



"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

Journal
of
Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

VOLUME 23

JUNE 1983

NUMBER 2

ISSN 0361-1906

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The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701, by authorization of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Subscriptions: \$5.00 per year, \$9.00 for two years, payable in advance. Issues are dated: March, June, September, and December.

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LUTHER — THE REFORMER

Heroes, who are truly heroes, rarely begin with the hope of becoming such. Rather, it is time and circumstances which take ordinary men and make them great. Yet it is not an instantaneous thing. The "time" may well be of great length. The "circumstances" may come in a long series. Their lives are like mountains, building up to a peak of heroism.

However, they are not the builders; God is. He so manipulates time and events that a given man is brought face-to-face with the gifts necessary to take advantage of the opportunities. "In Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great and to strengthen everyone" (I Chron. 29:12).

LUTHER: NO REFORMER BY NATURE As one studies the life of Martin Luther, he finds little to indicate that this was a man who would strive for greatness. He was not of the kind who tries to set himself up as an authority on any subject. Nor was he the type who thrives on rebelling against authority.

Luther grew up as a child of the Roman church. He absorbed the prevailing attitudes of the church, which were the sum total of the attitudes of his world. The church was God, as far as he was concerned. To rebel against the church was to rebel against God. The pope, of course, was the church. He was a remote figure in far-off Rome. The very distance tended to magnify his "holiness" in Luther's eyes. He saw the pope sitting astride the "throne of Peter," relaying to man the will of almighty God. Luther had nothing but the highest respect and adoration for the pope. The "holy father" was certainly not seen as an authority against whom to rebel.

When Luther entered into the work of the church, every thought was to come into a more perfect harmony with the church and thus with God. If the church said that such-and-such was the way to come into harmony with God, Luther would reply, "I will strive to do such-and-such."

Never was there a thought of challenging the principles of the church. The church was his mother; the pope was his father. As Luther bowed in submission to his natural parents and accepted their discipline without question, so he bowed to this mother and father. — Luther was not a reformer! He was an obedient child.

Anyone who teaches that it was Luther's nature to set himself against authority, either does not know Luther or is a deliberate liar. Concerning the thought of opposing Rome or reforming the church, Luther is recorded as saying:

Indeed had another person so taught, I would have damned him and burned him with fire (W-T, 3, 3593; WLS, 3755).

THE REFORM OF LUTHER The Reform of Luther began with the reform of Luther. Rather than striving to reform the church, Luther had to be reformed first. As long as he was in agreement with the church, there is no way that he would even think of making reforms. If there had been no inner reform of the man, he probably would have ended up as one of the great champions of the Catholic faith. Indeed, he might even have been one of their "saints."

What might have been fades into the shadows of insignificance when compared to what was. What was, is that Luther was given a new heart, clean and right. As a result of this, all things became new to him. He saw everything in a different light. What accomplished this miracle, what reformed Luther, was the same thing that carried the Reformation through to its intended end. It was nothing less than the Gospel of free forgiveness, the power of God unto salvation. If we are to attribute the Reformation to any one thing or any one person, it must be attributed to the Gospel and its Author.

In order to determine when the Gospel did its reforming work in the heart of Luther, one would have to study his whole life and make his observations with the eyes of God. We simply do not know when it happened. Neither can we say that it must be narrowed down to one moment.

What can be said is that at one time Luther sought to find his righteousness in works, his own or those of the "saints." Later on he revealed that he found his desired righteousness in the works of Christ. This discovery came not because he sought it nor because he abandoned the way of righteousness which the Roman church had drilled into his head. It came through his study of the Word of God.

As a teacher of the Word, Luther felt compelled to study that Word. It was not in his nature simply to reiterate the teachings of the fathers. Luther was a scholar, and a scholar is noted for original work. How sweet is the love of God which moves Him to bring a man into contact with His saving Word: "Love that found me - wondrous thought! Found me when I sought Him not" (L.H. # 342:2).

Finally, after days and nights of wrestling with the difficulty, God had mercy on me, and then I was able to note the connection of the words "the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel" and "the just shall live by faith." Then I began to understand that the "righteousness of God" is that through which the righteous lives by the gift of God, that is, through faith, and that the meaning is this: The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God in a passive sense, the righteousness through which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just shall live by faith." Then I felt as if I had been completely reborn and had entered Paradise through widely opened doors. Instantly all Scripture looked different to me. (W 54, 185f - E op var arg i, 22 - SL 14,446f.)

Luther was reformed. Christ had entered into a tortured soul and filled it with the peace which is beyond understanding. The reform had just begun. The Spirit of God would continue to work with him for the rest of his life, removing ignorance and error. It is the same process of sanctification by which the Spirit separates all God's people from sin and error. It had to begin where it did, with a reformation of Luther's beliefs concerning the righteousness of God. In that, Luther found the key

to Scripture, as he said, "Instantly, all Scripture looked different to me." The most important work of reform had begun within Luther. Upon this foundation the Spirit would build. Luther could now learn and understand more and more.

TETZEL'S INDULGENCES It was a series of events that brought Luther face-to-face with the saving Word. It was, also, a series of events that led to the reformation of the church. Immediately after Luther was reformed, he had no thought of reforming the church. In the simplicity of his ignorance, he thought that Rome already knew and proclaimed the truth. He was perfectly content to stand in his own pulpit or sit in his professor's seat and preach the pure Gospel. Had he been left alone to do this, it is entirely possible that there would have been no Reformation, at least none of so great dimensions.

However, God had other plans. He brought before Luther matters that he could not ignore, errors against which he was compelled to speak. Again and again, the Lord had to push Luther into the Reformation:

God carried on this affair in a marvelous way and drove me into it without my intention, and He alone has advanced it so far that a reconciliation between the pope and us is impossible. (W-T, 3, 3593.)

It began with Tetzel slithering his way into Luther's flock. Although he didn't come to Wittenberg, he was close enough for Luther's sheep to go to him. They went and purchased his indulgences. Luther was compelled. He could not keep silent. He must preach against this great offender. The Ninety-five Theses were like an incendiary bomb exploding over the world, spreading its fire everywhere.

This was the spark of the reformation of the church. One can "if" history into non-existence, but permit this observation: if Tetzel had never spit his venom into Luther's congregation, Luther might have remained in obscurity. However, there was Tetzel, bold and brassy. The Lord had cast a hot coal into the tinder of Luther's mind.

It kindled a fire that Luther never sought to be kindled.

Ever was it so. The sparks igniting the fires of reform came from the outside, from the enemies of the Gospel. In 1528 Luther wrote:

How often we have declared, and still declare, every day that we are ready gladly and willingly to accept and observe whatever they may set up and command, if the pope and all our adversaries only consent not to compel us to teach and to practice anything against the Word of God ... but they compel and urge us to teach and act contrary to God's Word. This starts the trouble; because of it we are rising in opposition and preparing to defend ourselves. (W26, 570f - E30, 387f - SL19, 1358f.)

It was his inclination to remain in obscurity, but his enemies would not allow it. They kept hurling their fire-brands at him. They are the ones who kept the fire of reform going and growing.

What a strange alliance — the Lord on the one hand and the enemies of Christ on the other! Together, they badgered Luther into the work of reforming. Of course, the objectives of the two parties in this alliance were exactly opposite. One wanted the Reformation; the other was trying to stop it, but the Lord would have His way. In fact, all unbeknownst to them, the enemies of Christ were actually serving as His tools. So it has always been: the persecutors of the church have ended up serving the purposes of the Lord.

So it was that Tetzal's arrival on the scene started something that could not be stopped. Luther thought he was attacking a local error. He didn't realize that Tetzal was only one small branch on a root that originated in Rome. When Luther poured the savor of the Gospel on Tetzal's doctrine of salvation by works, that savor shot through the whole root system, until the pope himself could smell its sweet aroma of death (Cf. II Cor. 2:16). Therefore, when Luther stood up to Tetzal, he was standing up to the whole Roman church. It was only a matter of time before he found this out.

