

and the generosity of other friends, a monument representing the "Rock of Ages" was placed over the grave of Father Lorente, inscribed upon which are the words: "Very Reverend Thomas Lorente, O. P., Founder and Vice Provincial of the Spanish Dominicans in Louisiana. Born in Aragon, Spain, A. D. 1868. Died in New Orleans, August 24th, 1915. Erected by his loving friends, August 25th, 1916."

The unveiling ceremonies attracted a large number of friends including many distinguished prelates and priests. The sermon on this occasion was preached by the Rev. Fr. J. D. Foulkes, S. J., president of Loyola College, New Orleans, who took for his

text, "Thou art a priest forever." Referring to Fr. Lorente's work, he said: "As we gaze to-day at his white-robed brethren, hidden away far from the maddening crowd, beneath the murmuring pines of Rosaryville, we realize the boundless zeal of this modern Las Casas. Here has he built on our free American soil an armory where God's recruits learn their manual of arms. From out these hallowed walls Fr. Lorente wished regiment upon regiment of trained warriors to march into civilized and uncivilized lands for God's greater honor and glory; spiritual battles were to be theirs, the fruits of victory immortal souls."

—Albert Muller, O. P.

LUTHER THE CATHOLIC

LUTHER the Reformer must be understood in the the light of Luther the Catholic. Among his adherents the idea obtains that the turning-point in his career hinges upon a sudden inspiration, which was, in effect, a divine commission to purify the Church and preach the doctrine of justification through faith alone. The story of Luther's Pre-Reformation life, however, shows, parallel to the gradual progress of the tremendous moral influences at work within him, a steady doctrinal development, culminating, logically and naturally, in an open clash with the Church when the occasion presented itself in the Indulgence Controversy with Tetzel. Thus, for a true understanding of his later career, an acquaintance with Luther's Catholic life is indispensable. While a detailed account of it is impossible, due to the lack of historical data and to the doubtful authority of Luther's polemical writings, one of the

principal sources for its study, yet the main features and general tenor of this period of his life stand out quite well defined.

Martin Luther was born November 10, 1483, at Eisleben, a village of Saxony. His father, a poor miner, soon removed with his family to Mansfeld, seeking employment in the slate quarries there. Here Luther first attended school. Severe as was his home life, it was perhaps surpassed by the brutality of his teachers. This seems especially true of a year spent at Magdeburg, in a school of the Brothers of the Common Life. In 1498 we find him again in his native Saxony, applying himself, for the three following years, to latin, rhetoric and religion in the parish school of St. George at Eisenach. Like other poor students, Luther had, during these years, been obliged to earn his tuition by singing from door to door. It was a joyless life, but a ray of brightness entered

into it at this time. By his singing he had been fortunate enough to attract the attention of a charitable noblewoman, Madam Cotta, who received him into her household, and whose gentleness and refinement exerted an influence upon the rough miner's son which can hardly be overestimated. Luther ever retained a feeling of deep gratitude towards his benefactress.

The fortunes of the Luther family had by this time been greatly bettered through the industry of the father, who was consequently able, in 1501, to send his promising son to the University of Erfurt. The matriculation entry, which reads "Martinus Lüdher ex Mansfelt," is the earliest extant contemporary record of his life. As a necessary preparation for jurisprudence, the course it was intended he should follow, Luther devoted himself for a time to philosophy, in the then wide application of the word. He threw himself with all earnestness into his studies. Melancthon in his "Vita Lutheri" declares his success to have been such that "the whole Academy admired his genius." The Baccalaureate and Masterate in Philosophy, degrees which he received in 1502 and 1505, respectively, also bear testimony to his proficiency as a student. Luther's university years fell within the period of the decay of Scholasticism, in which philosophy, descending from its high position in the Middle Ages, became a synonym for captious subtilizing and mere intellectual display. The lack of a solid philosophical basis was no doubt a contributory cause of Luther's later errors.

Erfurt was at that time the center of Humanism in Northern Germany. Luther, while not professedly a Humanist, was deeply influenced by the paganizing spirit of the movement, and found his friends largely among its adherents. It is significant that the only books he later took with him into the Augustinian monastery, were Virgil and Plau-

tus. As to the extent to which Luther succumbed to the flagrant immorality of the day, which, nourished by the Renaissance, was at its height in the university centers, we have no indisputable evidence. He was popular among the students, and gladly took part in their convivial gatherings, singing and playing the lute. A contemporary writes of him as "musician and learned philosopher," the latter term referring, Grisar suggests, to the spells of melancholy and depressing thought which began to be frequent in his life.

The year 1505 saw the first great change of Luther's life, his entrance, on July 17th, into the Erfurt convent of the order of Hermits of Saint Augustine. No satisfactory reason has ever been given for this step, by which the young Master of Philosophy turned his back upon all opportunities of worldly preferment, and rendered vain the hopes of his friends for the bright future which seemed to lie before him. The account which attributes his decision to the sudden death by lightning of a friend with whom he was walking, is not trustworthy. Nor is there a better foundation for the story that while returning from a visit to his parents at Mansfeld, he was overtaken by a violent storm and in his agitation made a hasty vow, crying out: "Help, dear St. Anne, I will become a monk!" Luther's own explanation is not consistent. He writes: "I entered the cloister and left the world because I despaired of myself." In another passage, however, he speaks of a heavenly terror which overcame him, and still again of his desire to escape from the severity of his parents. Janssen frankly declares that he had no vocation, but was urged on by the morbid discord of his interior life. Denifle also implies that his conversion was the result of spiritual difficulties and temptations in his university life.

