of "INDULGENCES" to those whose salvation was in doubt. Originally - an indulgence was EARNED by making a pilgrimage and paying a small sum. However, by LUTHER'S TIME the idea was widely abused and indulgences were on public sale. The papers stated that anyone who bought such a paper from the Pope had his sins forgiven. The people thought they were actually buying forgiveness of sins for themselves, and they didn't have to repent. They were also told that they could buy forgiveness of sins for people already dead, and that, as the coin would in the treasury cling, a soul out of purgatory would spring. Purgatory, they were told, was a place of punishment between earth and heaven to which the souls went to suffer until they were pure enough to enter heaven. Everyone wanted to escape this period of purification by paying money. The Monk, John Tetzel, was selling these papers in Germany, near Wittenberg. Luther told the people not to buy them, since they were worthless, and contrary to Scriptures. He preached about this but the people ignored his warnings. He finally had to take a stand, and ask whether what the Pope was permitting was right and according to the Scriptures or not. He protested the situation to the Archbishop of Mainz: "Papal Indulgences are hawked about under your illustrious sanction. I regret that the faithful have conceived erroneous notions about them. They believe that if they buy a letter of pardon, they are sure of their salvation....They also believe that INDULGENCES free them from all guilt of sin". This letter brought no response.
- 1517 - OCTOBER 31, 1517. On this day Dr. Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses, or Propositions for debate, on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. This was an invitation to debate certain issues of importance. There were three basic ideas in the 95 Theses: 1. Protest against the abuse of papal authority. 2. Challenge to the Pope: if he controls purgatory, why not empty it for free? 3. Denial of the "extra Merit" theory behind indulgences. The "true treasury" of the Church is the GOSPEL - the proclamation of God's mercy in Christ.

Luther's CRISIS had continued until the study of the Holy Scriptures brought a new conviction. Luther saw that there is no way in which man can "gain credit" with God and "merit" or "earn" God's favor, BUT, man can RECEIVE through FAITH God's divine gift of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. His sins are forgiven by the SHEER MERCY of God. This article of *JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH* soon came to form the BASIS of Luther's religious thought. Luther later recalled: 'At this realization, I felt myself to have been BORN AGAIN and to have entered Paradise itself'

- 1518 - On August 7, 1518, Luther was given Pope Leo's order to come to Rome within 60 days to answer the charges of falsedoctrine, heresy. The Elector Frederick, the head of the Province and one who was a follower of Luther, would not let him go because he was afraid Luther would never come back. He insisted that the meeting be held on German soil.
- 1518 - In October 1518, Luther went to Augsburg to debate with Cardinal Cajetan. He was told to revoke, take back, everything he had written about repentance and indulgences. Luther would not do this until he had been shown his error. When Luther presented truth to him, the Cardinal was confused, and said, "Go.. Recant or never come back to me again!" Luther left Augsburg secretly. If he had remained, he would have been taken to Rome. He arrived back in Wittenberg one year after he posted the Theses! Many people were now in favor of Luther and his teachings. The sale of indulgences ceased. Tetzal was in disgrace. Charles von Miltitz, an envoy of the Pope, met with Luther at Altenburg. He flattered Luther and denounced Tetzal as a fraud. With tears in his eyes, he asked Luther to be silent and to allow the controversy to die out. Luther agreed. It seemed that the matter was settled. God decreed otherwise. Dr. Eck, professor at the University of Ingolstadt, attacked Luther. The promise given by Miltitz that both sides be silent was broken. Luther felt free to reply to Dr. Eck's attack. The result:
- 1519 - The Leipzig Debate. The Leipzig debate lasted 3 weeks in the summer of 1519. Luther defended the truth on the basis of the Scriptures. Here Luther came to the parting of the ways with Rome. If the Roman Church would not listen to arguments based on the clear, plain Word of God, then he must cease to be a Roman Catholic. A few friends supported him, and he placed his trust in God and God's Word.
- 1520 - After the Leipzig Debate, Eck went to Rome to report to the Pope. The people were favoring Luther and the powerful Elector was protecting him. The result was that a document called 'a papal bull', a papal order, was prepared against Luther. the Pope signed it and Dr. Eck took it to Germany and published it there. This paper commanded Luther to repent within 60 days of all he had said and done against the Roman Church. If he didn't, he and his followers were to be regarded as obstinate heretics and must be punished according to the law of the Church.
- As Dr. Eck went from place to place with this paper, he was ridiculed at Leipzig and denounced. At Erfurt students tore copies of the document and threw them into the Gea River. The 'bull' was sent to Wittenberg for publication, but the professors refused to post it. On Dec. 10, 1520, a sign was posted that invited all friends of Luther to assemble at the Church of the Holy Cross outside the city walls at 9:00 o'clock. At the appointed time, Luther, with Melanchthon and Carlstadt and others, went through the Elster Gate of Wittenberg. They lit a fire and Luther stepped forward and threw the papal document, threatening him with excommunication, into the fire. To this day this spot where this was done is shown to visitors to Wittenberg.
- 1520 - In the months of August to November Luther published 3 great and important papers in which he made his position plain to all the world. These three documents were Luther's declaration of independence. He dissolved the last ties that bound him to Rome..

