

## CHAPTER II

### LUTHER'S FIRST YEARS IN THE MONASTERY

#### I. NOVITIATE, PROFESSION, FIRST MASS

The completion of a year's novitiate was the first obligation incumbent on the new monk. During this probationary period he was not permitted to study. Prayer, pious reading, labor and penances, service in the choir, and mastering the rules and life of the Order occupied his time. For this purpose the novices were assigned to the direction of an elder monk. Luther was placed under an experienced novice-master whom he praised in later years as a wise and sympathetic religious. The master of novices explained to him the statutes of the Order, which John Staupitz, at that time superior of the entire congregation, had composed in 1504 on the basis of the old constitutions, adapted with wise discretion to the needs of the age. They were detailed and precise, but tolerated many dispensations in the monastic observance. The master of novices also saw to it that the young novice entrusted to his care diligently read the Bible.

The statutes enjoined upon all the duty of "reading the Bible with fervor, to hear it read with devotion, and to learn it with assiduity." To hold that the Sacred Scriptures were not in the hands of the faithful, even of the pious, in the days when Luther was a youth, is a wide-spread error. In the case of Luther himself, who afterwards rendered this statement current, there was not a day "on which the Word of the Scriptures was not perceived abundantly by ear and intellect. It came to be a permanent companion, a monitor and comforter, a judge and a benefactor."<sup>1</sup> From that day a pronounced inclination towards the Bible began to take hold of him.

Besides the Bible, the young novice joyfully saturated his mind with the writings of St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure, those profound and sympathetic teachers of the Middle Ages. His spiritual director understood how to comfort and guide the novice, who at

<sup>1</sup> Scheel, *M. Luther*, II, 2 ed., p. 2.

times showed a lack of courage. Long afterwards Luther remembered how the good man spoke to him of the remission of sins and occasionally called his attention to the fact that the article of faith on the *remissio peccatorum* must be set up against all scruples.

Brother Martin willingly adapted himself to the discipline of the well-regulated monastery. He learned to love his new abode, was determined to become a good monk, and resolved to devote his energies to the salvation of souls.

At the commencement of his novitiate, he received sad reports from Mansfeld, where his family resided. The pestilence invaded the little town and carried off two of his brothers. His heart, on the other hand, was gladdened at the news of his father's belated consent to his entrance upon a monastic career. It was difficult for the father to relinquish the hopes he had placed in a secular career for his highly promising son. Perhaps the affliction with which his home had been visited moderated his attitude.

When the probationary year had terminated and the hour for the taking of the solemn vows had arrived, Brother Martin, advancing to the altar of the Augustinian church at Erfurt, unperturbed by misgivings and with joy in his heart, made profession of the vows that bind forever. The vows were couched in the usual form: "I, Brother Martin, make profession and vow obedience before Almighty God and the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, and before you, Brother Winand, local prior, in the name and place of the prior general of the Order of Hermits of the holy Bishop Augustine, and his lawful successors, to live without property and in chastity according to the rule of the same Blessed Augustine to the end of my life." No act of his life, no promise ever made by him, took place after such mature deliberation and with such a complete knowledge of the circumstances and obligations, as this oblation of himself to the divine Majesty in the bosom of the universal Church by means of the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The act was witnessed by the community of those who were to be henceforth more closely united to him.

Luther was now a full-fledged member of the German Congregation of the Hermits of St. Augustine, who, as a Congregation of Observantines, were subordinated to John Staupitz, the vicar or representative of the general of the Order who resided in Rome. Besides the monasteries of the congregation of the Observantines, there

existed in Germany numerous other Augustinian monasteries which had not introduced the Observance. They constituted the so-called Provincia Saxoniae, and extended over central and upper Germany. According to the general administration of the Order, they were under the jurisdiction of a provincial. Both, Observantines and non-Observantines, were classified under the common canonical character of mendicant friars, with this sole exception that the Observantines had their own peculiar exercises which were conducted in the spirit of the enthusiastic founder and father of their Order, Andrew Proles, the predecessor of Staupitz (died in 1503 at Kulmbach).

Luther was not exempt from the task of begging alms. Despite the fact that he possessed the master's degree, he was obliged to assume this task like other humiliating exercises of the Order. Some years afterwards, however, in view of his academic degree and of the studies he was destined to pursue, he was absolved from the obligation of the "*saccum per naccum*," as begging with a sack about the neck was humorously termed in the monastery.