LUTHER'S CALL It was noted above that Luther became involved with Tetzl only after Tetzl spat his venom into Luther's congregation. Luther could not sit back and watch as his people were being led astray. Not only did he love them, but his pastoral responsibility toward them was felt very deeply by him. (For more on Luther's attitude toward his people, see "Luther, the Seelsorger," *Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1.)

Luther's feeling of responsibility stemmed not only from his love, but also from his call. In 1512, he received from pope and emperor the call to be a Doctor of the Holy Scripture. Part of his oath of office was that he would "interpret Scripture before all the world and ... teach everybody in a common, free school for higher learning." Luther never took an oath lightly. Before his conversion, it was his terror of judgment that drove him to be faithful to his oath. After his conversion, it was his love for Christ and for human souls that drove him:

What I have begun as a doctor, created and called by their command, I must in truth confess until my end, and I can now no longer be silent or stop, as I would certainly like to do, tired and disgusted as I am, because of the great, unbearable ingratitude of the people. (W31 I, 212 - E39, 256 - SL5, 723.)

Luther confessed that there were many times when he was tempted to quit. He faced opposition from the clergy and ingratitude from the laity. However, he could not quit. His call compelled him to keep fighting for the truth of Scripture. It is as though Christ kept saying to him, "No. You cannot stop. I have called you. I have given you an office, which you are bound to fulfil."

Truly, I would finally have to lose courage and despair of the great, weighty matter that rests on me if I had begun it as a meddler (Schwärmer), without call and command. But now God and all the world must bear me witness that I have begun it publicly in the discharge of my doctorate and the office of the ministry and have brought it thus far with God's grace and help. (W30 III,522 - E31, 219f - SL20, 1670.)

THE CALL AND THE WORD

The thing of chief importance in Luther's call was that he must preach the Word of God faithfully and purely. He did not regard it as a call to force himself and his own ideas upon his flock. This is not to say that Luther was never tempted to proclaim some idea that popped into his head:

Oh, how many fine ideas have come to me while I was studying the Scripture! But I had to give them up. If an enthusiast had had them, no doubt all the printeries would have been too few for him. (W23, 112 - E30, 46 - SL20, 792.)

While there were those who accused Luther of a lack of originality, there were, also, those who declared that Luther's reform was based solely on teachings invented by himself. To this he replied:

*This message is not a novel invention of ours but the very ancient, approved teaching of the apostles brought to light again. ... We only contend for, and hold to, the ancient: that which Christ and the apostles have left behind them and have given to us. But this we did do. Since we found all of this obscured by the pope with human doctrine, aye, decked out in dust and spider webs and all sorts of vermin, and flung and trodden into the mud besides, we have by God's grace brought it out again, have cleansed it of this mess (*Grærljhmæiæz*), wiped off the dust, brushed it, and brought it into the light of day. Accordingly, it shines again in purity, and everybody may see what Gospel, Baptism, Sacrament of the Altar, keys, prayer, and everything that Christ has given us really is and how it should be used for our salvation. (W46, 62f - E50, 86f - SL8, 682.)*

It was the pure Word, which Luther was called to and was, therefore, determined to preach. However, the pope and all his underlings would not allow Luther to do this. It was not a matter of Luther running around the countryside, intruding himself into other men's ministries; he keenly felt that this was not his call. The problem was that he was forbidden to proclaim the truth to his own

flock, to those who had called him. Therefore, Luther resisted and acted in accord with his call.

THE WORD: THE REAL REFORMER Luther could have been stopped. He was only a man. But it was not Luther whom the Lord of the church wanted as some new head of His church. The only reason that Luther was not stopped is because God had put His Word into the man's mouth. God wanted the Word to go out and gather the lost sheep into the flock. Wycliffe tried a method of reform which failed. Huss tried his method and failed. Men fail.

Wycliffe and Huss fought merely against the life of the pope. That is why they did not attain their purpose, for they were sinners just as the papists were. But I attacked the doctrine. With this weapon I defeated them. For this matter does not concern life; it concerns doctrine. (W-T1, No. 8880 - Cp. SL22, 892, No. 95.)

Luther knew only too well that if the reforming process depended on his person, he would have joined Wycliffe and Huss in failure. There were those who tried to halt the tide of reform by discrediting Luther's person. He was accused of being proud, arrogant, bold, irreverent, offensive, seditious, blood-thirsty, schismatic, etc. Luther was only too willing to admit many flaws in his personal character:

I have never boasted of my holiness on any point. ... We are not discussing life, but doctrine. The doctrine may well be correctly taught by a person though his life is evil. Bad doctrine is a thousand times more harmful than a bad life. (W6, 581 - E24, 19 - SL15, 1413.)

Luther was not conceding to the accusations of his enemies. He simply was redirecting the flow of discussion. He had no desire to argue with those who attacked his character. That was too much of a waste of time and energy:

I will not stubbornly argue the point whether I am

a haughty man or not, since that does not concern my doctrine but my person. I have repeatedly said: Assail my person if you will and in any way you will; I do not claim to be an angel. But I will allow no one to assail my doctrine without giving an account of myself, because I know that it is not mine but God's. For on this depend my neighbor's salvation and my own, to God's praise and honor. (W7, 274 - E27, 210 - SL18, 1260.)

Luther was never happier than when the attention was taken from himself and directed toward Christ and His Word. Then, he knew, the reforming work would carry on under the power of that Word. Had he stopped to defend his character, he would have found himself bogged down in an endless self-apologia. Satan wanted that, but Luther would have no part of it. He foiled the attempts of Satan and his servants by keeping the attention centered on doctrine and not on Luther.

It was the Word of the Spirit, which gave success to the work of the Reformer, for doctrine was the spark which ignited fires within the souls of men. Luther's person might have drawn a few away from Rome. However, the Gospel is the power that worked within the heart and gave men the will and the courage to abandon the papacy.

REFORM OR REVOLT Since the opponents of Luther could not stop the reform by attacking the person of Luther, they turned to attacking him for all the evils that followed on the coattails of the reform movement. Not only the gross evils, such as the Peasants' War, but every little evil that came along was somehow tied to Luther. Luther was saddened by the fact that they magnified the pimple and ignored the face. The glory of the Gospel unleashed from the shackles of the papacy far outshone any evil that may have attached itself to the movement.

There were, indeed, evils following Luther like dogs nipping at his heels. At one time the peasants, encouraged by such men as Muentzer, thought that reform was the same as revolt. They launched into a bloody rebellion against the state. However, Luther made it clear that

there was a world of difference between reform and revolt (although some Roman historians still speak of "The Protestant Revolt"). He did not believe that the sword of the state should achieve the reform, but rather the "Sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17).

What have I done to the pope? I have never drawn a sword but have struck only by word of mouth and the Gospel. And I am still striking at the pope, bishops, monks, and priests, at idolatry, error, and sects. Thereby I have accomplished more than all the emperors and kings could have done with all their power. I have taken only the rod of His mouth and beaten upon the hearts. I have let God carry on, and I have let the Word work. This has caused such a disturbance in the papacy and has so torn it apart that by this time it would have fared worse if the seditious murderers with their peasants had not trespassed on my domain. (W34, 531 - E6, 297 - SL 13b, 2627f.)

Luther never approached his work with a revolutionary bent. He did not seek to tear down the church, that he might build a new one. He only wanted to renovate the church that existed. He sought to repair the holes in the roof, to replace the rotting timbers, to cement the crumbling walls, and above all to replace the foundation of sand with one of solid rock.

