



Dr. Martin Luther

“Here I stand
and cannot do otherwise. God be my help.”
p. 318

In order to preserve the historical nature of this work, British spellings and the formatting of the text have been kept as they were in the original book as found.

First printing: August 2010

Copyright © 2010 by Attic Books. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews.

For information write:

New Leaf Publishing Group, P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638.

ISBN-13: 978-0-89051-599-0

Library of Congress Number: 2010934824

Printed in the United States of America

Please visit our website for other great titles: www.nlpg.com

Originally published in 1850 by:

American Sunday-School Union

Now known as:

American Missionary Fellowship

www.americanmissionary.org



ATTIC
BOOKS

THE
LIFE OF LUTHER;
WITH
Special Reference to its Earlier Periods
AND THE
OPENING SCENES
OF
THE REFORMATION.

BY BARNAS SEARS, D.D.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION:
1122 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Barnas Sears (1802 – 1880) served in areas of education and pastoral ministry for more than fifty years. He was a promoter of “free schools for the whole people,” helping encourage and provide support of public schools through adequate taxation, and president of Brown University from 1855 to 1867. His publications include *A Grammar of the Language* in 1842, *The Ciceronian: or the Prussian Method of Teaching the Elements of the Latin Language* in 1844, as well as editor of the *Christian Review* from 1838 to 1841.

The ASSU, now called American Missionary Fellowship (AMF), has been associated with some of America's most prominent citizens and religious leaders. Bushrod Washington, George Washington's nephew and heir of Mount Vernon, who served as Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court, was vice-president of the ASSU until his death in 1829. Included among other ASSU officers or influenced by its mission were Bishop William White of Philadelphia's Christ Church; Francis Scott Key, who wrote “The Star Spangled Banner”; D.L. Moody; Laura Ingalls Wilder; and John Adams (related to both early American presidents), who personally organized over 320 Sunday schools.

ASSU missionaries carried books published by the mission in saddlebags to leave with the fledgling Sunday schools they had started, promoting literacy, education, and the very best in Christian moral values. Though it stopped publishing books in 1968, American Missionary Fellowship continues its missionary work in the United States, extending beyond Sunday school work to include church planting, church camps, and numerous other programs.

www.americanmissionary.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I - Birth till beginning of Reformation 1517

Chapter I - Birth to age 14	15
Chapter II - 1497 to 1505	48
Chapter III - 1505 to 1508.....	70
Chapter IV - 1508 to 1517.....	120

Part II - From publishing of the theses 1517 to the Augsburg Confession 1530

Chapter I - 1517 to 1518.....	183
Chapter II - Leipsic Disputation	270
Chapter III - Luther and Diet of Worm	302
Chapter IV - 1521 to 1525.....	327
Chapter V - Luther's Marriage and Domestic Life	375
Chapter VI - 1525 to 1546.....	417
Index	491

P R E F A C E.

IN an age so distinguished for historical research as the present, it would be remarkable if there were no demand for a Life of LUTHER, founded upon new investigations. In the English language the want of such a work is much greater than in the German. In the latter, the facts newly discovered, though they lie scattered in many different publications, are recorded; while, in the former, they are nearly or quite unknown. To say nothing of Luther's letters, edited by De Wette, and of Melancthon's, by Bretschneider, without which no good biography of Luther can be written, elaborate historical essays, almost without number, on points connected with the life of the Reformer have been published within a few years in Germany, of which hardly a trace can be found in English or American books. The year 1846, the third centennial of Luther's death, was, in this respect, unusually prolific. In the recent histories, too, of old towns and cities, in the publications of learned societies, in the later critical biographies of many of the associates and contemporaries of the Reformer, and in several special and general histories

relating to the affairs of Germany in that period, important additions have been made to our knowledge of the life and times of Luther.

About three years ago, the Committee of Publication of the American Sunday-School Union applied to the writer, to prepare a life of Luther, to be published under the auspices of that society. Having, from the time of my temporary residence in Germany, in the years 1834-5, when my historical studies, under the guidance of Neander, commenced, contracted some familiarity with the writings of Luther, and with the history of his age, I was induced by my historical tastes, and my interest in the Reformer, some of whose minor works I had edited, no less than by the hope of doing a service to the young, to engage in the undertaking. During this interval of three years, nearly all the works, amounting to some hundreds of volumes, which cast new light on the subject in hand, have been carefully examined. Many new facts have been brought together, and many obscurities removed, while not a few apocryphal accounts have been discarded.