As the day of his ordination to the priesthood was approaching, Luther read the thoughtful and edifying treatise on the holy sacrifice of the Mass by Gabriel Biel—but as he assures us after his defection from the ancient Church, he did so with a bleeding heart. His disposition inclined him to view with terror the thought of the sublimity of the sacred function no less than the idea of intimate union with God through the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. In the second semester of 1506, the preliminary orders of the subdiaconate and diaconate were conferred upon him. These events were followed by his ordination to the priesthood, probably on April 3, 1507. He received holy orders in the magnificent dome of Erfurt, at the hands of the suffragan bishop, John Bonemilch von Lasphe. His soul now highly stimulated, he prepared himself for the celebration of his first holy Mass. The extant letters in which he extended an invitation to his various acquaintances to be present on the greatest day of his life—for it was celebrated with great solemnity—reveal his profound earnestness and lively realization of his own unworthiness. The style of these letters is invested with a certain pathos, be it in consequence of the humanism he formerly cultivated, or as a result of his natural disposition.

While he said his first Mass at the altar of the Augustinian church, the thought of the proximity and magnitude of almighty God caused

him to be seized with such fright that he would fain have interrupted the holy Sacrifice and hastened away from the altar, had not the assistant priest held him back. The reports which have come to us from his own lips, as well as those contained in the copy of his lectures on Genesis, are too definite as to permit the possibility of a doubt concerning the abnormal event.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards he said that he always said Mass with a shudder, aye, "with great horror."<sup>3</sup>

His father, accompanied by no less than twenty riders, arrived for the celebration on horseback, defraying his own expenses. At the festive banquet, Martin desired to persuade his father to give a new and open approval to his entrance into the monastery, since his previous consent had not been whole-hearted. Therefore, Martin praised the "pleasant and quiet" life of the monastery and the "divine nature" of his chosen state of life. But when he mentioned the heavenly call on the occasion of the storm at Stotternheim, his father became angry and exclaimed: "Would to God that it was not a hallucination of the devil!" He was a choleric man and his patience was exhausted. The select company which surrounded him did not restrain him from giving vent to his displeasure. He even remarked, though without justification, whether the son had forgotten that children owe complete obedience to their parents as regards entrance into the cloister, that the fourth commandment was above the notion which induced him to select the monastic state, etc. It must have been an unpleasant scene when the monks, who were seated next to them, tried to defend the monastic life and their promising confrère. Thereat the father expressed himself in these acrid words: "I would prefer to be somewhere else rather than to be here, eating and drinking." To such an extent his irascible temperament led him to forget the requirements of the festive occasion. In course of time, however, the old man became reconciled. When Luther, fourteen years later, was in open conflict with his monastic order as a result of the publication of his treatise against the monastic vow, he justified the conduct of his father in the preface of the dedicatory letter which he addressed to him by citing the latter's statement relative

<sup>2</sup> See the citations from the sources in Scheel II, pp. 345 sq. I am unable to regard as sound the objections variously raised against Luther's account in the Table Talks and the statements contained in his commentary on Genesis. Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, I, p. 15; VI, pp. 99 sqq., 195 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Grisar, *op. cit.*, VI, 197.

to the obedience due to parents.<sup>4</sup> It seems never to have disturbed him previously. But in the aforementioned treatise (1521) he assured his readers that the words which his father uttered on the occasion of his first Mass made a deep impression on him, "as if God Himself had spoken them."

## 2. STUDIES AND FIRST EXPERIENCE AS TEACHER

After his first Mass, Martin began the study of theology. John Nathin, a celebrated teacher of his Order, was prefect of theological studies in the Erfurt monastery. But Martin was not introduced into positive and speculative theology in an orderly fashion. After about a year and a half spent in the study of Gabriel Biel's treatise on the "Sentences" and other Nominalistic writers, his superiors in the autumn of 1508 transferred him to the Augustinian monastery of Wittenberg, where he was ordered to lecture at once on the Nicomachean Ethics while he continued his theological studies.