The name of the first document was: *"Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate"*. In this document he appealed to the German people to stand for their national rights, since for too long they had been cowed and overridden by the servants of the Pope at Rome.

The second document was: *"On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church"*. In this document he attacked the very heart of the whole papal system. He showed that the Church invented sacraments never ordained by Christ, and had corrupted those which He had established. He reduced the number of Sacraments from 7 to 2, namely, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He wrote that only these Sacraments had visible signs or elements connected with God's Word which offered and conveyed the blessings of God to the individual sinner. The Romanists had added all sorts of needless vows and works by which to merit grace, given freely in Baptism. They had taken the cup away from the laity in the Lord's Supper and had transformed the Sacrament into an unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead.

The third document was entitled: *"Treatise on Christian Liberty"*. He described the lofty meaning of faith and showed the sum total of Christian life in two truths:

"A Christian man through faith is a free lord of all things and subject to none".

"A Christian man through love is the free servant of all things and subject to all".

With these documents, Luther tore asunder the last ties that bound him to the Church of Rome. He had challenged her authority, attacked her doctrines, and ridiculed her practices. Rome had burned other men for less. What would Rome do to Luther?

1521 - On January 3, 1521, Leo X announced the formal excommunication of Luther and his followers.

1521 - In March 1521, Luther was summoned by Emperor Charles V to Worms. In April Luther was at the Diet in Worms. April 17 Luther was standing before all the illustrious people, and he was asked to recant, to take back, what he had written. He asked for time to thin, that he could answer without violence to the Word of God or peril to his soul.

On April 18, 1521, Luther was ready. It was several hours before the Diet was ready for him, then the question was put to him: "Do you wish to defend all of your books or to retract some of them?" Luther gave a long address. He ended by saying, "I am convinced by those passages adduced and introduced by me, and my conscience is bound by God's Word. I can or will recant nothing, since it is neither safe nor advisable to do aught against conscience. Here I stand. God help me! Amen".

1521 - Luther left Worms for Wittenberg on April 26. His enemies were preparing a document which was to be his formal condemnation as an outlaw and a heretic. This decree was formally signed by Emperor Charles on May 26, 1521. This stated that from the 14th day of May, 1521, everyone was commanded, under pain of imperial ban, not to shelter, house, give food or drink, to aforesaid Luther, nor aid him by word or deed, secretly or publicly, with help, adherence, or assistance, but to take him prisoner wherever he may be found and to send him to us (the Emperor) securely bound; also, to overpower his adherents, abettors, and followers, and to confiscate their possessions. Luther's poisonous books and writings were to be burned and in every way annihilated".

