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Chapter 1

EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING

IN MORA, a village near the Thuringian forests, dwelt an ancient and numerous family of the name of Luther. It was customary with the Thuringian peasants, that the eldest son always inherited the dwelling and the paternal fields, while the other children departed elsewhere in quest of a livelihood. One of these, John Luther, married Margaret Lindemann, the daughter of an inhabitant of Neustadt, in the see of Wurzburg. The married couple quitted the plains of Eisenach, and went to settle in the little town of Eisleben in Saxony, to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows.

John Luther was an upright man, diligent in business, frank, and carrying the firmness of his character even to obstinacy. With a more cultivated mind than that of most men of his class, he read much. Books were then rare; but John omitted no opportunity of procuring them. They formed his relaxation in the intervals of repose, snatched from his severe and constant labors. Margaret possessed all the virtues that can adorn a good and pious woman. Her modesty, her fear of God and her prayerful spirit were particularly remarked. She was looked upon by the matrons of the neighborhood as a model whom they should strive to imitate.

It is not known precisely how long they had been living at Eisleben, when, on the tenth of November, one hour before midnight, Margaret gave birth to a son. Melancthon often questioned his friend's mother as to the period of his birth. "I well remember the day and the hour," replied she, "but I am not certain about the year." But Luther's brother James, an honest and upright man, has recorded that in the opinion of the whole family the future reformer

was born on St. Martin's eve, November 10, 1483, and Luther himself wrote on a Hebrew Psalter which is still in existence: "I was born in the year 1483." The first thought of his pious parents was to dedicate to God by the holy rite of baptism the child that He had given them. On the morrow, which happened to be Tuesday, the father with gratitude and joy carried his son to St. Peter's Church, and there he received the seal of his consecration to the Lord. They called him Martin in commemoration of the day.

The child was not six months old when his parents quitted Eisleben to repair to Mansfeldt, which is only five leagues distant. The mines of that neighborhood were then very celebrated. John Luther, who was a hard-working man, feeling that perhaps he would be called upon to bring up a numerous family, hoped to gain a better livelihood for himself and his children in that town. It was here that the understanding and strength of young Luther received their first development; here his activity began to display itself, and here his character was declared in his words and in his actions. The plains of Mansfeldt and the banks of the Wipper were the theater of his first sports with the children of the neighborhood.

The first period of their abode at Mansfeldt was difficult to the worthy John and his wife. At first they lived in great poverty. "My parents," said the reformer, "were very poor. My father was a poor wood-cutter, and my mother has often carried wood upon her back, that she might procure the means of bringing up her children. They endured the severest labor for our sakes." The example of the parents whom he revered and the habits they inspired in him early accustomed Luther to labor and frugality. How many times, doubtless, he accompanied his mother to the wood, there to gather up his little fagot!

There are promises of blessing on the labor of the righteous, and John Luther experienced their realization. Having attained somewhat easier circumstances, he established two smelting furnaces at Mansfeldt. Beside these furnaces little Martin grew in strength, and with the produce of this labor his father afterwards provided for his studies. "It was from a miner's family," says the good Mathesius, "that the spiritual founder of Christendom was to go forth: an image of what God would do in purifying the sons of Levi through him, and refining them like gold in His furnaces." Respected by all for his

integrity, for his spotless life, and good sense, John Luther was made councilor of Mansfeldt, capital of the earldom of that name. Excessive misery might have crushed the child's spirit: the competence of his paternal home expanded his heart and elevated his character.

John took advantage of his new position to court the society which he preferred. He had a great esteem for learned men, and often invited to his table the clergy and schoolmasters of the place. His house offered a picture of those social meetings of his fellow-citizens, which did honor to Germany at the commencement of the sixteenth century. It was a mirror in which were reflected the numerous images that followed one another on the agitated scene of the times. The child profited by them. No doubt the sight of these men, to whom so much respect was shown in his father's house, excited more than once in little Martin's heart the ambitious desire of becoming himself one day a schoolmaster or a learned man.

As soon as he was old enough to receive instruction, his parents endeavored to impart to him the knowledge of God, to train him up in His fear, and to mold him to Christian virtues. They exerted all their care in this earliest domestic education. The father would often kneel at the child's bedside, and fervently pray aloud, begging the Lord that his son might remember His name and one day contribute to the propagation of the truth. The parent's prayer was listened to most graciously. And yet his tender solicitude was not confined to this.