At Wittenberg Luther came into closer personal contact with Staupitz, the vicar of his Order, with whom he probably had had converse already at Erfurt. At his instigation, he was promoted to the baccalaureate in Sacred Scripture at the university, on March 9, 1509. Luther had made the reading of the Bible his specialty; it appealed to him more than Scholasticism and methodical scientific works. For this reason, and because of his talents, Staupitz kept an eye on him, in order eventually to make him his successor in the academic chair of Biblical science, which had been entrusted to the Augustinians, but to which he could not do full justice on account of his official journeys. The Biblical baccalaureate was a preliminary step for Luther. It obliged him to explain certain parts of Sacred Scripture to his academic audiences. Later he was appointed to the office of "*sententiarius*," which entitled him to deliver university lectures on the celebrated Book of Sentences of Peter Lombard. He advanced to this dignity in the autumn of 1509. It terminated his first sojourn at Wittenberg. The Order sent him back to Erfurt, where a *sententiarius* was needed. Due to these labors, his own further training must have been considerably neglected.

Luther's interior life during the days spent at Erfurt and Witten-

<sup>4</sup> *Werke*, Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 573 sq.

berg was constantly furrowed by deep anxiety. The terrors from which he suffered at the beginning of his monastic life, would not desert him. He continued to worry about the sternness of the divine Judge, the remission of his sins, and the problem of predestination by an alleged and inscrutable divine decree. In part these terrors were caused by his psychological condition, which, when later symptoms are taken into consideration, seems to have been a kind of precordial fear; in part, they were the product of melancholy thoughts which he harbored and which re-acted upon his physical condition. On one occasion, while attending divine service in the choir of the monks, he fell prostrate to the floor and was racked by convulsions, as the Gospel of the demoniac was being sung, and screamed aloud: "It is not I! It is not I!" (meaning that he was not the man possessed).<sup>5</sup> No mention of epilepsy is made in his subsequent history. The many later references made by him to his mental sufferings during this period, lack precision. They may pertain to his sojourn at Wittenberg or to his first residence at Erfurt, or to both.

He says that his life in the cloister was always sad. When he discussed his sins with Staupitz and raised all kinds of imaginary objections, the latter told him to dismiss the specter of his "puppet sins." His thoughts, which were replete with fantasies, appeared unintelligible to others; few knew how to console him as well as Master Bartholomew (Usingen), whom he styled the "best paraclete and comforter" in the Erfurt monastery.<sup>6</sup> Once Staupitz told him: "Master Martin, I do not understand that." On another occasion Luther was deeply impressed as Staupitz admonished him when he was affrightened at the idea of predestination: "Why torment yourself with such thoughts and broodings? Look at the wounds of Christ and His blood shed for you! There you will see your predestination to Heaven shining forth to your comfort."<sup>7</sup> Yet, in many passages of his later writings and addresses Luther says of his monastic life: "My heart trembles and flutters, when I meditate on how God may be merciful to me. Often have I been frightened at the name of Jesus, and, when I looked upon Him as He hung upon the cross, He was as lightning to me." He was often compelled to say: "I wish there were no God." Never, so he says with exaggeration,

<sup>5</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, I, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

had he been able to recite a prayer properly. He had lived in great tortures and at times so sensed the terrors of God's judgment "that his hair stood on end." He became startled when death or the future life was discussed in the monastery.<sup>8</sup> According to his representations, it was principally his good friend Staupitz who prevented him from being "drowned," as he puts it, in the fear of predestination. But, are not many polemical admixtures recognizable in these portrayals of his depressed and melancholy state of mind in the monastery, from which he alleged he was forced to flee?

When Luther left Wittenberg, he had neglected to deliver the necessary introductory lecture as *sententiarius*. As a consequence the scrupulous theologians of Erfurt did not want to let him lecture on the Books of Sentences there; they may also have been unfavorably disposed toward him for other reasons. However, in the end he was permitted to lecture.

The notes on Peter Lombard which he penned in those days reveal an active mind, but at the same time an adverse and extremely surprising self-conscious mannerism of formulating judgments. He sneers at the drolleries of contemporary theologians, at "the rotten rules of the logicians," at the masks worn by the "philosophers," at "the rancid philosopher Aristotle." For the latter he showed a decided aversion. At the very beginning of his career he styles him a comedian whom he would unmask. The Middle Ages had appreciated Aristotle quite differently. But Luther showed a contentious and an audacious spirit already at Wittenberg. Mathesius, his eulogist, says of him: "Our Frater Martinus there applied himself to the study of Sacred Scripture, and commenced to dispute in the university against the sophistry which was everywhere in vogue at that time. And since all schools, monasteries, and pulpits appealed to the 'master of sublime thought' (Peter Lombard), besides Thomas of Aquin, Scotus, and Albertus, in support of the foundation of Christianity, our Frater Martinus began to dispute against their principles, at which good people were highly amazed even at that time."