Yet it seems inevitable that the devil, when he fails through the professed enemies of the Truth, will send men to "defend" the Christian cause. However, he always arms them with the wrong weapons, thereby seeking to destroy the cause from within. So it was for Luther; there came such defenders, who sought to promote the cause of the Reformation by varying degrees of force. Carlstadt was mild among these, but still he tried to push the reforming process at a rate faster than the people were prepared for. Muentzer was the most radical, willing to use physical weapons to "purge the church" of all heresy. To their means, Luther wrote:

What our friends have undertaken by force and violence must be fought with the Word alone, must be de-

stroyed with the Word alone. ... Whoever believes, let him believe and follow; whoever does not believe, let him disbelieve and depart. For to faith and to matters that are of faith no one is to be compelled but drawn by the Word that he may believe and come of his own free will. (W-Br2, 474 - SL15, 2012f.)

THE ENTHUSIASTS This very Word, which Luther so emphasized, was ridiculed by these enthusiasts. Their fundamental principle was this: "An external matter can be of no use for salvation." Thus, they discounted the power of the outward Word, for it was written with pen and ink upon paper. Likewise, they rejected the power of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Instead, they proclaimed an inner working of the Spirit without means.

But when you ask them: How does one obtain this exalted Spirit? they do not direct you to the outward Gospel but to a utopia (inß Schlaraffenland) and say: Stand awaiting, as I have stood, then you will experience it; the heavenly voice will come, and God Himself will speak with you. ... Do you not see the devil, the enemy of divine order, in the method? How he gets you to gape with the words: Spirit, Spirit, Spirit! But meanwhile he is tearing up the bridges, the highway and the byway, the ladder, and everything by which the Spirit is actually to come to you, namely, the outward ordinances of God in the material Baptism, the written and spoken Word of God. (W18, 136f - E29, 209f - SL20, 202f.)

It is amazing that these fanatics would give up the Sword of the Spirit and, yet, would be willing to take up the sword of the state. Or, perhaps, it is not so amazing, for when one has departed from the Word of God, anything becomes possible. What is so amazing is the great diversity of errors that can be concocted by the mind that is starved from lack of the Word, the mind that depends solely on its own imagination.

DIVISIONS Luther grieved deeply over the growing number of divisions that were occurring within the reform movement. As the movement gained strength and it became more and more obvious that neither pope nor em-

peror were able to stop it, the heretics took courage. After hiding in the shadow of Luther's robes, they began to come out into the open. One error after another was propounded and then defended. The attacks of Luther's "friends" were a greater blow to him than the attacks of his enemies. He regarded these "friends" as the greatest danger to the Reformation.

Luther had become game for the hounds, the papists pursuing from the front, the enthusiasts from the rear, devils from every side. Though it would have been so very easy for the dogs to corner the man and tear away at his flesh, they would have found themselves with a mouth full of quills. The man they could have had, but the doctrine which he taught brought only pain to all the opponents. And if they did not withdraw from the battle, but chose to try to devour both Luther and his doctrine, they would find themselves with a belly full of quills, which would destroy them.

Although Luther was saddened by the growing opposition and persecution arising from the heretics, he found in this a corroboration of his Gospel. The absence of persecution is a sign that no one is bringing Christ to the world, for the world hates and opposes Christ. The Gospel is not the root cause of divisions and offenses, but sin and Satan. Nevertheless, the Gospel is the opportunity for this trouble.

If you do not want to have the Gospel or be a Christian, then go out, and take the world's side. Then you will be its friend, and no one will persecute you. But if you want to have the Gospel and Christ, then you must count on having trouble, conflict and persecution wherever you go. Reason: because the devil cannot bear it otherwise, nor will he stop egg-ing people against the Gospel, so that all the world is incensed against it. (W32, 340f - E43, 63 - SL7, 402f.)

COMPROMISE In response to the rise of sects and the seeming blow that this dealt to the cause of reform, some of Luther's "friends" urged him to ease up. Like the ecumenists of today, they thought that the

reformers should present a united front against the papacy. The only way to do this was through compromise.

Others went even further. They were no longer concerned with complete reform. They wanted to make compromises even with the papacy, so as to bring an end to the strife. Luther would have to yield a point here; the pope would have to yield a point there, and so goes the compromising.

No, not so! For you hear that St. Paul would not mix even a small quantity of yeast with the good dough. God had forbidden it. For it works its way through and through and corrupts everything. Where in one point we mingle the correct, the pure doctrine with human additions, the injury is done; the truth is thereby obscured, and souls are led astray. Therefore the making of such a doctrinal hodge-podge and patchwork is not to be tolerated in Christendom. (W21, 205 - E8, 177f - SL12, 480.)

Luther refused to be a compromising reformer. Such is the way of man; yea, such is the way of Satan. Luther chose the way of Christ: "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mt. 28:20). In his work of reforming, he always came back to the Bible. This is where he got his start. This is the only thing that he had confidence in. This is not to say that Luther never had doubts. It was not only his opponents who said, "Who do you think you are? Why do you think that you are the only one who knows the truth?" Luther asked himself such questions:

Oh, with how great an effort and exertion, also with proof from Holy Scripture, did I barely succeed in justifying before my own conscience that I, a lone man, dared rise against the pope, consider him the Anti-christ, the bishops his Apostles, the schools of higher learning his houses of ill fame. (WB, 482f - E28, 29 - SL19, 1069.)

The Word, the Word, always the Word! Without it, Luther would not have been inwardly reformed. Without it, there would have been no real Reformation. Even if

Luther was the only one to have been reformed, while the whole world stood against him, it would not have swayed him. Every enemy's taunting opposition drove him back to the Word, not to himself, for reassurance. If he thought on himself, he despaired. If he thought on the Word, he was secure and could stand up against the devil and the whole world.

Die Heilige Schrift It is good that God sends teachers who are so secure in their knowledge of the Truth. They can, then, teach others without hesitation, with firmness and confidence. Yet, men are only a fading cloud on this earth. If one's confidence rests on a man, his faith will likewise be a fading cloud. Furthermore, one man's confidence cannot give another true confidence.

Luther knew that the only way to perpetuate the Reformation was through the Scriptures. The people had to find their confidence in the Word, just as he did. If they had the Bible, then Luther could fade away. The truth would remain and so would their confidence. It is for this reason that Luther was guided to make a translation of the Bible. Through him the Lord put His Word into the hands of the people. They could read. They could study. They could discover for themselves that what he taught was the truth. Thus, even when Luther was gone, their confidence would remain, for it would not be based on a man, but on the Word. (For more, see "Luther — the Translator," *Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1.)

DEFORMATION Unfortunately, all too many people depended on the man and not on the Word. Although they had the Bible in a language that they could read, they did not make use of it. Thus, when Luther died, they turned to other men. And Satan was more than willing to supply many men. Today, the land of the Reformation is a barren land. There are few who still cling to the truth. The Bible has become a book used only insofar as some passage can be twisted to support the ideas of false teachers. One wonders how many German homes possess the German Bible, and of those which do, how many echo the sounds of a Bible well read. — And Germany does not stand alone. The world is full of Bibles.

Every nation can read the Bible in her native tongue. Yet, the world suffers from a famine of the Word. Souls are born dead and never receive the breath of life. Oh, yes, the world is full of preachers, but it is not full of the hearing of the Word!

CONCLUSION Today, we who celebrate the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth, must fall to our knees in humble thanksgiving. After these many years, we still have the truth. We have it because God, in His mercy, brought His Word to a darkened world through a man named Martin Luther. It is not the man whom we celebrate, but the God Who led him, yea, drove him to be the reformer that he was. Luther would be the first one to decry any attempt to elevate his person beyond the position of redeemed sinner. As he continually tried to direct the attention of the people to the saving Word, so must we. There would be no more fitting way to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his birth than by the proclamation of the whole counsel of God. Only His Word, taught in truth and purity, can give to men complete confidence in their eternal salvation. This Word was the real "reformer." And this Word shall continue to reform the hearts of men, so long as the world stands.