Persons who are conversant with the sources of information, will not complain that the admirable work of Jurgens on the youth of Luther should be followed, so far as it extends. No other single work, except Luther's letters, has been used so much as this. But from the year 1517, to Luther's death in 1546, no such explorer and guide could be found. Fortunately, from that date,

Luther is his own best biographer. The five large volumes of his published letters, with the supplementary collections, embrace the history of this period of his life with remarkable fulness of detail. The fact that no life of the Reformer had been written, in which was incorporated the body of materials contained in his correspondence, determined the mind of the writer to make that correspondence a subject of particular study with reference to his object. The new colouring which would hereby be given to the narrative would, it was believed, render it both more truthful and more interesting. Luther would appear in his own dress. His thoughts, expressed in his own words, would reveal his true character as nothing else would. Never could such a plan be more justifiable than in the case of one so accustomed as he was, to give unreserved freedom to his tongue and pen, and to speak out all that was in his heart. Indeed, so perfectly does the character of the individual shine forth in his own utterances and actions that a separate portraiture of it has been omitted as superfluous.

It will, I trust, appear that the author has had no theory to establish, no secret purpose to answer, but has studiously laboured to set forth Luther in his real character. His faults have not been concealed, nor his virtues wittingly overdrawn. It seemed irreverent to interrupt the solemn voice of history, and ill-advised to imitate the example of those who transfigure imperfect

and erring men into pure saints, for the blind homage of the ignorant and credulous.

In order to give full relief to the picture of Luther's youth and early manhood, for the benefit of the young reader, it was necessary to abridge the latter part of his life. This design was favoured by the consideration that Luther's later years were involved in controversies, which it would be improper to perpetuate in the publications of the Union. Indeed, the biographical interest sensibly abates at the point where it begins to expand into general history, a circumstance which would of itself justify the limited plan of the present work.

B. SEARS.

Newton Centre, Jan. 21, 1850.



DESCRIPTION OF INITIALS AND VIGNETTES.

PAGE 10. Entrance to Luther's House in Wittenberg, with "1540" inscribed at the top.

— 13. The Electoral or All-saints' Church at Wittenberg, described on page 128.

— 15. Taken from a medal struck in Saxony, in the year 1617, the first Jubilee of the Reformation. It represents Luther taking a bushel from a lamp or candle—a symbol of the gospel, as is intimated by the open Bible at the side, and the name of Jehovah above, in Hebrew letters.

— 47. Luther's House, or the Old Augustinian Cloister. His apartment was in the second story, connected with the second and third windows from the right. The entrance was at the door on the right of the tower and near by it.

— 48. Taken from a medal struck by the city of Worms in 1617. It represents a burning candle standing upon an open Bible, with a serpent endeavouring to extinguish it, and a hand from the clouds pointing to it, and intimating that divine strength feeds the flame. The medal itself has a Latin inscription—signifying, "O Lord! let it shine on for ever."

— 61. The Ninety-five Theses of Luther on Indulgences, posted up on the door of the Electoral Church at Wittenberg. The hammer is lying at his feet.

PAGE 69. The Augusteum, or University, on the left, and Melancthon's house towering high on the right.

— 119 Luther's Monument, erected in 1817—1821, in the Market-place at Wittenberg.

— 120. Jubilee-medal struck in Saxony, in 1617, representing the Elector, Frederick the Wise, in his robes of office, holding a sword in his right hand, and pointing with his left to the name of Jehovah. By his side stands Luther, holding a burning light in his right hand, and with the left pointing to the Bible. On the table-cloth is seen the Elector's coat of arms.

— 270. Luther's seal, described by himself, p. 449.

— 137. A rear-view of the Parochial or City Church in Wittenberg, where Luther commonly preached.

— 183. From a medal of the second Jubilee of the Reformation, in 1717, in Saxe-Weisenfels. It represents the Church founded upon a rock—the waves of the ocean dashing wildly around it.

— 295. Taken from a medal struck by the City of Nüremberg, in 1717, representing a Bible open to the passage—"The word of the Lord endureth for ever." V. D. M. I. Æ. are the initials of the same words in Latin—"Verbum Dei Manet In Æternum." On the left of the Bible is a mason's plummet-rule or level, with reference to the passage (Gal. vi. 16): "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy," &c.

— 302. The Double-headed Eagle and Crown represent the German Empire.