If the troubled student thought to

find peace in the religious state, he was sadly deceived. The unhealthy condition of his mind was nourished by the quiet and introspective spirit of convent life. Certain evil tendencies, against which his superiors fought in vain, soon manifested themselves. At times he gave himself up to an inordinate love of study, neglecting, meanwhile, his religious exercises, even the obligation of daily reciting the Divine Office. Again, tortured by the remembrance of his sins, he exceeded the requirements of the rule in his vigils and prayers, thus verifying the old proverb, "In a monk, everything beyond obedience is to be suspected." At the root of this deplorable condition was a presumptuous reliance on his own merits, instead of a childlike trust in God's infinite mercy. Such a course led Luther gradually into a state of despair, from which he sought refuge in the exactly opposite doctrine, that man, a creature without free will, and incapable of good works, could be saved only through the merits of Christ, without regard to his own acts.

From his later writings it is clear that the advice and guidance of Luther's superiors were by no means lacking to him during these years. As he received no consolation from the sacraments, even from the general confessions he made while at Erfurt, his spiritual director laid on him the obligation of forgetting, as far as possible, his past sins, and reproved him with the words, "God is not angry with you, but you with Him." His chief counsellor, however, in his difficulties, was the Superior of the Saxon Congregation of the Augustinians, John von Staupitz, a pious and learned man, who took a deep interest in his brilliant, if eccentric, young subject. With beautiful words he encouraged him to hope in the Precious Blood and in the Wounds of his Saviour. Had he exerted his remarkable will-power in following out

the directions of his friend, and not the dictates of his own pride, Luther, instead of an Arius, might have been an Augustine.

Luther's theological education was superficial. His principal authors were not the great lights of Scholastic theology, St. Thomas and Scotus with their contemporaries, but rather their unworthy successors of the later Scholastic period. He professed himself a follower of the Nominalist, William of Occam, whose works contain serious errors on the power of the Church and the Pope. Repelled, moreover, by the subtleties in which the study of theology was entangled, he manifested a preference for Sacred Scripture, and when his superiors chose him to specialize in that branch, he characteristically threw himself into it with such ardor as to neglect still further his theological training. The shortness of the course, moreover, prevented anything like thoroughness. Luther had been permitted to pronounce his vows after the customary year of probation, and in 1507, but one year after his profession, was ordained to the priesthood.

Several incidents of this time show that he still remained in an abnormal spiritual condition. The celebration of his first Mass agitated him so extraordinarily that he would have fled from the altar, had not the assistant priest restrained him. On another occasion he was overcome by terror during a procession in which he, as deacon, was accompanying Staupitz, who carried the Blessed Sacrament. Later the same superior warned him, "from Christ your fear does not come; Christ does not terrify, He consoles." It was true. If Luther had any reason to despair, it was to be found, not in divine wrath, but in his own obstinacy. His conduct aroused in his brethren the suspicion that he was possessed by the devil. It is related that once, while the scriptural account of the casting out of

the deaf and dumb devil was being read, Luther fell in a frenzy on the choir floor, crying out, "It is not I, it is not I."

In 1508, through the influence of Staupitz, Luther was given the professorship of philosophy in the newly-erected University of Wittenburg. With this change began a period of intense external activity, and a rapid falling away in doctrine, which brought him in a few years clearly outside the teachings of the Church, and led directly to the publication of the Indulgence Theses of the year 1517. In addition to his lectures in philosophy, Luther applied himself to theology, and especially to Sacred Scripture, obtaining in 1509, the degree of Bachelor in Sacred Theology. Internal disturbances of the Order seem to have occasioned his return, in the following year, to Erfurt, where he continued his preparation for the Doctorate in Theology, which he received in 1512.

An important event which occurred at this time was his journey to Rome, September, 1510, to May, 1511. It was the result of a bitter controversy between the Observantine and Non-Observantine Convents of the German Province. The Observantine houses, of which there were seven, chose Luther to present their case before the Papal Court, because, says one of his earliest biographers, he was "sharp of mind and bold and vehement in contradiction." This visit to the Center of Christendom furnished him with copious materials for his future tirades against the Church, but it cannot be said that he returned to Germany with his faith in the divine authority of the Papacy at all impaired.

Luther now resumed his activities at Wittenberg. His lectures on the Book of Psalms, given between 1513 and 1516, and his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 1516, are, if not strictly heretical, at least filled with a

tone of disrespect and arrogance. In the sermons delivered during these years, the errors of the Reformer are more easily traced. As early as 1515 he had been censured for heresy. Luther was already the most influential professor in the University of Wittenburg; his sermons made him also the most popular preacher in Germany. His prominence in his Order is shown by his election, on April 29, 1515, to the office of Rural Visitor, a position second in importance only to that of Staupitz, the Provincial. These multifarious external duties brought on a gradual cessation in his spiritual life. Mass came to be celebrated only at rare intervals, and his breviary was often left untouched for weeks.

Such was Luther's position when, in 1517, the Dominicans began to preach in Germany the indulgence granted by Leo X to secure funds for the building of Saint Peter's.

On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg his famous Ninety-five Theses on the nature of indulgences. Although he was not formally excommunicated until five years later, this event may be conveniently considered both the beginning of the Protestant Revolution, and the end of Luther's Catholic life.

Luther's rebellion against the Church must be accounted for by a variety of reasons. Some ascribe it chiefly to the decline of his life as a priest and religious; others to sensuality and scruples. The best theory, and one to which nearly all the others can be reduced, is that of Father Denifle, who finds in pride the source of his downfall. This opinion is, curiously enough, confirmed by Luther himself, who later in his career quoted against those of his disciples who differed with him, the sentence of Saint Augustine, "Pride is the mother of all heresies."

—Thomas Gabisch, O. P.