And now, lest we join the apostates in Germany and the world, let us heed the warning of Luther:

Dear Germans, buy while the market is at your doors; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; use the grace and Word of God while they are here. For this you should know: God's Word and grace are a passing rainstorm which does not return where it has once been. It came to the Jews, but it is gone; now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks, but it is gone; now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latins had it too, but it is gone; now they have the pope. And you Germans dare not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not let it remain. Therefore, take and hold fast the gracious Word, whoever can; idle hands are bound to have a lean year. (W15, 32 - E22, 176 - SL10, 464.)

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LUTHER — THE MAN, HIS HOME AND FAMILY

INTRODUCTORY When one undertakes to write something on the more personal and private life of Martin Luther (as distinguished from his doctrine and the resultant controversies and reformation of the church), how wonderful it would be if he had left us an autobiography. One time he had indicated to friends that he had this in mind, but due to poor health and the press of time and work it never happened.

If Luther didn't write a review of his private life (we refer particularly to the years prior to his "public" life), why didn't some of his friends or contemporaries do so? Surely they recognized the greatness of the man Luther in the annals of history. Apparently they took his dynamic personality, and the background and training from which it came, pretty much for granted. None of Luther's closest friends (including the dozen and more students who spent hours, and even months and years, in the Luther home) ever thought of writing a description of him while he was still alive. After his death, Philip Mel-

anchthon, his close friend, did write a ten-page "mere sketch" biography of Luther. The first real attempt at a longer biography was by John Mathesius, a former table companion, who incorporated facts (and much legendary material) of Luther's life in a series of 17 sermons he preached from 1562-1564.

The person interested in pursuing information on Luther, the man and his personality, his ancestry and family history, his home life, is left with the formidable task of gleaning materials from Luther's voluminous writings, particularly from the "Table Talk" recorded by those around the Luther table in the Black Cloister. There have, of course, been countless books written about Luther in the last five centuries. Separating fact from fiction in these books (also in Table Talk entries) is not always easy or even possible.

There was no photography in those days. Consequently, the pictures we have of Luther come mainly from the paintings and woodcut sketches by his good friend and contemporary, Lucas Cranach, the elder (1472-1553). Some of the pictures of Luther have been somewhat embellished as can be noticed by comparing them with Cranach's works, the professionalism of which may be open to question. For obvious reasons, we might wish that the renowned Italian painter, Michelangelo (1475-1564), had been sympathetic to Luther and his cause. Or that the accomplished German painter, Albrecht Duerer (1471-1528), had left us a portrait of the Reformer.

From the sketches and word-pictures (by friend and foe) that we do have of Luther, we know that he was of imposing appearance. He had "deepset, shining eyes" which "flashed with the fire of an Old Testament Isaiah." His parishioners are said to have remarked that they felt he could see right through them from the pulpit, noting everything they had done during the week. His ears "lay close to a massive head" which, in turn, was "covered with light-brown hair." He walked erect, bending backward rather than forward. At least in his first 38 years he was not a very fleshy man, but in fact somewhat emaciated. A reporter at the Leipzig Debate (1519) mentioned that every bone in his body could be counted. He had a

firm mouth and a resonant "clear, high-pitched tenor voice with the authority of John the Baptist calling men to repentance." Blended together with his serious and somber bearing was a skillful wit and ready charm.

ANCESTRY AND CHILDHOOD HOME In the late 15th century there were many prosperous people living in the "electoral villages" on the western edge of the Thuringian forest in Saxony. They were known as "quit-rent" folk, that is, people who paid a form of rent to the Elector for certain feudal services. This rent was levied not on the persons, but on the land. Usually these people answered only to the Elector, living otherwise pretty much without outside interference. They chose their own mayor and village officers and shared the use of the forests, fields, meadows and water. According to the Electoral system, the families would bequeath their possessions to the youngest son. The older sons had to seek employment outside the village.

One of these "quit-rent" families was the Luther (variously spelled Chlotar, Ludher, Luder, Lueder, Lauther, Lutter) family of Moehra. Around 1521 Luther remarked that his family branches took in "almost the whole neighborhood from Eisenach along the border of the Thuringian forest." This would indicate that the Luther family had been living in the area for centuries.

Luther's grandfather was Heine Luther. To him and his wife Margaret (nee Ziegler) were born four sons: Gross-Hans, Klein-Hans, Viet, and Heinz. Since Gross-Hans had no chance of inheriting the family holdings, he decided to leave. He in turn married Margaret (nee Lindemann) [For a detailed discussion on the Ziegler-Lindemann maiden name debate, see the book *Luther and His Mother*, by Ian Siggins]. With their first-born son, Jacob, they went to seek their fortune in the copper mines of Mansfeld county. Eisleben was the chief city in the county, and they took residence there in a two-story house two blocks from St. Peter's Church.

It was in Eisleben that the second son, Martin, who was destined to turn the world upside down, was born. While we are observing the 500th anniversary of Luther's

birth this year, it might seem strange that there is some question about the definite year of his birth. The mother is said to have been certain of the day, November 10th just before midnight, but uncertain whether the year was 1483 or 1484. She told Philip Melanchthon that it was 1484, while Luther himself and brother Jacob believed it was 1483. Luther wrote on a Hebrew Psalter, "I was born in the year 1483." Martin was so named for the fact that he was baptized on the day after his birth, St. Martin's Day. The baptism took place in the tower room of the neighboring church of St. Peter. The officiating priest was Bartholomew Rennebacher.

Luther said: "My father slept with my mother and embraced her, just as I do my wife, and they were still godly people." Their conjugal union produced at least eight children, with others probably lost in infancy. Besides Martin and his older brother Jacob (whom Luther considered a dear friend and companion), two other brothers were born, names unknown, who were lost to the plague shortly after Luther was ordained a priest in 1507. There were four sisters: Barbara, who died in 1520; Dorothea (married name Mackenrot); Margaret (married name Kaufmann); and a fourth sister, first name unknown, but married to a man named Polner.

If Augustine had his famous mother, Monica, and John Wesley his mother, Susanna, what about Luther's mother? Contrary to what most biographers assert, the author of the book *Luther and His Mother* contends that more can be learned about Luther's character from his mother than from his father. The book makes a strong case. As to physical resemblance, Cranach's sketches would indicate that Martin inherited facial characteristics of both parents.

It has been ascertained from Table Talk that within the family Luther's mother was known as "Hanna," not Margaret. The likelihood is that she received this nickname because both her father and her husband were named Hans. Luther leaves us with the impression that his mother was very industrious and self-denying. Superstitions about devils and demonic spirits were a frequent topic of conversation in the Luther home, though there were also as-

surances of a greater power to overcome these spirits. Luther himself in later years firmly put to rest aspersions that his mother had been a prostitute and that he himself was the product of an adulterous union. (Luther's enemies tried everything to undermine his character and work.)

Hans and Hanna were frequent visitors to the Black Cloister parsonage in Wittenberg in later years. Though they did not attend Luther's wedding, they did attend Melanchthon's in 1520, after which Philip said: "In his mother Margaret, Johannes Luder's wife, dwelt not only the virtues befitting an upright, married woman, but her modesty, fear of God, and prayerfulness were especially obvious and other upright women paid her close attention as an example of virtue."