— 327. Taken from a medal struck in Saxony, in 1617, representing a brick-kiln on the left; on the right,

the brazen serpent, or serpent on the cross, and the name of Jehovah with a pillar of cloud between. The meaning is, that as Moses conducted the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, so did Luther conduct the people of God from papal captivity.

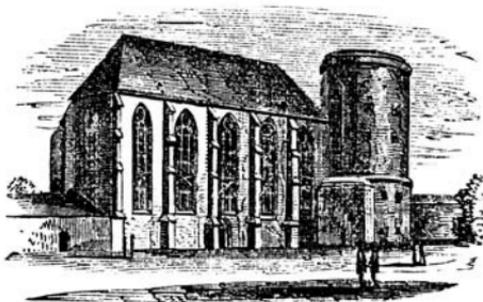
PAGE 374. The Castle of the Elector at Wittenberg.

— 375. Taken from a medal struck at Halle, in Suabia, in 1617, resembling that on page 302; except that it has the city arms or seal.

— 416. Chapel Corpus Christi (Body of Christ), one of the oldest public buildings in Wittenberg.

— 417. From a medal of Saxe-Gotha, struck in 1717, representing a palm-tree among thorns, and yet flourishing. Its emblematical import, as applied to the church, is obvious. Upon the medal itself is inscribed a verse from Ovid—"Vixi annos bis centum, nunc tertia vivitur ætas"—"I have lived two centuries, and am now living in the third."

— 496. The Yard or Court of the Elector's Castle at Wittenberg.



FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
DR. MARTIN LUTHER.....(<i>fronting title-page</i>)	
MAP OF JOURNEY FROM MANSFELD TO MAGDEBURG.....	49
MAP OF JOURNEY FROM ERFURT TO WITTENBERG.....	123
VIEW OF WARTBURG CASTLE AND THE ARREST OF LUTHER	323
KATHARINA VON BORA, WIFE OF LUTHER.....	376
THE INTERIOR OF LUTHER'S DWELLING.....	383
LUTHER ON CHRISTMAS EVE.....	396
MARKET-PLACE AT WITTENBERG	403

PART I.

FROM LUTHER'S BIRTH TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE
REFORMATION IN 1517.

CHAPTER I.

LUTHER'S BOYHOOD TO THE FOURTEENTH YEAR OF HIS AGE,
WHEN HE LEFT HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

SECTION I.—*Luther's Birth place and Parentage.*



OME twenty-five miles north-west of Leipsic is situated the old town of Halle, on the Saale. From this town, the road running to the west, after crossing a fertile plain, leads to a romantic spot, at a distance of ten

miles, where the hills of south-western Saxony begin to rise, and the flat lands, extending all the way from the Baltic Sea, reach their termination. Here the road, passing between two beautiful sheets of water, the one fresh and the other salt, enters a vale, with ranges of vine-clad hills on either side, which becomes wider and wider, till at the distance of nearly ten miles, it contracts again, and the heights that bounded it converge and form the varied

and pleasant scenery of Eisleben, once the capital of the county of Mansfeld. As the traveller enters this town, he leaves, on the left, before proceeding very far, the house where Luther was born, now converted into an edifice for the accommodation of an orphan school. In the same quarter of the city, a few rods to the east, is St. Peter's Church, where, according to the custom of the times, the boy was, on the very next day after his birth, baptized, and christened Martin, as that happened to be St. Martin's day. This circumstance is highly characteristic of the religious sentiments of that age. The senses and the imagination were employed, more perhaps than the heart, in the service of religion. The infant child was to be brought at once, in imagination at least, into connection with a saint; and it was believed that an association of the name would be adapted to awaken in him a corresponding association of ideas. The font which was used on that occasion is still shown to the curious traveller.

Leaving these places and passing directly on, about half-way through the town, the visiter will reach the point where a broad street, coming from the left, meets at right-angles with the one he is in. Turning in that direction he will see most of the city lying before him, on a rising eminence. At a little distance stands, on the left, the old and somewhat stately house in which Luther died. On the other side of the street, a few rods above, is to be seen the church in which he preached his last sermon, the very pulpit in which he stood being still preserved.

Let us now look for that district in Thuringia, or Western Saxony, where the ancestors of Luther re-

sided. We will imagine ourselves at the castle of Wartburg, about seventy-five miles south-west of Eisleben, and about twenty-five west of Erfurt. Before us, as we face the east, we shall have Eisenach, in a valley, almost at our feet, and along the hills and dales beyond, Gotha, Erfurt, Weimar and Jena, lying respectively at distances of about twelve or fourteen miles from each other.