- 1521 - Luther's party was attacked by soldiers near Castle Altenstein. Luther's companions fled. Luther himself disappeared. God provided a safe place. The Elector of Saxony had several strong castles. He had some of his men, who were friends of Luther, to take him to one of the castles. Luther knew of the scheme. The men took him through the thick forests to the old castle called "Wartburg", on a steep hill near Eisenach. Here Luther was safe. Only a few friends knew he was there. He dressed as a soldier, a 'knight', and went by the name of "Knight George". For ten months the bold confessor was kept carefully guarded at the fortress.
- In a little room in the Wartburg Luther had a workshop. Soon tracts, letters, papers and books showed the world that Luther was not dead. He began to translate the Bible into the German language. He was determined that everyone must have the Bible in his own language, so everyone could read it for himself, since up to this time the people received only what the priests would tell them. By the time he would leave the Wartburg, he had translated the New Testament from the Greek into the German language.
- His translation was printed and given to the people, who were happy that they could read so much of the Bible in their own language. Many had not heard Luther preach up to this time, so now they could learn the way of salvation by reading the Scriptures. The people who feared Luther was dead gave thanks to God that he still was alive and could carry on his work.
- In Wittenberg some men were trying to carry on the reformation of the church in the wrong way. They had no leadership. They thought they had to cast everything out of the church that had been used by the Roman Church. They began to remove altars, pictures, stained glass windows. They went too far. When Luther heard of this he knew that the people he had set free from the rule of the Pope needed him to teach and guide them. He saw it was time for him to return to Wittenberg in order to save the work he had begun. Luther remained in Wittenberg as his home and center of operation for the next 25 years, until his death.
- 1522 - Luther returned to Wittenberg in March 1522, about 10 months after entering the Wartburg. There was great rejoicing among the people. In a short time all troubles were settled. Luther worked hard to give the people a sound knowledge of the Word of God and to build up the Church of the pure Gospel as strong as it was in the days of the Apostles. Everything contrary to the Word of God had to be abolished. The celebration of the mass as an unbloody sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the living and dead, was discontinued; the adoration of the saints; the Corpus Christi festival (adoration of the communion host as if it were Christ personified) was abolished and the saints days (a saint was worship on every day of the year), were no longer celebrated. He asked, is it sinful? Then the Christian had to avoid it. It was sinful only if it was contrary to the Scripture. In those matters where Scripture neither commanded or forbade, a Christian has the right to use his Christian liberty.
- 1523 - In Brussels, Belgium, two young Augustinian friars (monks), who had been active in preaching the Gospel, were burned to death for refusing to renounce their faith. (Luther could have suffered the same fate, especially if he had been taken to Rome, except for the protection of God.)
- Luther kept the printing presses busy and the people bought everything he wrote. He traveled to other towns and cities of Saxony giving advice how to build good congregations, and he helped people solve their problems. He was interested in schools. He told people to support Christian schools in which the children could learn the Word of God and receive a good education from Christian teachers. Luther has done more for children than any other man. He showed it was the duty of the Church to teach all its children the Bible stories and the Catechism. This is the beginning of the parochial schools as we have them in the Lutheran Church.