On his part, Luther's father is described as being diligent in business, firm of character, and even obstinate. It appears that he did not prosper in his labors in Eisleben, so that within a year or so after Martin's birth he moved his family to Mansfeld. He probably began work there as a common laborer in the mines, but by 1491 he had become a shareholder. By 1505 there were already eight children (although one had died). Industriousness and frugality marked Luther's childhood home. By 1511 Hans had become a part-owner of at least six shafts and two foundries. When Martin became a priest, his father visited the monastery with a company of 20 horsemen and made a gift of 20 gulden to the Augustinians, which is quite a bit when it is realized that the price of an ox was one or two gulden. When Luther enrolled at the University of Erfurt, he was classified as coming from a family that "had." On July 10, 1534, the heirs of Hans Luther divided 1250 gulden (another source says \$18,000), which marked Hans Luther as fairly well-to-do if not exactly rich.

The book *Luther and His Mother* has perhaps the strongest arguments (though it is suggested also by others) in support of the contention that errors and romantic legends have evolved over the years pertaining to certain aspects of Luther's childhood. For example, the impression is generally left that Luther grew up in pover-

ty-stricken circumstances. The facts do not seem to support this. Luther's remark that his mother carried or dragged wood home from the forests must be tempered by the fact that this was not an uncommon practice in those days. It was not unusual, either, for boys who came from homes other than royalty to sing from house to house for their own amusement as well as for gifts of food or for other material benefits.

In disciplining their children, Luther's parents had their flaws. They are said to have trained and reared their children as though they were all cut out of the same cloth. Spankings were considered as necessary as eating and drinking. For stealing a nut one time Martin was beaten by his mother until the blood flowed. On another occasion his father "flogged him so severely that he ran away from him and bore him a grudge for it." Again, all of this should be understood against the backdrop of the accepted methods of child-rearing in their day. That the parents meant well with their harsher methods is indicated by the fact that Luther's father, for example, made every effort to win his son back after the grudge-causing incident. In later years, Luther himself elaborated: "My parents treated me harshly, so that I became timid. . . . They seriously thought they were doing right; but they could not distinguish character, which, however, is very necessary in order to know when, or where, or how chastisement should be inflicted. It is necessary to punish; but the apple should be placed beside the rod." This gives us insight into Luther's philosophy in raising the children which were to be born to him.

It is generally supposed that Luther entered Latin school in Mansfeld as soon as his parents considered him ready. One suggestion is that he began school on St. George's Day, March 12, 1488, when he was about 4½ years old. This would help explain why he had to be carried to school. Since there were no holidays in those days, the child Martin presumably went to school practically every day for eight whole years.

Basically four things were learned in school: reading, writing, singing, and Latin. Latin was considered very important, being the "church language" of the day

and the language of the more learned. All students, even gifted ones, had to spend many years merely learning to read and write. Much time was consumed by mechanical hammering and cramming. As for discipline, school was much like home. "Thrashings" were commonplace for such things as lapsing into German, failing to decline and conjugate properly, the use of profanity, or general misbehavior. Luther tells how he was spanked fifteen times one morning. While such spanking was probably not the rule, neither was it the exception. In Martin's case it was probably for a whole week's offenses rather than a one-day, spur of the moment, disciplining. It can be assumed that Luther as a child amused himself as children do. He does speak of enjoying the attendance of a pig-slaughtering event in the city.

When Luther was fourteen, he was sent to high school in Magdeburg in the company of John Reinecke, the son of a blast furnace superintendent in Mansfeld, and a long-time friend. After one year, for an unknown reason, Luther's parents sent him to school at Eisenach. The likely reason for this was that he had relations there, chiefly on his mother's side. (Luther's maternal cousins, the Lindemanns, were a highly-respected family including two pastors, two lawyers, a physician, two schoolmasters, a university docent, and three public officials.) Melancthon's brief biography says: "Here (at Eisenach) he rounded out his Latin studies, and since he had a penetrating mind and rich gifts of expression, he soon outstripped his companions in eloquence, languages, and poetic verse."

One of the prominent business families in Eisenach were the Heinrich Schalbes. Luther no doubt lodged with them, for he himself speaks of "my host Heinrich Schalbe." He tutored the Schalbe son. It cannot be proved beyond doubt that the Schalbe daughter, Ursula, was the "wealthy widow" who enjoyed Luther's boyhood singing voice so much that she had pity upon him and took him into her house to lodge there. The book *Luther and His Mother* exposes also this romantic legend quite convincingly.

We know that Luther loved and respected his parents. He venerated his father, whom he had hurt by his later decision to enter the monastery when his father wanted

him to pursue a study of law. His mother died on June 30, 1531, just over a year after the death of her husband. As to the care and concern he had for her, we quote from a letter he wrote her while on her deathbed. Writing with the text of John 16:33b obviously in mind, he says in part: "... Be grateful that God has brought you to this knowledge and did not let you stay trapped in popish error, which taught us to trust our own works and monks' holiness, and to regard our only consolation, our Savior, not as a comforter, but as a hard judge and tyrant, so that we were forced to flee from him to Mary and the saints and to expect no grace or comfort from him. ... Jesus says, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world ... and so I commend you body and soul to his mercy. All your children and my Katie are praying for you. ... Your loving son, Martin Luther."

IEWS ON CELIBACY AND MARRIAGE A recent made-for-television movie, "The Thornbirds," highly successful by viewer-rating standards, put the spotlight on the "unnatural" burden that the Roman Catholic Church imposes on its priests (and nuns) with the vow of celibacy. Like other heresies of Rome, celibacy was a gradual development. It reached its peak under Pope Gregory VII in 1075, when priests were forced to repudiate their wives. In subsequent years, celibacy caused scandals and crimes of immense proportions. In Mansfeld, Germany, a 1512 police order directed a distinctive attire "for all the women of priests and other public and common prostitutes."

At the time Luther was about 30 years old. By word and example he was to throw the spotlight on the unscripturalness and unnaturalness of the monastic vow of celibacy. That vow had come to mean little more than remaining unmarried. As a parish priest, pastor, and confessor, Luther could not and would not avoid dealing with countless practical questions dealing with the estate of marriage, including the question of celibacy.

He began attacking the subject publicly in 1519 when he published a "Sermon on the Estate of Marriage." In his 1520 "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" he touched on the subject. Then in 1521, in his "Of Monastic Vows,"

he declared the vow of celibacy no longer binding, and encouraged monks and nuns to leave the cloister. In 1523 he wrote "An Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order that They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Chastity of Wedlock." (The Teutonic Knights were the youngest of three great military and religious orders which sprang from the Crusades in the 12th century.)

In "The Estate of Marriage" sermon Luther elaborates upon Matthew 19:12, in which God Himself exempts three categories of men from marriage. Luther says: "Apart from these three groups, let no man presume to be without a spouse." To the Teutonic Knights he writes that the pope has no right to "put God to school" by stipulating that a wife is not a help but a hindrance to serving God. Celibacy should be a free choice. The tyranny of celibacy is contrary also to nature. It is, said Luther, "like putting fire and straw together and commanding that there be neither smoke nor fire." To keep nature from running its desired course, he said, is to "keep nature from being nature, fire from burning, water from wetting, and a man from eating, drinking and sleeping."

It is not surprising that Luther's support for the abolition of celibacy was construed, especially by his foes, as an "emancipation of the flesh." In effect, it was the very opposite. While the church in the Middle Ages accorded to celibacy and virginity the highest possible rung on the ladder of holiness, and believed that marriage and family had no part among the religious elite, Luther came to view the real saints "as those who put up with squalling babies, shrewish wives, and drunken husbands."

The Luther biographer, Bainton, says: "According to Luther the man is the head of the wife because he was created first. She is to give him not only love but also honor and obedience. He is to rule her with gentleness, but he is to rule. She has her sphere, and she can do more with the children with one finger than he with two fists. But she is to confine herself to her sphere. If Luther did not say that children, church, and kitchen are the province of women, he did say that women have been created with large hips in order that they should stay

home and sit on them." Marriage, to Luther, was a "school of character" and motherhood was "woman's outstanding glory." That was true of Eve, and also of his wife-to-be, Katie. However, especially after his own marriage, Luther began to soften some of his almost chauvinist-sounding ideas.