To the left, towards Eisleben, we look directly across four or five ranges of hills, which run parallel with the Thuringian Forest, with long narrow vales between them. To the right, or in a south-easterly direction, lies the Thuringian Forest itself—a romantic range of hills or mountains, extending about forty miles. Through all this tract of country were scattered different branches of the family which bore the name of Luther.

Directly south from Wartburg, on the southwestern declivity of the forest, on the way to Salzungen, lies the hamlet of Mora, where was the homestead of that branch of the family from which Martin Luther sprung. Here the grandfather, Heine Luther, had a small farm, which he seems to have left to his eldest son Heinz or Henry Luther, the uncle of Martin. While Heinz received the small estate and assumed the maintenance of his parents, Hans or John, Martin Luther's father, appears to have been dependent upon his own industry for his livelihood. The most probable opinion is, that not long after his marriage he removed to Eisleben, in order to engage in the business of mining. From the Hartz Mountains, lying to the north-west, between Eisleben and Hanover, there runs a vein of copper with a small

ingredient of silver, passing through Mansfeld and extending to Eisleben. At this last place, Hans Luther, Martin's father, took up his first residence after leaving Mora; and during this residence Martin Luther was born, November 10, 1483.

The story to which Seckendorf gave currency, on the authority of a writer too late by a century to be a witness, namely, that Luther was born while his parents, yet residents of Mora, were attending a fair at Eisleben, is not only improbable in itself, as D'Aubigné well remarks, but has been proved to be untrue from the fact, that fairs were never held at Eisleben in the month of November. Melancthon, the best authority on this subject, says: "The parents of Luther first dwelt in the town of Eisleben, where Luther was born, and afterwards they went to Mansfeld." This view is confirmed by Ratzeberger's Manuscript, which says: "Forasmuch as the mining business had for many years been in a prosperous state in the county of Mansfeld, Hans Luther, with his wife Margaret, betook himself to that place, and gave himself, according to his best ability, to mining, till he became owner of a share in the mines and of a foundry. There, in the town of Eisleben, in the year 1483, was his son Martin Luther born, . . . but the elder Luther, Hans, removed with his household to Mansfeld and was, on account of his knowledge and industry in mining, much beloved of the old Count Gunther."

The report that Luther's father fled to Eisleben in consequence of having killed a person at Mora, was undoubtedly got up at a later period by the Papists, in order to throw discredit upon the Reformation. Eisleben, which has now a population of about seven

thousand, was, at that time, the largest town of the territory of the Counts of Mansfeld.*

As Luther passed only about half a year of his earliest infancy in Eisleben, it was only the associations of his mind and subsequent connections with this place that could have any influence upon him. Indeed, it may be said that Eisleben owes more to Luther, than Luther to Eisleben. He always cherished an affection for the place, and had warm and intimate friends there; and the very last act of his life was, to make arrangements for establishing a Latin high-school in Eisleben, which soon numbered seven hundred pupils, and has not only existed, but flourished from that time to the present.

After about six months' residence at Eisleben from the time of Luther's birth, his parents removed to Mansfeld, six miles to the north-west, of which the present population is about twelve hundred and fifty. Though this was a much smaller place than the former, it was the residence of the various branches of the family of the Counts of Mansfeld. The castle, now in ruins, stood upon a rocky eminence on the south, and overlooked the vale in which the town was situated. The scenery, in and around the place where Luther spent the first thirteen years of his life, was rather wild and romantic. The country, though not mountainous, is elevated and hilly; partly cultivated, partly covered with pine forests, and partly a bald and sterile rock. The pits and slag lying on the

* The independent county of Mansfeld was a small irregular tract, lying between Halle and Nordhausen, not extending forty miles in any direction; and yet D'Aubigné says Mora was in it, whereas it was more than sixty miles from its nearest boundary.

surface indicate at once that it is a mining district. To the south-east, towards Eisleben, an extensive, varied and smiling landscape meets the eye. In the time of Luther's childhood, Mansfeld was a place of active business. Money, in considerable quantities, was coined from the silver ore; and the copper worked in those mines led to commercial intercourse with the larger places of trade in the south of Germany, and with Venice. It was undoubtedly the prospect of doing better in his business that induced the miner, Hans Luther, to leave Eisleben, and settle at Mansfeld; and the result justified his expectation. For we find him at a later period rising, if not to affluence, to a state of comfort and respectability. He became the owner of a house and two furnaces, and left, at his death, besides these, about one thousand dollars in money. He was so much esteemed, that he was made a member of the town council.