His father, anxious to see him acquire the elements of that learning for which he himself had so much esteem, invoked God's blessing upon him, and sent him to school. Martin was still very young. His father, or Nicholas Emler, a young man of Mansfeldt, often carried him to the house of George Emilius, and afterwards returned to fetch him home. Emler in after years married one of Luther's sisters.

His parents' piety, their activity and austere virtue, gave the boy a happy impulse, and formed in him an attentive and serious disposition. The system of education which then prevailed made use of chastisement and fear as the principal incentives to study. Margaret, although sometimes approving the too great severity of her husband, frequently opened her maternal arms to her son to console him in his tears. Yet even she herself overstepped the limits of that wise precept: "He that loveth his son, chasteneth him betimes." Martin's impetuous

character gave frequent occasion for punishment and reprimand. "My parents," said Luther in after life, "treated me harshly, so that I became very timid. My mother one day chastised me so severely about a nut, that the blood came. They seriously thought that 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."

At school the poor child met with treatment no less severe. His master flogged him fifteen times successively in one morning. "We must," said Luther, when relating this circumstance—"we must whip children, but we must at the same time love them." With such an education Luther learned early to despise the charms of a merely sensual life. "What is to become great, should begin small," justly observes one of his oldest biographers; "and if children are brought up too delicately and with too much kindness from their youth, they are injured for life."

Martin learned something at school. He was taught the heads of his Catechism, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, some hymns, some forms of prayer, and a Latin grammar written in the fourth century by Donatus, who was St. Jerome's master, and which, improved in the eleventh century by one Remigius, a French monk, was long held in great repute in every school. He further studied the calendar of Cisio Janus, a very singular work, composed in the tenth or eleventh century: in fine, he learned all that could be taught in the Latin school of Mansfeldt.

But the child's thoughts do not appear to have been directed to God at that time. The only religious sentiment that could then be discovered in him was fear. Every time he heard Jesus Christ spoken of, he turned pale with fright; for the Saviour had only been represented to him as an offended Judge. This servile fear—so alien to true religion—may perhaps have prepared him for the glad tidings of the gospel, and for that joy which he afterwards felt, when he learned to know Him who is meek and lowly in heart.

John Luther wished to make his son a scholar. The day that was everywhere beginning to dawn had penetrated even into the house of the Mansfeldt miner, and there it awakened ambitious thoughts. The persevering application of his son and the boy's remarkable dis-

position made John conceive the liveliest expectations. Accordingly, in 1497, when Martin had attained the age of fourteen years, his father resolved to part with him, and send him to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. His mother was obliged to consent, and Martin prepared to quit the paternal roof.

Magdeburg was like a new world to Martin. In the midst of numerous privations, for he scarcely had enough to live upon, he inquired—he listened. Andrew Proles, provincial of the Augustine order, was at that time warmly advocating the necessity of reforming religion and the Church. It was not he, however, who deposited in the young man's heart the first germ of the ideas that he afterwards developed.

This was a rude apprenticeship for Luther. Thrown upon the world at the age of fourteen, without friends or protectors, he trembled in the presence of his masters, and in the hours of recreation he painfully begged his bread in company with children poorer than himself. "I used to beg with my companions for a little food," said he, "that we might have the means of providing for our wants. One day, at the time the Church celebrates the festival of Christ's nativity, we were wandering together through the neighboring villages, going from house to house, and singing in four parts the usual carols on the infant Jesus, born at Bethlehem. We stopped before a peasant's house that stood by itself at the extremity of the village. The farmer, hearing us sing our Christmas hymns, came out with some food which he intended to give us. He called out in a high voice and with a harsh tone, 'Boys, where are you?' Frightened at these words, we ran off as fast as our legs would carry us. We had no reason to be alarmed, for the farmer offered us assistance with great kindness; but our hearts, no doubt, were rendered fearful by the threats and tyranny with which the teachers were then accustomed to rule over their pupils, so that a sudden panic had seized us. At last, however, as the farmer continued calling after us, we stopped, forgot our fears, ran back to him, and received from his hands the food intended for us." "It is thus," adds Luther, "that we are accustomed to tremble and flee, when our conscience is guilty and alarmed. We are afraid even of those who are our friends, and who would willingly do us every good."