HIS OWN MARRIAGE - Not only with words, but also, finally, by example, Luther was to give the most dramatic witness to the principles he had been expounding and urging upon others. He himself was to marry and thus, in a sense, to found the Protestant parsonage.

Monks began to leave the cloister and marry when Luther, hiding at the Wartburg, was declared an outlaw following his stand at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Not only monks, however, but also nuns were discarding their vows and leaving the cloisters. On April 10, 1523, Luther wrote his friend, Georg Spalatin, that nine nuns had been brought to Wittenberg by a burgher of Torgau, Leonard Koppe, who had helped them escape from the cloister at Marienthronen in Nimbschen near Grimma. A student is said to have written: "A wagonload of vestal virgins has just come to town, all more eager for marriage than for life. God grant them husbands lest worse befall."

It was still a capital offense to abduct nuns as Koppe had done, sneaking them out somehow under a canvas which covered empty herring barrels in his wagon. When they arrived safely in Wittenberg, Luther had charge of finding husbands for most of them. Of the nine, three deserve special mention: a sister of John Staupitz; an aunt of Katherine von Bora (her father's sister who later lived with the Luthers); and Katherine herself, who was to become Luther's bride.

This was not by any means a case of love at first sight. Nor, for that matter, and contrary to what was being said by many, did Luther plan the escape of these nuns so that he might find a wife for himself. As late as November 30, 1524, Luther wrote that he had no intention of marriage, not because he was a sexless stone or hostile to marriage, but rather because he expected daily

to die as an heretic. Five months later he wrote Spalatin: "I have had three wives at once and have loved them so hard as to lose two to other husbands. The third I hold barely with my left hand, and she is perhaps about to be snatched from me." The reference to "three wives" meant no more than this that Luther felt keenly the responsibility of caring for them until husbands were found. The one "about to be snatched" from him was Katherine von Bora.

Katherine had fallen in love with Jerome Baumgartner, a young man from Nuremberg who was a Wittenberg student from 1518-1521. He met Katherine in 1523 on a return visit to Wittenberg. After a shorter stay, he returned to his home and, to Katherine's dismay, did not return apparently because his father did not wish him to marry an escaped nun. On October 12, 1524, Luther wrote the young man: "If you still wish to hold your Kathie von Bora, you had better act fast before she is given to another who is at hand. She still has not conquered her love for you. I would certainly be happy to see you two married. Farewell." Luther and others had been trying to interest Katherine in marrying Dr. Kaspar Glatz, but she was particular in choosing a husband and reacted by "proposing" that she was willing to marry Luther himself or Amsdorf, but Glatz never.

We know nothing about the courtship of Luther and Katherine von Bora. Marriage would give Katherine status even if Luther were imprisoned or executed. (It was better to be a widow than an old maid.) On June 10, 1525, Luther wrote to Spalatin as follows regarding long engagements: "Don't put off till tomorrow. By delay Hannibal lost Rome; by delay Esau forfeited his birthright ... the gifts of God must be taken on the wing." Three days later, Luther (age 42) and Katherine von Bora (age 26) were married. The three reasons Luther gave for his marriage were: to please his father, to spite the pope and the devil, and to seal his witness before his martyrdom.

The wedding was held on June 13, 1525, in the Black Cloister with the town pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, officiating. Only a few friends were present: Lucas Cranach

and his wife took the place of Luther's parents; Justus Jonas, prior of the Castle Church; and Apel, law professor at the University. In a special service two weeks later, June 27, it was made publicly known to all the world that they were married. Luther had invited Spalatin with the words: "You must come to my wedding. I have made the angels laugh and the devils weep." At 10:00 AM they proceeded with the sound of bells through the street for the service at the parish church. A special dinner was held at the Black Cloister. Of the many gifts the Luthers received there was a silver pitcher decorated in gold. Also, the Elector made over the Augustinian Cloister as a permanent dwelling for Luther and his bride, doubled his salary, and sent game, clothes and wine.

As for some background regarding Katherine: She was born on January 20, 1499, probably in Lippendorf, three miles from Leipzig. Her father owned two pieces of property, one being a farm which Luther purchased in 1540 for 610 gulden. Her father's ancestors were knights in western Germany. Little is known of her mother, but her mother's sister was abbess of the nunnery where Katherine took her vows. She had three brothers and maybe a sister. Her mother died and in 1505 her father remarried. In 1508 or 1509 Katherine was sent to the Cistercian nunnery, Marienthron, known for receiving nuns from the more well-to-do families. Katherine was not particularly attractive (Luther once said he would have preferred Ave Schoenfeld if he had had a choice). She is described as having a rather plump, well-proportioned, plain-looking face with wide-set eyes and a broad brow.

HOME LIFE AND CHILDREN

Marriage, of course, involved some changes in Luther's life-style. For example, he remarked that "one wakes up in the morning and finds a pair of pigtales on the pillow which were not there before." How badly Luther needed someone to look after him is shown by his admission that when he was single his bed went unmade and the linen unchanged for months. Under the constant press of his work, he wouldn't keep much house nor would he be concerned about keeping any regular eating schedule. Prior to his marriage he is said to have existed for weeks on a diet of dry bread and herring. Katherine was just what he

needed. She was a very efficient housekeeper and manager. In 1531 Luther said: "I am very busy. Four persons are dependent upon me, and each of them demands my time for himself. Four times I preach in public, twice a week I lecture, and in addition I hear cases, write letters, and am working on a book for publication. It is a good thing that God came to my aid and gave me a wife. She takes care of domestic duties, so that I do not have to be responsible for these too."

Naturally, there were times when, as Luther once said, he had to "put up with the irritations of Katy von Bora." Table Talk reveals an occasional husband-wife spat. At times Katie would disturb Luther with trivial matters as he said: "So my Katy would sit next to me at first while I was studying hard and would spin and ask, Doctor, is the grandmaster the margrave's brother?"

But we can be certain that Katherine always showed great respect for her famous husband. She would greet him as "Doctor" or use the polite "Ihr" instead of the familiar "du." On his part, Luther had many fond names for his wife. He called her "My Rib," "My Lord," "My Morning Star of Wittenberg," and some times in a play on words he would call her "Kette," meaning "chain." Perhaps the highest compliment he gave her was when he called one of his favorite books of the Bible, Galatians, "My Katherine von Bora." How fond he had grown of Katherine is revealed in his remark: "I wouldn't give up my Katy for France or for Venice, first because God gave her to me, and second because I have often observed that other women have more shortcomings than my Katy (although she, too, has some shortcomings, they are outweighed by many great virtues), and third, because she keeps faith in marriage, that is, fidelity and respect." To this he added: "A wife ought to think the same way about her husband."

On October 25, 1525, Luther wrote: "My Katherine is fulfilling Genesis 1:28." The marriage was blessed with six children: first was Hans, born June 7, 1526, and baptized the same day by George Roerer, with Bugenhagen, Jonas, and Cranach as sponsors. The second was Elizabeth, who was born December 10, 1527, and was to die with-

in the year on August 3, 1528. In succession the other children were Magdalene, born May 4, 1529; Martin, born November 9, 1531; Paul, born January 29, 1533; and Margaret, born December 17, 1534.

How neighbors must have noticed the change that took place around the Black Cloister! From being the abode of pensive, somber monks, it had taken on the laughter and chatter of children and the hustle-bustle of a busy household. While the exact living conditions cannot be determined, insights into the Luther home can be garnered from his writings, especially from Table Talk.