- 1524 - Luther published the first Lutheran hymn book in 1524. It was a pamphlet, contained 8 hymns, 4 written by Luther. This was the tiny spring from which came the mighty stream of Protestant hymnody. Soon people were singing hymns everywhere. As the end of 1524 Luther had written 24 hymns and in the following years he wrote 12 more. His greatest hymn: "*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*" was probably written for the Diet of Spires, which convened on April 20, 1529, when the German princes made their formal "protest" against the revocation of their liberties, and thus received the name "Protestants". The thought was taken from Psalm 46. It has been called the "Battle-hymn of the Reformation".
- 1525 - In 1523, 12 nuns left a cloister to return to the world and normal life. Some went to live with relatives, but 9 did not know where to go. Luther was asked to help find places for them. Some families took in some nuns. Luther found places for 6 of them. 3 remained in Wittenberg. 2 then married and moved away. Only one, Catherine von Bora, remained. Luther tried to find her a husband. The first man to say he would marry her left town, and didn't come back. She refused the second one proposed by Luther. She said she would be willing to marry Luther himself. In June 1525 they were married. This pleased Luther's father. Luther had urged all pastors to marry and have a family. He set an example for them.
- 1526 - Luther wanted to bring the whole congregation into the worship service. In 1526 he produced a liturgy in the language of the people. He also insisted that the laity as well as clergy should partake of wine as well as bread in the Holy Communion Service, a communion of believers. The people were taught and urged to sing the hymns, and the Gospel was sung into their hearts. Luther taught that the individual conscience is answerable only to the Word of God. Christ alone is the intermediary between man and his Creator, therefore no more praying to Mary or the saints. Through Baptism all Christians are members of the priesthood of believer.
- 1529 - The number of followers of Luther who preached the Word of God grew. City after city asked for Lutheran preachers and got them. The Emperor had not carried out the Edict of Worms - that Luther be taken prisoner and delivered to Rome and that all his possessions be taken. In 1529 the Emperor called a Diet (meeting) to convene at the city of Spires for the purpose of carrying out the Edict of Worms. This meant that Luther must be turned over to the authorities for execution; the Lutheran books burned; the Lutheran "heresy" be rooted out, and the Roman Catholic religion be restored by force as the only true religion of the whole German Empire. Staunch followers of Luther, who had come to the light of the truth, stood in Luther's place before the Diet of Spires, boldly, bravely, courageously. They said: "Luther would not recant, and they would not retreat!"
- 1529 - April 19, 1529. A declaration stating their position was given, that they would not consent to an agreement that would check the preaching of the Gospel in their lands. They appealed to the Bible. They protested any action against them and Luther, and it was on account of this "protest" that the evangelicals were called "Protestants". This protest was too much for the papal and imperial (state) authorities. They did not dare to make good their threats against Luther and his followers. The Word of God again prevailed.
- 1529 - Luther, in childhood, had suffered many beatings because the schools were inadequate and the teachers were brutal. The chief defect in these schools was that the Gospel was not taught in them (therefore there was no love). Luther himself passed from the common school to the university without coming to the knowledge of Christ, the Savior of sinners. Luther advocated that all boys be sent to school two hours a day and the girls one hour a day. They were to learn useful trades and arts. In the interest of good schools

Luther made a survey of the school and, as he wrote: "The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Thus the Small Catechism sprang, as it were, directly from the compassion Luther felt for the churches on account of the sad state of destitution to which they had been brought, and which he felt so keenly during the visitation. In January 1529, according to Luther's letters, he was engaged in this work, having probably begun about the close of 1528. He was able to make rapid progress, since ample material was at his command. He was working on the Large Catechism at the same time

Both Catechisms, though in various respects ^{different,} were intended for all: people, youth, parents, preachers, and teachers. It is not correct to say that Luther wrote his Large Catechism only for scholars, and the other only for the unlearned. He desired to instruct all, and, at the same time, to enable parents and pastors to teach. According to Luther, it is the duty of every Christian to learn constantly, in order also to be able to teach others in turn.

After Luther wrote the Catechism he said, "I am also a doctor and preacher, yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism, and every morning and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and a pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain".

1529 - On October 2-3, 1529 the Colloquy of Marburg was held.

Meeting with Ullrich Zwingli, the parish priest of Zurich, Switzerland, and a reformer. He renounce the papacy and introduced preaching of the Bible, but his methods were different from those of Luther. He insisted that all traces of Roman Catholicism be destroyed. He removed images, pictures, organs, choir singing and other things. He agreed with Luther on the doctrine of justification by faith, but not fully on doctrines of original sin, the person of Christ and the means of grace.

In 1524 Carlstadt had denied the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament. Zwingli agreed with him; Luther disagreed. Zwingli said that Holy Communion was merely a memorial supper and that both Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper were only signs or emblems of the grace of God.