A year had scarcely passed away, when John and Margaret, hear-

ing what difficulty their son found in supporting himself at Magdeburg, sent him to Eisenach, where there was a celebrated school, and in which town they had many relatives. They had other children, and although their means had increased, they could not maintain their son in a place where he was unknown. The furnaces and the industry of John Luther did little more than provide for the support of his family. He hoped that when Martin arrived at Eisenach he would more easily find the means of subsistence, but he was not more fortunate in this town. His relations took no care of him, or perhaps, being very poor themselves, they could not give him any assistance.

When the young scholar was pinched by hunger, he was compelled, as at Magdeburg, to join with his schoolfellows in singing from door to door to obtain a morsel of bread. Sometimes the voices of the youths formed a harmonious concert. Often, instead of food, the poor and modest Martin received nothing but harsh words. Then, overwhelmed with sorrow, he shed many tears in secret, and thought with anxiety of the future.

One day, he had already been repulsed from three houses and was preparing to return fasting to his lodgings, when, having reached the square of St. George, he stopped motionless, plunged in melancholy reflections, before the house of a worthy citizen. Must he for want of bread renounce his studies, and return to labor with his father in the mines of Mansfeldt? Suddenly a door opened—a woman appeared on the threshold. It was Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, and a daughter of the burgomaster of Ilefeld. The Eisenach chronicles style her "the pious Shunamite," in remembrance of the woman who constrained the prophet Elisha to stay and eat bread with her. The Christian Shunamite had already more than once noticed the youthful Martin in the assemblies of the faithful; she had been affected by the sweetness of his voice and by his devotion. She had heard the harsh words, and seeing him stand thus sadly before her door, she came to his aid, beckoned him to enter, and gave him food to appease his hunger.

Conrad approved of his wife's benevolence: he even found so much pleasure in the boy's society that a few days after he took him to live entirely with him. Henceforward his studies were secured; he was not obliged to return to the mines of Mansfeldt there to bury the

talents that God had entrusted to him. At a time when he knew not what would become of him, God opened the heart and the house of a Christian family. This event begat in him that confidence in God which the severest trials could not afterwards shake.

Luther lived in Cotta's house a very different kind of life from that which he had hitherto known. His existence glided away calmly, free from want aand care; his mind became more serene, his character more cheerful, and his heart more open. All his faculties awoke at the mild rays of charity, and he began to exult with life, joy, and happiness. His prayers were more fervent, his thirst for knowledge greater, and his progress in study more rapid.

To literature and science he added the charms of the fine arts, for they also were advancing in Germany. The men whom God destines to act upon their contemporaries are themselves at first influenced and carried away by all the tendencies of the age in which they live. Luther learned to play on the flute and on the lute. With this latter instrument he used often to accompany his fine alto voice, and thus cheered his heart in the hours of sadness. He took delight in showing by his melody his lively gratitude towards his foster mother, who was passionately fond of music. He himself loved it even to old age, and composed the words and tunes of some of the finest hymns that Germany possesses. Many have even passed into our language.

These were happy times for young Luther; he could never think of them without emotion. One of Conrad's sons who came many years after to study at Wittenberg, when the poor scholar of Eisenach had become the first doctor of the age, was received with joy at his table and under his roof. He wished to make some returns to the son for the kindness he had received from his parents. It was in remembrance of this Christian woman who had fed him when all the world repulsed him, that he gave utterance to this beautiful thought: "There is nothing sweeter on earth than the heart of a woman in which piety dwells."

Luther was never ashamed of these days in which, oppressed by hunger, he begged in sadness the money necessary for his studies and his livelihood. Far from that, he used to reflect with gratitude on the extreme poverty of his youth. He looked upon it as one of the means that God had employed to make him what he afterwards became, and he accordingly thanked Him for it. The poor children who

were obliged to follow the same kind of life touched his heart. "Do not despise," said he, "the boys who go singing through the streets, begging a little bread for the love of God (*panem propter Deum*): I also have done the same. It is true that somewhat later my father supported me with much love and kindness at the University of Erfurt, maintaining me by the sweat of his brow; yet I have been a poor beggar. And now, by means of my pen, I have risen so high that I would not change lots with the Grand Turk himself. Should all the riches of the earth be heaped one upon another, I would not take them in exchange for what I possess. And yet I should not be where I am if I had not gone to school—if I had not learned to write." Thus did this great man see in these his first humble beginnings the origin of all his glory. He never forgot to recall that the voice whose accents thrilled the empire and the world once used to beg for a morsel of bread in the streets of a small town. The Christian finds a pleasure in such recollections, because they remind him that it is in God alone he should glory.