A family friend reported in 1542 that the Black Cloister was almost always overrun by all sorts of people. It was said that "a miscellaneous and promiscuous crowd inhabits Dr. Luther's home and on this account there is a great and constant disturbance." In addition to Luther, his wife, and their six children in the home, there were, at various times, up to eight orphaned nieces and nephews of Luther, tutors for the children, exiled clergymen, escaped nuns, government officials and visitors from abroad, university colleagues and the many students. At one time there might be 25 people for one meal. All visitors, of course, were considered members of the family and expected to conform to family customs, such as studying the catechism, taking part in family devotions and prayer.

Luther, we can well surmise, was in every sense the bishop of his own household. And truly, even with the press of his other work and responsibilities, Luther fulfilled the divine mandate that a "bishop should be ... given to hospitality." Katie, it seems, was happy to oblige as this stream of people sought refuge, solace, and sustenance in the home of her famous and well-beloved husband, the Doctor of Wittenberg.

The relaxed, if sometimes harried, atmosphere of this hospitable home lent itself to spirited conversation with Luther himself, the center of attention. Some of the students and other men present who heard and took part in the conversations began to take notes. From the years 1531-1546 more than twenty men recorded what one of

them called "the crumbs which have fallen from Luther's table." Accustomed as he was to seeing open notebooks and poised pens before him, Luther at times challenged: "Make a note of this!" Though Melanchthon occasionally issued a rejoinder, saying: "Everything don't try to tell; silence would at times be well!"

In some cases there is reason to question the authenticity of the Table Talk entries. They cannot always be relied upon as an exact recording of Luther's words. As for the scope of Table Talk, the comments cover everything from "the majesty of God to frogs, from pigs to popes, pregnancies, politics, and proverbs."

Among the recorders were John Aurifaber, Luther's secretary in 1545 until his death; Viet Dietrich; John Schlaginhaufen; Conrad Cordatus; Jerome Weller, who lived in Luther's house from 1527-1536 as a tutor of his children; Anton Lauterbach; John Mathesius; Caspar Heidenreich; Jerome Besold (the last to take notes at Luther's table, from 1542 until Luther died in 1546). Other names mentioned are Medler, Weller, Forster, Kraft, Plat, Cruciger, Jonas, and Maugis.

In this connection, much has been said regarding some of Luther's apparently uncouth and uncultured, even vulgar, language as it becomes evident not only in his table talk, but also in some of his polemical writings against his rivals. However, this language needs to be accepted against the backdrop of the days in which Luther lived. "Life itself stank," remarks a Luther biographer. One could not walk about Wittenberg without the odors of the pigsty, chamber pots, garbage, and slaughterhouse being evident. Even in church "people had manure on their boots." It was not uncommon for many of the literary men of the day to use what we would consider today to be language in poor taste.

The well-known "Lutherzimmer" was the room from which Luther's leadership radiated forth throughout the world. In this room he received and visited with his guests. In this room was the table at which the many guests sat and heard the table talk. In this room Luther translated the New Testament with his colleagues. The

Lutherzimmer was on the second floor and the kitchen on the ground floor. Katie was accustomed to having the Lutherzimmer filled with manuscripts, reference works, correspondence lying on the tables, chairs, sills and floors. It is said that the table where Luther gave his talk and the window seat on which Katherine sat, doing her spinning and sewing, darning and patching, can still be seen.

Katie gladly did what she could to make ends meet. When it came to material things she shared her husband's view that "the pleasantest kind of life is to have a moderate household ... and to be content with little." On the financial side things were tight, but a positive, trusting attitude prevailed. "I'm rich," said Luther; "my God has given me a nun and has added three children. I don't worry about my debts, for when Katy has paid them there will be more." The Luthers willingly and gladly observed the principle of "what's mine is thine" when it came to the needs of their many friends and visitors, which fact supports Luther's one time casual observation that "I do not believe that I can be accused of niggardliness."

While Katie generally shared her husband's generosity, there were times when she took it upon herself to restrain this propensity in him. An illustration of this comes from a sentence in one of Luther's letters to a recently-married friend: "I am sending you a vase as a wedding present. P.S. Katy's hid it." The Luthers knew what inflation is, according to Luther's remark that "Yes, when one could buy fifteen eggs for four pieces of copper and a bushel of rye for two pieces of silver, they were able to manage. But now that everything sells for three times as much, the cost of living has tripled while the pay is still the same."

Daily life in the Luther home began at sunrise, with the main meal of the day served at 10:00 AM. Generally, the "Table Talk" meal was at 5:00 PM. The Black Cloister property was fenced off, accessible by gate. Flowers and shrubs adorned the yard. Behind the house next to the city wall was a small vegetable garden in which Luther experimented with all kinds of plants. He is said to have raised melons, cucumbers, lettuce, peas, beans, cab-

bage and radishes. Just west of the Luther house was the Brauhaus, or brewery, where Katie prepared the family brew from the barley sent annually by the Elector.

The Luthers had a servant named Wolfgang ("Wolfe") Sieberger, a humped-back man who walked with a limp. He outlived Luther, continuing to serve Katie and the children for a time after Luther's death. Aunt Lena, the same aunt who had escaped with Katie from the nunnery, also lived with them permanently. She was a big help to Katie as she faithfully assisted in caring for the children until her death in 1537.

Not far away was the Zulsdorf farm, which Luther had purchased, next to the Elbe River. On the farm were hens, ducks, pigs and cows (Katie did the slaughtering!). There was an orchard which provided apples, grapes, pears, nuts and peaches. The river afforded catches of trout, carp, pike and perch. Katie was in her glory at the farm, as we gather from her husband's remark: "To thee, rich lady of Zulsdorf, Mrs. Dr. Katherine Luther, who lives in the flesh at Wittenberg but in the spirit at Zulsdorf."

For recreation there was a bowling lane of sorts in the garden, and Luther is said to have used it occasionally. He also enjoyed chess, together with music and singing. He installed a wood-working lathe in one room to learn a trade by which he could supplement his salary, but he never went at it seriously. A dog named Toelpel is often mentioned in Table Talk. Luther referred to his puppy's looking for a morsel at the table with open mouth and motionless eyes as a worthy example for his own prayer life: "All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat."

As one might expect, Christmas time was a high point in the Luther home. The well-known and beautiful Christmas hymn, "*Vom Himmel hoch da komm Ich her*," originated from Luther's pen in the Lutherzimmer, probably as he was lending a hand by rocking the cradle while Katherine busied herself in the kitchen. In the pictured life of Luther by Koenig and Gelzer (Krauth's *Conservative Reformation*), one of the happiest is devoted to Luther in the family circle at Christmas: "On Luther's lap kneels his

youngest child, clasping him around the neck. Its little night-cap and slip and bare feet show that it has been kept from its bed to see the wonderful sight. On Luther's shoulder, and clasping his hand in hers, leans Catherine, with the light of love, that light which can beam only from the eye of a devoted wife and mother, shining on him. The oldest boy, under Melanchthon's direction, is aiming with a crossbow at an apple on the tree ..."

Katie was a diligent, conscientious mother, keeping the children occupied so they wouldn't unduly interfere with their father. Father Luther was a firm disciplinarian, once stating that he preferred to have a dead son to a disobedient one. He once disciplined little Hans so severely that he wouldn't let him come into his presence for three days even against Katie's pleading. However, we can be sure that he never forgot the harsh treatment he had sometimes received in his own childhood home and therefore tempered his discipline by placing the apple next to the rod.

Luther's parental love, under the influence of the Gospel, was often very evident. His loving attitude toward children is demonstrated by a comment he made to Justus Jonas, who was praising the blessing of God in a bough of cherries. Said Luther: "Why don't you learn it daily by looking at your children, the fruit of your body? They are there every day, and surely they amount to much more than all the fruit of the trees. There you see the providence of God Who created them from nothing ... yet we overlook them as if those gifts of God made us blind and greedy. ... Dear God, how great are the ignorance and wickedness of man who doesn't think about the best gifts of God but does just the opposite."