Luther preached and wrote against the errors of Carlstadt, Zwingli and others in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Luther believed it was not "unreasonable" to believe in the real presence since Christ said: "This IS My body". Since Christ said it, that ended the matter since His Word is the highest authority, and whether human reason can grasp it or not, made no difference. Christ says ~~what~~ is true.

It was expected that there would be an attempt to bring about a union between reform movements in Germany and Switzerland. In order to to this, the German Landgrave Philip of Hesse arranged a meeting. This is called "The Marburg Colloquy". It was held October 2-3, 1529.

Zwingli said it was against reason to believe the true body and blood of Christ in heaven could be in so many places on earth in the Lord's Supper. Luther said that human reason, which can be in error, was not to decide the question, but the plain Word of God. He raised the velvet table cloth, and wrote on the table with chalk, "This is MY body". He remained steadfast to that word, nothing could make him change his mind. When Zwingli said, "is" means "represents", Luther replied, that "is" means "is", for that is what the Lord said.

In the end they had to part without reaching an agreement on this point. There could be no union without unity. Zwingli was sorry there could be no union, and Luther sadly said, "You have a different spirit than ours"

Once more Luther stood up as the champion of the Word of God.

1530 - Diet of Augsburg. Emperor Charles V called a Diet at Augsburg. He invited the evangelical princes to come and work to heal the division in the church. Luther and his co-workers, Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Justas Jonas, were asked to draw up brief articles of defense of the evangelical doctrines and practices. Dr. Eck, Luther's chief opponent, issued a book against Luther, charging Luther with being as bad as the ancient heretics. It was then decided by Luther and his co-workers to change the articles of defense into articles of faith, so that the Lutherans might be able to prove to all the world that they are not heretics, but believers in the old, orthodox, apostolic Christian Creed. Melanchthon was given the task of putting the document into right form; he worked on it until the time of its presentation. Luther himself was well satisfied with the Augsburg Confession, since it clearly expressed what he taught.

On April 3, 1530, Elector John of Saxony, together with Luther, Melanchthon, and Jonas, started from Wittenberg for Augsburg. After 12 days journey, they arrived at Coburg. Luther could go no further because he was still an outlaw of the Empire. He could have been taken prisoner. Luther stayed at Coburg, spending the time praying for his friends. He also wrote letters, advising and encouraging them.

June 25 was the day when the great *AUGSBURG CONFESSIO*N was to be read. This day was "destined to be the greatest day of the Reformation and one of the most glorious in the history of Christianity and mankind". Actually, this day was to be "*The Birthday of the Lutheran Church*". After the Augsburg Confession was read, one of the Catholic bishops said, "I have been misinformed concerning this doctrine". A Duke said, "It is the truth, the pure truth; we cannot deny it". To this day the Augsburg Confession is regarded by all Lutherans as their chief confession of faith.

The Diet of Augsburg, which was intended to crush the Lutherans, really strengthened them. From now on, it was not a lone monk battling for the truth, but a Church with a confession, the Augsburg Confession, taking its place among the religious bodies of the world. It was a Church body with the proud distinction of being the Church of the pure Word and Sacraments.

From April 16 to October 13 Luther remained at the Fortress Coburg while the Diet convened at Augsburg.

On June 5 Luther received the report of his father's death.

Luther continued his work on the translation of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets. Luther daily wrote letters of admonition and comfort to his friends at the Diet of Augsburg. Melanchthon wrote "*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*" as a supplement to the Confession.

Luther lamented that due to his illness half of his Coburg stay was wasted.

In October Luther left the Fortress Coburg and returned to Wittenberg.

1530 - 1531 - From December 31 to March, Luther and his colleagues continued to meet for working sessions on the translation of the Bible.

June 15, Luther's mother died.

On October 11, the army of Zurich was defeated at the battle of Kappel, by the old Catholic cantons. The Reformer Zwingli died with sword in hand, and his body was quartered and burned.

Luther again traveled to Torgau several times and also other cities.