The Erfurt professors were probably conspicuous among the "good people" who opposed Luther. It is not incredible that, as he relates afterwards, the Bible, which served the fiery combatant as a means for his boastfulness, may have been withheld from him for a while. In order to understand his beloved Bible properly, Luther began to

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 109.

study Greek under the direction of John Lang, a fellow-member of his Order, who had a humanistic training and shared his opinions, Luther's studious spirit also impelled him to take up certain writings of St. Augustine, the founder of his Order and a doctor of the Church. We have marginal notes made by him in 1509 on certain treatises of Augustine. But owing to his lack of leisure and his pre-conceived notions he was not able to fathom their depth. Augustine's teachings on grace, free will, and justification, on natural good works and acts meritorious for Heaven, really remained a sealed book for him all his life. In vain he appealed to particular passages to support his own peculiar opinions.

The town of Erfurt was hardly aware of Luther's residence at the highly esteemed Augustinian monastery. Luther himself is silent for a long time concerning the storms and struggles which the town experienced. It is only afterwards that he mentions Erfurt, and then with a feeling of resentment. In January, 1510, the ancient city council of Erfurt was violently deposed by a popular democratic party. The Saxon Elector opposed both the insurgent workers and the rights of the Archbishop of Mayence, who ruled the town. The spacious "old college" in which the university lectures were delivered, was destroyed on August 4, in a riot between the students and the municipal lansquenets. It was the "frantic year," as it is called in the annals of the city. During this uprising Luther lectured in perfect peace in the quiet halls of the Augustinian monastery.

In this same year, 1510, a grave controversy broke out in the Observantine Augustinian congregation. It was occasioned by the vicar, John Staupitz, who jeopardized the canonical and disciplinary autonomy of the Observantine monasteries entrusted to his care. He intended to affiliate them with the monasteries of the German Augustinian province, who were non-Observantines. The consolidation of the province, which had hitherto been directed by separate provincials, with the monasteries of his own jurisdiction would have greatly extended his authority. He counted upon the support of the General of the Order and increased vigor in the life of the German monasteries, although no noticeable decline had been manifested by them.

The monks of Erfurt and of six other monasteries of the Observantine congregation judged otherwise. They considered their observance jeopardized by the influence of the communities which had affiliated

with them and insisted upon the privileges of their congregation, which was protected in virtue of papal legislation against the arbitrary interference of the General. In the Franciscan Order, Brother Louis of Anhalt, whom Luther met at Magdeburg, had effectually defended the Observantine monasteries of St. Francis in Germany, whose constitutions enjoyed papal sanction, in the interests of the stricter life, against Aegidius Delfini, the General of his Order.<sup>9</sup> In this posture of affairs, Luther assumed the rôle of eloquent spokesman against Staupitz and, in behalf of the insurgent monasteries, was sent to Halle in company with the theologian John Nathin, where Adolph von Anhalt, the provost of Magdeburg cathedral, so-journed. Both appealed for assistance to the provost. In order to assure themselves of success, the monasteries decided to send Luther to the headquarters of the order at Rome and to the papal curia. This was the occasion of Luther's journey to Rome, an event destined to become highly significant in his life.

### 3. THE JOURNEY TO ROME

After having spent a considerable part of his life in the narrow confines of the monastery and in academic halls, the journey to Rome was bound to bring the active mind of young Luther in contact for the first time with the great ecclesiastical world. He was to receive an abundance of new ideas. He was destined also to become aware of the religious and moral abuses which had been accumulating on all sides, but particularly in the Rome of the Renaissance. In the late autumn of 1510 he commenced his journey on foot, in accordance with a custom of his Order, accompanied by a fellow member. They travelled through Bavaria and over the mountains to Tyrol, thence, from Innsbruck over the Brenner Pass to Lombardy and beyond. Following the usual road of the pilgrims, they crossed Central Italy and proceeded via Viterbo and Lake Bolsena to the Eternal City. Whenever practicable, he called upon the numerous monasteries along the road and enjoyed their hospitality. The hardships of the winter season, just previous to the close of the year, were probably not small. With reinvigorated energy he ascended the heights of Mario, whence he obtained his first sight of Rome. Near a chapel he knelt down and recited the customary prayers of pilgrims, in

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Lemmens, *Franziskanerbriefe*, pp. 20 sqq.

greeting the sacred walls and plains, the home of innumerable saints and martyrs. In Rome he took up his abode with his fellow-monks.