How grateful Luther was for his family! Relaying the sad news of the death of his infant daughter, Elizabeth, Luther said: "My baby daughter, little Elizabeth, has passed away. It is amazing what a sick, almost womanlike heart she has left to me, so much has grief for her overcome me. Never before would I have believed that a father's heart could have such tender feelings for his child. Do pray to the Lord for me." At times Luther wrote warm and amusing letters to his children. His let-

ter to his four-year-old son Hans is a classic in literature. It shows how he could enter into the childish realm of imagination and "prattle" with the little children. It was the spring of 1530 when the Augsburg Confession was being presented but Luther, for fear of his life, could not be present. From the Coburg Castle, where he was staying, Luther wrote his son:

Grace and peace in Christ, dear little son. I am glad to hear that you are studying and saying your prayers. Continue to do so, my son, and when I come home, I will bring you a pretty present.

I know a lovely, pleasant garden where many children are. They wear golden jackets, and gather nice apples under the trees, and pears and cherries, and purple plums and yellow plums, and sing, and run, and jump, and are happy, and have pretty little ponies with golden reins and silver saddles. I asked the man who owned the garden who these children were.

He said, "They are the children who say their prayers and study and are good."

Then I said, "Dear man, I also have a son, whose name is Hans Luther; may he come into the garden and eat the sweet apples and pears and ride a fine pony and play with these children?"

Then the man said, "If he says his prayers and is good, he may come into the garden, and Phil and Justy (two of Hans' friends), too; and when they all come, they shall have whistles and drums and fifes and shall play and shoot little crossbows." Then he showed me a fine, large lawn in the garden for playing, where hung real golden whistles and fine silver crossbows. But it was yet early and the children had not finished eating, and I could not wait to see them play.

So I said to the man, "My dear sir, I must go and write at once to my dear little Hans about all this, so that he will say his prayers and study and be good, so that he may come into the garden. But he has an Aunt Lena, whom you must allow him to bring with him."

The man answered, "Yes, do write him at once."
So, dear little Hans, study and say your pray-

ers and tell Phil and Justy to say their prayers and study, too, so that you may all come into the garden together. God bless you! Give my greetings and kiss to Aunt Lena. The year 1530. Your loving father, Martin Luther.

One of the most difficult and touching moments in the life of the Luthers was when their little girl Magdalene took ill and was to die in 1542 at the age of 14. While she was lying ill, Luther said: "My dearest child, my own sweet and good Magdalene, I know you would gladly stay with your father here; but in heaven there is a better Father waiting for you. You will be ready to go to your Father in heaven, will you not?" She answered: "Oh, yes, dear father, let the will of God be done." Luther responded: "Dear little girl, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The sick sister's favorite brother, Hans, was called home from school in Torgau to be with the family.

After Magdalene died, Luther spoke movingly about his grief showing. As in Elizabeth's case, it is seen that he was a man of tender emotions. The workmen had made a coffin somewhat too small. Said Luther: "The couch here is narrow; but oh! how beautiful is that on which thou restest above." He sought to comfort himself and others, saying: "Ah, grieve no more for her; I have given to heaven another angel."

Luther often suffered from poor health. His numerous minor illnesses are said to have included such ailments as dysentery, gout, kidney stones, headache, irregular heartbeat, ringing in the ears, and dizziness. In 1527 he suffered a severe illness. In 1537 he had such a serious gall bladder attack that he prepared for his death by having Bugenhagen help him prepare a will. Due no doubt in part to his physical ailments, Luther would often be of short temper and/or lapse into prolonged periods of depression. Katie would play nursemaid with home remedies with which she had become proficient from treating many victims of the plagues which struck Wittenberg periodically.

She also would, at times, use a form of pastoral psy-

chology on her dear Doctor. The method she used one time to pull Luther out of the doldrums is well known. She dressed herself in black, mourning-style. When her husband asked her why she was so dressed, she turned her sad face to him and said: "It's terrible, terrible! God is dead! Judging by your actions these past few weeks, I can see that God is dead. If He weren't, you would use your great faith in Him to help you out of this lethargy." You're right," came Luther's reply; "I'm ashamed of my self."

DEATH COMES On January 28, 1546, Luther traveled 80 miles from his home to his native city of Eisleben, where he went to settle a family dispute which had been plaguing the princes of Mansfeld. He took sick there and died on February 18. He had been ill during the stay and felt his death approaching. On his deathbed, in the presence of Dr. Jonas from Wittenberg, who had accompanied him on the trip, prayer was spoken. Luther repeated a number of times: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, God of Truth." When asked, "Reverend father, do you die firm in the faith you have taught?", Luther replied, "Yes." With this he fell asleep.

Luther's body was taken to Wittenberg, where he was buried on February 22 in the Castle Church at the foot of the pulpit. Three funeral addresses were given: by Professor Jonas; by Johannes Bugenhagen, the town pastor; and by Philip Melanchthon on behalf of the University of Wittenberg. Melanchthon compared his departed friend with the great men of Bible like Moses and St. Paul, and to the greatest of the early church fathers. When he first heard of Luther's death, Melanchthon had exclaimed: "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

In his will dated January 6, 1542, witnessed by Melanchthon, Cruciger, and Bugenhagen, Luther had left the farm at Zulsdorf to Katie, together with the house called "Brun," which he had purchased, and various other lesser valuables amounting to 1,000 florins. The anxious time which this was for Katie and the four children was eased somewhat when Elector Frederick allowed her to stay in the

Black Cloister for her lifetime, and also gave her increased remuneration. In addition, she was helped materially by the King of Denmark and the Duke of Prussia, who had been family friends. At home Jonas, Melancthon, and Cruciger took her under their wing. The latter two persuaded Chancellor Brueck to desist from his unsettling plan to take Katie's boys from her for, he said, she would be unable to properly instruct them.

Adding to Katie's difficulties was the fact that many one-time friends deserted Luther's family after he died. Then Katie and the children had to flee twice within a year due to the outbreak of the Schmalkaldic War, which raised havoc of her farm and buildings. However, in 1547 she resumed taking in boarding students at the Luther home which had become known as the "Wittenberg Inn." Katie and the children would faithfully attend worship services, leading the congregation in singing many of the hymns whereby the Reformation begun by her husband was continuing to be sung into the hearts of the people.

In 1552 yet another plague broke out in Wittenberg. Katie decided to leave the city. On the trip by wagon, the horses bolted; Katie jumped and fell, seriously hurt. She lay very ill for weeks until death finally claimed her on December 20, 1552, at the age of 53 years. She was not buried in Wittenberg next to her famous husband, but rather in Torgau. When their mother died, the four orphaned Luther children were still quite young: Hans, 26; Martin, 21; Paul, 19; and Margaret, 18. Hans studied law and practiced it for some years. Martin studied theology, though he is said to never have occupied a pulpit. Paul became an able physician and served with distinction in several courts until his death in 1593. Margaret married a Wittenberg student on August 5, 1555. Her happy marriage ended with her early death in 1570 at the age of 36. She is said to have descendants to the present time.

The last table talk entry was recorded by Jerome Belsold on the day before Luther's death. The last recorded thought of the Reformer included the words: "We are beggars. That is true." Those six words sum up admirably both Luther's home and family life as well as the doctrine

which he had so faithfully proclaimed throughout his life. From this rehearsal of "Luther — the Man, His Home and Family" it becomes evident that God's chosen instrument to restore the holy Gospel to its rightful place in the church was a humble servant of his Savior. He was a sinful, mortal human being — which he readily recognized and confessed — but throughout his public and private life he held out the beggar's hand of faith to receive — just receive — the innumerable blessings, both spiritual and material, which the Savior-God has in store for His own believing children. Blessed be his memory!

Paul Fleischer

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