The strength of his understanding, the liveliness of his imagination, the excellence of his memory, soon carried him beyond all his schoolfellows. He made rapid progress, especially in Latin, in eloquence, and in poetry. He wrote speeches and composed verses. As he was cheerful, obliging, and had what is called "a good heart," he was beloved by his masters and by his schoolfellows.

Among the professors he attached himself particularly to John Trebonius, a learned and eloquent man who had all that regard for youth which is so well calculated to encourage them. Martin had noticed that whenever Trebonius entered the schoolroom, he raised his cap to salute the pupils—a great condescension in those pedantic times! This had delighted the young man for it revealed to him his own value as an individual. The respect of the master had elevated the scholar in his own estimation. The colleagues of Trebonius, who did not adopt the same custom, one day expressed their astonishment at his extreme condescension. He replied, "There are among these boys men of whom God will one day make burgomasters, chancellors, doctors, and magistrates. Although you do not yet see them with the badges of their dignity, it is right that you should treat them with respect." Doubtless the young scholar listened with pleasure to these words, and perhaps imagined himself already with the doctor's cap.

Chapter 2

ENTRANCE INTO A CONVENT

LUTHER had now reached his eighteenth year. He had tasted the sweets of literature; he burned with a desire for knowledge. He sighed for a university education, and wished to repair to one of those fountains of learning where he could slake his thirst for erudition. His father required him to study the law. Full of hope in the talents of his son, he wished that he should cultivate them and make them generally known. He already pictured him discharging the most honorable functions among his fellow-citizens, gaining the favor of princes, and shining on the theater of the world. It was determined that the young man should go to Erfurt.

Luther arrived at this university in 1501. Jodocus, surnamed the Doctor of Eisenach, was teaching there the scholastic philosophy with success. Melancthon regretted that at that time nothing was taught at Erfurt but a system of dialectics bristling with difficulties. His thought was that if Luther had met with other professors, if they had taught him the milder and calmer discipline of true philosophy, the violence of his nature might have been moderated. The new disciple applied himself to study the philosophy of the Middle Ages in the works of Occam, Duns Scotus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. In later times all this scholastic divinity was his aversion. He trembled with indignation whenever Aristotle's name was pronounced in his presence. He went so far as to say that if Aristotle had not been a man, he should not have hesitated to take him for the devil. But a mind so eager for learning as his required other ailments; he began to study the masterpieces of antiquity, the writings of Cicero, Virgil, and other classic authors. He was not content, like

the majority of students, with learning their productions by heart; he endeavored to fathom their thoughts, to imbibe the spirit which animated them, to appropriate their wisdom to himself, to comprehend the object of their writings, and to enrich his mind with their pregnant sentences and brilliant images. He often addressed questions to his professors, and soon outstripped his fellow-students. Blessed with a retentive memory and a strong imagination, all that he read or heard remained constantly present to his mind; it was as if he had seen it himself. "Thus shone Luther in his early years. The whole university," says Melancthon, "admired his genius."

But even at this period the young man of eighteen did not study merely to cultivate his intellect; he had those serious thoughts, that heart directed heavenwards, which God gives to those of whom He resolves to make His most zealous ministers. Luther was aware of his entire dependence upon God,—simple and powerful conviction, which is at once the cause of deep humility and of great actions! He fervently invoked the divine blessing upon his labors. Every morning he began the day with prayers; he then went to church, and afterwards applied himself to his studies, losing not a moment in the whole course of the day. "To pray well," he was in the habit of saying, "is the better half of study."

The young student passed in the university library all the time he could snatch from his academic pursuits. Books were as yet rare, and it was a great privilege for him to profit by the treasures brought together in this vast collection. One day—he had then been two years at Erfurt and was twenty years old—he opened many books in the library one after another, to learn their writers' names. One volume that he came to attracted his attention. He had never until this hour seen its like. He read the title—it was a Bible, a rare book, unknown in those times. His interest was greatly excited and he was filled with astonishment at finding other matters than those fragments of the Gospels and epistles that the Church had selected to be read to the people during public worship every Sunday throughout the year. Until that day he had imagined that they composed the whole Word of God. Now he saw many pages, many chapters, many books of which he had had no idea! His heart beat fast as he held the divinely inspired Volume in his hand. With eagerness and with indescribable emotion he turned over these leaves from God.