Luther was frequently ill from headaches and vertigo. He preached numerous sermons for his family and friends at the Luther House.

1533 - On Jan. 28 Paul, Luther's fifth child, is born. Martin, the fourth, had been born Nov. 9, 1531.

Luther continued his visitations to cities and congregations.

1534 - Luther completed the translation of the entire Bible. The first edition appeared in this year, the second in 1540-1541, the third in 1546. Luther had it illustrated with more the 500 woodcuts by Lucas Cranach the Elder, and the Younger; by George Lemberger and other masters.

It was during his visit to Wittenberg in December 1521 that his friends urged the undertaking of a new translation of the Bible into German, and within a few days after his return he was at work on it. He worked with such rapidity that within 3 months the entire New Testament was in an idiomatic German, that to the present hour is the wonder of all literary critics. All his attainments are kept subordinate to the one object of presenting the thoughts of Revelation in language that is the simplest and most intelligible to all classes of the people. In giving the Germans their Bible, he gave the German language a permanent literary form, and, upon the basis of a common language replacing the confusion of dialects that had heretofore been current, and in this way unified the German people. The work was rendered relatively easy by his thorough acquaintance with both the language and the spirit of Scripture. His translation is not only a rendering of the original in another tongue; it is an interpretation that touches at once the heart and very life of the most unlearned as well as the most learned. The achievement of those three months would alone have given him lasting fame.

For centuries the highlights of the early Reformation period - the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, the burning of the papal bull, the Diet of Worms, and the year on the Wartburg - have excited the imagination of people. These events were on the avenue of history. one of the momentous dates of intellectual history was the day in 1534 when Luther completed his translation of THE ENTIRE BIBLE. This accomplishment has given comfort and spiritual nourishment to the lives of many, and has helped shape their lives. The most significant achievement of Luther's life had been completed.

1535 - Luther's lectures on Galatians are published.
Luther has many visits from theologians and princes.
Luther also traveled again to Torgau and other places.

1536 - Luther is stricken by illness several times.

In November 1536 Luther met with Bugenhagen at Wittenberg and with a papal legate to discuss plans for a council. No plans were made. The Elector, at the beginning of December 1536, asked Luther to draw up a number of articles which might serve as a basis for negotiations, if the council were held in December. Luther wrote articles amounting to 18 pages by December 18, emphasizing more sharply the differences with Rome. He became too ill to continue, and had to dictate the rest. On Jan. 3, 1537, the completed articles were submitted to Elector John Frederick. The Elector was determined to commit his fellow believers to this clear and strong position at Smalcald, where a federal diet was to be convened in February. This was not done. During Luther's illness, he delegates to the Diet listened to the advice of Melancton, that they rest their case on the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. The so-called "*Smalcald Articles*" were never actually discussed at Smalcald, but were simply signed at the conclusion by the theologians present. But, due to their importance, they circulated quickly throughout Germany, and were added to the list of confessional statements which in 1580 were included in the "*Book of Concord*".

1537 - From January 31 to March 14 Luther was ^{to be} engaged in the meeting at Smalcald of the Smalcald League.

On Feb. 18 Luther was stricken with stones and on Feb. 26 begins his journey home as a sick man.

In November Luther complains of being overworked. He is again ill with the stone ailment, and along with others receives the Lord's Supper at his home.

At this time Luther probably composed the hymn: "*Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word*".

Luther again travels to various cities, and becomes ill.