SECTION II.—*Character of Luther's Parents, and their Condition during his Boyhood.*

LUTHER always spoke of himself and of his ancestors as belonging to the peasantry. "I am a peasant's son. My father, my grandfather, and my forefathers were all true peasants. Afterwards my father went to Mansfeld, and became an ore-digger." As it has been already intimated, Luther's father, after he became a miner, rose by industry and effort from the condition of a peasant to that of a burgher or free citizen. He commenced his career at Mansfeld in penury, but with a force of character that could not leave him in that state. "My parents," says

Luther, "were, in the beginning, right poor. My father was a poor mine-digger,* and my mother did carry her wood on her shoulders; and after this sort did they support us, their children. They had a sharp, bitter experience of it; no one would do likewise now."

It was not till about seventeen years afterwards, when Luther was a member of the university, that his father had the means of paying the expenses of his education.† His honesty, good sense, energy and decision of character won for him the respect of his fellow-citizens. He was open-hearted and frank, and was wont to follow the convictions of his understanding, fearless of consequences. His firmness was characterized by severity, sometimes approaching to obstinacy. In his actions which are known to us, he appears clear-headed and decided, going right forward to his object. His son's bold and unwavering course after committing himself to the work of reform, was just to his mind. In the very

* *Hauer*, a word which has often been misunderstood as meaning a *wood-cutter*. It is time this mistake was corrected in the English and American writers on Luther.

† Michelet is evidently in an error when he speaks of the parents being "in the enjoyment of a small property, for which they were no doubt *indebted to their son*." The position of the father in society at Mansfeld, long before Luther's celebrity, the liberal support which he is known to have given his son while at the university, his appearance with an attendance of twenty horsemen at the time of Martin's consecration as priest, the present of thirty guldens then made, and Luther's own poverty up to the time of the father's death, all forbid such a conjecture. Besides, the early biographers of Luther, who were his intimate friends, testify directly to the contrary.

midst of the Peasants' War, which the enemies of Luther said was caused by him, his father advised him to take the bold, and, at that time, even hazardous step of trampling on the vow of celibacy, and, in that way, bearing his most decided testimony against the pretended sanctity of a monastic life.

Hans Luther was strictly religious in his character, but, at the same time, had the good sense, (so rare in that age,) to distinguish religion from monasticism, upon which he looked with suspicion and aversion. Hence he was highly displeased when his son became a monk, and it was two years before a reconciliation was effected, and even then his opinion remained unchanged. When Martin left the monastic life, as he afterward says, "My father was heartily glad, for that he well knew the wicked cunning of the monks." Melancthon describes him as being "a magistrate at Mansfeld, beloved of all for the honesty of his character." Mathesius, who had lived in the family of Luther, represents the father as "patterning the widow of Sarepta, and training up his son in the fear of the Lord."

Of the history of Luther's mother less is known. Her maiden name was Margaret Lindemann. She was born at Neustadt, a small town directly south of Eisenach, and west of Gotha. Her father, who had been a burgher there, had removed from that place to Eisenach. It was, no doubt, here that Luther's father formed an acquaintance with her. The circumstance that three of her brothers were liberally educated would seem to indicate that she belonged to an intelligent family. Melancthon says, "She had many virtues agreeing to her sex; and was especially notable for her chaste conversation, godly fear, and

diligent prayer, insomuch that other honourable women looked upon her as a model of virtue and honesty." That her piety was strongly tinged with the superstitions of the times and had a monastic severity, is proved by a variety of incidental remarks found in the writings of Luther. On one occasion he says, "My mother's strait and rigorous carriage toward me served afterward to make me fly to a cloister and become a monk."

As one of the most important objects aimed at in this biography is to trace out the causes that operated in the formation of Luther's character; and as the incidents of his early life have been very sparingly handed down to us, it will be requisite to direct attention successively to the character of the various influences that acted upon him; and then to collect from the scenes of common life, in the time and places of his education, and from his own frequent allusion to them in his later writings, as many collateral rays of light as possible, and concentrate them on the points in question. In this way, we can, in no small degree, fill up the chasm which has so long existed in respect to his early history.

SECTION III. — *Luther's Domestic Education.*

LUTHER'S parents bestowed great care upon his early training. In the strictest sense, he was brought up in the fear of God, and with reverence for the then existing institutions of religion. The intentions of his parents were of the most laudable character; the faults of their discipline were those of the age in which they lived. They were highly conscientious, earnest and zealous in the discharge of