The first page on which he fixed his attention told the story of Hannah and of the young Samuel. He read eagerly and his soul could hardly contain the joy it felt. The child Samuel whom his parents lend to the Lord as long as he lived; the song of Hannah, in which she declares that Jehovah "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes"; Samuel's service in the temple in the presence of the Lord; those sacrificers—the sons of Heli—wicked men who live in debauchery, and "make the Lord's people to transgress";—all this history, all this revelation that he had discovered, excited feelings till then unknown. He returned home with a full heart. "Oh! that God would give me such a book for myself," he thought. Luther was as yet ignorant both of Greek and Hebrew. It is scarcely probable that he had studied these languages during the first two or three years of his residence at the university. The Bible that had filled him with such transports was in Latin. He soon returned to the library to pore over his treasure, then came repeatedly, in his astonishment and joy, to read it further. The first glimmerings of a new truth were beginning to dawn upon his mind.

Thus God led him to the discovery of that Book of which he was to give the admirable translation which Germany has used for three centuries. That may have been the first time that the precious volume had been taken down from its place in the library of Erfurt. That Book, deposited on the unknown shelves of a gloomy hall, was about to become the Book of Life to a whole nation. In that Bible the Reformation lay hidden.

It was in the same year that Luther took his first academic degree —that of bachelor. The excessive labor he had expended in order to pass his examination brought on a dangerous illness. Death seemed imminent, and serious reflections occupied his mind. His case excited general interest. "It is a pity," his friends thought, "to see so many expectations blighted so early." Among the many friends who came to visit him was a venerable priest who had noticed Luther's work at Mansfeldt in his academic career. The young man could not conceal the thoughts that occupied his mind. "Soon," said he, "I shall be called away from this world." But the old man kindly replied, "My dear bachelor, take courage; you will not die of this illness. Our God will yet make of you a man who, in turn, shall console many. For

God layeth His cross upon those whom He loveth, and they who bear it patiently acquire much wisdom." These words impressed Luther. When he was so near death he had heard the voice of a priest reminding him that God, as Samuel's mother said, raiseth up the miserable. The old man had poured sweet consolation into his heart and had revived his spirits; never would he forget it. "This was the first prediction that the worthy doctor heard," says Mathesius, Luther's friend, who records the incident, "and he often used to call it to mind." We may easily comprehend in what sense Mathesius calls the priest's words a prediction.

When Luther recovered, there was a great change in him. The Bible, his illness, the words of the aged priest—all seem to have made a new appeal, but as yet he had not made the great decision. Another circumstance awakened serious thoughts within him. At the festival of Easter, probably in the year 1503, Luther was on his way to pass a short time with his family. According to the custom of the age, he was wearing a sword; as he struck it with his foot, the blade fell out, cutting one of the principal arteries. His companion having dashed off for assistance, Luther found himself alone. Unable to check the flow of blood, he lay down on his back and put his finger on the wound. In spite of this, the blood continued to flow, and Luther, feeling the approach of death, cried out, "O Mary, help me!" At last a surgeon arrived from Erfurt and bound up the cut. The wound opened in the night, and Luther fainted, again calling loudly upon the Virgin. "At that time," said he in after years, "I should have died relying upon Mary." Soon after that he invoked a more powerful Saviour.

He continued his studies. In 1505 he was admitted master of arts and doctor of philosophy. The University of Erfurt was then the most celebrated in all Germany. The other schools were inferior in comparison with it. The ceremony was conducted, as usual, with great pomp. A procession by torchlight came to pay honor to Luther. The festival was magnificent. It was a general rejoicing. Luther, encouraged perhaps by these honors, felt disposed to apply himself entirely to the law, in conformity with his father's wishes.

But the will of God was different. While Luther was occupied with various studies, and beginning to teach the physics and ethics of Aristotle, with other branches of philosophy, his heart never

ceased to cry to him that religion was the one thing needful, and that above all things he should secure his salvation. He knew the displeasure that God manifests against sin; he called to mind the penalties that God's Word denounces against the sinner; and he asked himself, with apprehension whether he was sure of possessing the divine favor. His conscience answered, No! His character was prompt and decided; he resolved to do all that might ensure him a firm hope of immortality. Two events occurred, one after the other, to disturb his soul, and to hasten his resolution.

Among his closest friends at the university was one named Alexis. One morning a report was spread in Erfurt that Alexis had been assassinated. Luther hastened to ascertain the truth of this rumor. This sudden loss of his friend agitated him, and his mind was filled with keenest terror as he asked himself, "What would become of me, if I were thus called away without warning?"