- 1538 - Luther was visited by a delegate of the Reformed cities of Switzerland. He is frequently ill. Luther traveled again to Torgau 4 times and other cities.
- 1539 - Luther opened his doors to orphaned children. He again traveled to Torgau.
- 1540 - In January, during the serious illness of his wife, the Elector sent Luther a deer. Luther continued his lectures, his writing and his visiting.
- 1541 - Luther was seriously ill in April. During the year he traveled to Torgau.
- 1542 - On January 6 Luther wrote his last will and testament. In May Luther began his last great series of lectures on Genesis, which he had begun on June 3, 1535. During August and thereafter Luther's wife frequently visited the farm at Zuelsdorf, south of Leipzig, a small property purchased by Luther. On September 20, Luther's daughter Magdalena died after a brief, severe illness. Luther continued to travel and visit cities.
- 1543 - After April Luther is repeatedly ill with stone and dizziness, and yearns for death. On April 5, 1543 he wrote to Frederick Myconius at Gotha: "This past year I frequently was at the gate of death, yet I continue to breathe, though I am only a burden to the earth. May the Lord grant me a blessed last hour. May He come soon - even sooner, yes, ever so soon - with His glorious day, so that the world will cease raging against His name and His Word. Amen". In November the first eleven chapters of the Lectures on Genesis were published.
- 1544 - On October 5, 1544 Luther officiated and preached at the dedication of the Castle Church at Torgau, the first Evangelical church to be built. On Dec. 19, Luther and his colleagues of the Bible Revision Committee met for the last time. Even before the publication of the entire Bible in German, Luther had set up a commission which met at regular intervals to review critically the translations that had been completed. The work continued to 10 years, from January 24, 1535 to Dec. 19, 1544. In some years the commission met 4 times a month. Thus the translation of the Bible commanded Luther's love, devotion, and diligence, as well as the linguistic skills and the knowledge of the foremost minds of an entire generation of scholars. In addition to this biblical labor, Luther continued his academic activities until shortly before his death. The last major lecture series on Genesis began June 3, 1535 and was not concluded until 1545. His academic obligations, however, were not limited to his lectures. He took very seriously his position as dean of the theological faculty and the matter of conferring doctoral degrees. The last years of Luther's life were filled with constant activity. Even during the last 10 years of his life, the annual journeys were a regular feature; the almost routine visits to Torgau, the circuit journeys to the churches; attendance at the assemblies of the Smalcald League; conferences on secular, ecclesiastical, and theological matters at one place or another in Electoral Saxony. To this must be added his voluminous correspondence. We know that one some days he wrote as many as ten letters by hand. The list of treatises that came from his mind and pen was lengthened considerably even during the last ten years. An enumeration lists about 165 works. There was no slackening in activity, only a shifting of accents. Luther's distaste for the manipulations of high politics, for the inflexibility of diplomats and jurists increased. He was depressed to the point of being dissatisfied with

life because of the growing danger of war. As a matter of fact, five months after his death the Smalcald War broke out.

- 1545 - In February Luther issued his 'Portrayal of the Papacy'.
 In March Luther released his tract 'Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil'.
 At the Diet of Worms the Protestants rejected the invitation to send a deputation to the Council of Trent.
 On October 3 - 11, Luther and Melancton traveled to Mansfeld.
 On November 17 Luther completed his lectures on Genesis.
 On December 13 the Council of Trent convened.
 On December 22 until Jan. 7, 1546, Luther traveled with Melancton to Mansfeld to settle a quarrel between Counts Albert and Gebhard of Mansfeld. Luther again traveled to Torgau and many other cities.
- 1546 - On January 17 the Wittenbergers heard their last sermon by Luther.
 On January 23 Luther began a trip to Eisleben to mediate a dispute between the Counts of Mansfeld about a person inheritance.
 On January 25 he is stopped at Halle because of the flooding waters of the Saale River.
 On January 28 Luther continued to Eisleben. He walked part of the way and became overheated. He became ill on the way. An honor guard of 113 armed horsemen escorted Luther into Eisleben.
 January 29 - Feb. 16 Katherine, Luther's wife, remained at Wittenberg constantly concerned about her weak and ailing husband. He was accompanied by his three sons, Hans, Martin, and Paul. During these days Luther preached four times at Eisleben.
 On February 16 there was a recurrence of his illness. On Feb. 17 Luther was stricken with new attacks of illness, there were chest pains. During the night of February 17 his friends had a foreboding that the end may be near. After he had severe pains, he walked back and forth in his chamber and again lay down on the bed as the sickness became worse. Those present rubbed him with warm cloths, and he felt some relief. Luther commended his soul into the hands of his God. Finally, as he lay silently, Dr. Jonas shouted loudly, "Reverend Father, are you ready to die trusting in your Lord Jesus Christ, and to confess the doctrine which you have taught in His name?" He answered, "Yes!". At fifteen minutes before three o'clock in the morning, Feb. 18, 1546, he took a deep breath and softly and silently, with great patience, gave up his spirit.
 From February 20 - 22 Luther's body was brought to Wittenberg by way of Halle and Kemberg for burial in the Castle Church. Every where the procession went there was great mourning. He was buried at the foot of the pulpit from which he had preached so often and such powerful sermons to the glory of God.