It was in the summer of 1505 that Luther, whom the ordinary university vacations left at liberty, resolved to go to Mansfeldt, to revisit the dear scenes of his childhood and to embrace his parents. Perhaps also he wished to open his heart to his father, to sound him on the plan that he was forming in his mind, and to obtain his permission to engage in another profession. He foresaw all the difficulties. The idle life of the majority of priests was displeasing to the active miner of Mansfeldt. Besides, the ecclesiastics were but little esteemed in the world. For the most part their revenues were scanty, and the father, who had made great sacrifices to maintain his son at the university, and who now saw him teaching publicly in a celebrated school, although only in his twentieth year, was not likely to renounce the proud hopes he had cherished.

We are ignorant of what transpired during Luther's stay at Mansfeldt. Perhaps the decided wish of his father made him fear to open his heart to him. He again left his father's house to take his seat on the benches of the academy. He was already within a short distance of Erfurt, when he was overtaken by a violent storm, such as often occurs in those mountains. The lightning flashed—the bolt fell at his feet. Luther threw himself upon his knees, thinking that his hour, perhaps, had come. Death, the judgment, and eternity, with all their terrors, summoned him and he heard a voice that he could no longer resist. "Encompassed with the anguish and terror of death," as he

expressed it, he made a vow that if the Lord should deliver him from this danger, he would abandon the world, and devote himself entirely to God.

After rising from the ground, having still present to him that death which must one day overtake him, he examined himself seriously, and asked what he ought to do. The thoughts that had agitated him now returned with greater force. He had endeavored, it is true, to fulfill all his duties, but what was the state of his soul? Could he appear before the tribunal of a terrible God with an impure heart? He must become holy. He had now as great a thirst for holiness as he had had formerly for knowledge. But where could he find it, or how could he attain it? The university provided him with the means of satisfying his first desires. Who should calm that anguish and quench the fire that now consumed him? To what school of holiness should he direct his steps? He resolved to enter a cloister; the monastic life would save him. Oftentimes had he heard of its power to transform the heart, to sanctify the sinner, and to make man perfect! He would enter a monastic order, and there become holy; thus would he secure eternal life.

Such was the event that changed the calling, the whole destiny of Luther. In this we perceive the finger of God. It was His powerful hand that on the highway cast down the young master of arts, the candidate for the bar, the future lawyer, to give an entirely new direction to his life. Rubianus, one of Luther's friends at the University of Erfurt, wrote thus to him many years later: "Divine Providence looked at what you were one day to become, when on your return from your parents, the fire from heaven threw you to the ground, like another Paul, near the city of Erfurt, and withdrawing you from our society, drove you into the Augustine order." Analagous circumstances have marked the conversion of the two greatest instruments that divine Providence has used in the two greatest revolutions that have been effected upon the earth: the apostle Paul and Luther.

Luther re-entered Erfurt, but his resolution was unalterable. It was not without a pang that he prepared to break the ties so dear to him. Telling his intention to no one, he invited his university friends to a cheerful but frugal supper. Music once more enlivened their social meeting—Luther's farewell to the world. Henceforth, instead of these amiable companions of his pleasures and his studies, he

would have monks; instead of this gay and witty conversation—the silence of the cloister; and for these merry songs—the solemn strains of the quiet chapel. God was calling him, and he must sacrifice everything. Now, for the last time, he shared in the joys of his youth! The repast excited his friends; Luther himself was the soul of the party. But at the very moment that they were giving way to their gaiety, Luther could no longer hide his serious thoughts and he revealed his intention to his astonished friends. They endeavored to shake it, but in vain. That very night Luther, perhaps fearful of their pleadings, quit his lodgings, leaving behind him his clothes and books, taking only *Virgil* and *Plautus;* he had no Bible as yet. *Virgil* and *Plautus*—an epic poem and comedies—striking picture of Luther's mind! In effect a whole epic had taken place within him—a beautiful, sublime poem; but as he had a disposition inclined to gaiety, wit, and humor, he combined more than one feature with the serious and stately groundwork of his life.

Provided with these two books, he repaired alone, in the darkness of night, to the convent of the hermits of St. Augustine. He asked admittance; the gate opened and closed again. Behold him, separated forever from his parents, from the companions of his studies, and from the world! It was August 17, 1505: Luther was then twenty-one years old.