NOTES

"The Tower Experience". The new era was born in the tower room of the Black Monastery at Wittenberg. God's hidden presence in history manifested itself with particular clarity. Here Luther felt himself reborn and that he had entered paradise itself through open gates. Here a totally other face of the Gospel was revealed, the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

This new insight into the Gospel occurred sometime during the winter semester, 1512 - 1513, or in the spring of 1513. This was the hour when the Reformation was born. Without the Tower Experience there would not have been the 95 Theses, nor the Diet of Worms.

Luther concluded his last lectures on the Book of Genesis on November 17, 1545. He has begun this series in May 1535. The conclusion of these lectures marked the end of his teaching career to which he had devoted himself almost without interruption since 1512. His last words were: "Here you now have the dear book of Genesis. May our Lord grant that after me it (the Exposition) will be accomplished more adequately. I am weak, and no longer able".

Luther admonished parents, teachers, and magistrates faithfully to fulfill their obligations to the younger generation. He realized that the world would not be transformed in some magical way just because Christian sermons could be heard in it. He knew that the Gospel would be in a continual state of war with satan until the end of time.

Luther married Katherine von Bora on June 13, 1525. During the years that followed his private life abounded in trials. His wife was of the greatest blessing to him. In 1526 Luther had an attack of gallstones. This painful trouble was with him the rest of his days. In January, 1527, he had a heart attack which almost killed him. Yet, God spared him to live another 20 years and to do much important work for the kingdom of God and for the world.

The Lord blessed Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther with six children. John (Hans) was born June 7, 1526. He became a jurist (lawyer) and counsellor at Weimar. Elizabeth, born Dec. 10, 1527. Elizabeth died August 1528. This was a great trial for the Luthers. Magdalena was born May 4, 1529. The most pathetic scene in Luther's life was that of the death of his daughter, Magdalena in her 14th year, Sept. 20, 1542. She was a child of singular depth of character, affectionate and deeply religious. Martin Jr. was born Nov. 9, 1531. He studied theology, but his health being frail, he never entered the ministry. He married well and died early. Paul, the most gifted of the 3 sons, was born Jan. 28, 1533. He studied medicine and became a physician. The youngest daughter, Margareta, was born Dec. 17, 1534. She married a nobleman by the name of Kunheim. The last descendant in direct line, Martin Gottlob, a Dresden lawyer, died November 3, 1759.

MUSIC AND HYMNS

In 1524 Luther published the first Lutheran hymn-book. It was only a little pamphlet, containing 8 hymns, four by Luther, three by Paul Speratus, and one by an unknown author. This was the tiny spring from which sprang the mighty stream of Protestant hymnody.

At the end of 1524 Luther had written 24 hymns, and in the following years 12 more flowed from his pen. They were not all original. Sometimes he revised hymns already in existence, sometimes he translated old Latin hymns. His greatest hymn, written before 1529, was "A Mighty Fortress is our God", the theme of which is taken from Psalm 46.

The hymns of Luther and those who followed his example in this blessed work became a great medium for the spread of the truths of the Reformation. The people learned them by heart and sang them gladly. All that the enemies could do to stem the tide of the Lutheran song was in vain.

Luther was the father of evangelical hymn singing. The Lutheran Church became the "singing Church".

Elmer Zehms