To his great disappointment, his mission in behalf of the Observantine faction proved futile. He was advised that he would have to obtain a letter from the legitimate superior of his order in Germany (*i. e.*, Staupitz) in order to gain admission to the papal curia. He had no such a letter, and the General of the Augustinians as well as his procurator, who were not in favor of his mission, refused to intervene in his behalf. The efforts of the seven monasteries were unwelcome to them. Again, he must have poignantly felt another failure, namely, the refusal of the papal authorities to grant a petition which his passionate fondness for study had inspired. In some cases, religious had been given permission to devote certain years to study at the universities, outside of their monasteries and without appearing in the habit of their order. Luther's request to have this extraordinary privilege extended to the German Augustinians was declined because he had no recommendation of his superiors. The report of his pupil Oldecop on this subject is trustworthy, since during his stay at Rome, some time after this incident, Oldecop made inquiries concerning this matter. Luther compensated himself by studying Hebrew with a German Jew at Rome. He also made it his business to visit all the sacred places in Rome, and to become acquainted with the religious monuments of the city. He hunted up, he says, all the churches and crypts. The traditions of the various places edified him; he did not balk even at the false ones. Only at the so-called Stairs of Pilate, in the vicinity of the Lateran palace, which he climbed on his knees in accordance with custom, the question arose in his mind whether the tremendous indulgences connected with these steps were indeed genuine.<sup>10</sup> This doubt, however, was not the germ of his subsequent doctrine of justification without good works, as has been asserted, but was occasioned by the uncritical *Mirabilia Vrbis Romae*—a guide-book for pilgrims which was in circulation at that time. No trace of so-called reformatory ideas can be detected in Luther either at the time of his pilgrimage to Rome or for some considerable time thereafter.

He was, however, deeply depressed by what he saw of the decline of morality in Rome, including the higher and the lower clergy. Especially what he heard concerning the person and court of the

<sup>10</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, VI, 496.

recently deceased Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, his relatives, certain cardinals, the pomp and worldliness of Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere), the then reigning warrior-like successor of Alexander VI, sank deep into the soul of the receptive northerner. These recollections were violently revived during his subsequent contest with Rome and furnished him with weapons against the Roman Anti-christ, whose true character he fancied to have discovered in another manner. He appears, while at Rome, to have come in contact with German and Italian residents who collected reproaches against the morals of the curia in an odious and at times frivolously exaggerated form and apparently took less note of the prevailing good traits in the life of the city and the supreme government of the Church. The same holds good in regard to his entire journey through Italy. An honorable exception were the great hospitals he visited, with their ample equipment and the charity which they dispensed. The exemplary care of the sick and of poor pilgrims exhibited at Florence elicited favorable comments from him later on.

It appears that the splendid edifices and the grand works of this period, inspired by the joyousness of creative art, at Rome as well as along the whole way of his journey, failed to attract his attention. Even in his advanced years he relished no taste for the creations of art. As a pilgrim to Rome, he lacked the proper enlightenment to appreciate these matters.

When Luther, after his apostasy, described himself as having been the most pious monk at Rome, who said Mass so solemnly and slowly that several other priests finished saying Mass at the same time, and when he maintains that, inspired by the great Roman indulgences applicable to the souls of the departed, he in his pious zeal wished that his parents had already departed this life, so that he might gain these indulgences in their behalf—we have a series of grotesque exaggerations, suggested partly by his native humor, partly by exaggerated criticism of Roman conditions. We know that he did not say Mass regularly while in Rome. According to a later declaration of his, he desired to make a general confession extending over his whole life, but found the clergy in Rome insufficiently instructed for this purpose. Whatever he says about conditions or his own monastic virtues must be received with a large grain of salt.

At all events, it is certain that his visit in the center of Catholic Christianity did not shake his devotion to the Church, nor his sub-

mission to the papal authority, nor his loyalty to the monastic state, though the subsequent crisis was accelerated thereby.

His stay in the city on the Tiber lasted about four weeks. Luther did not get to see Pope Julius, who, on account of threatening war, had betaken himself to Upper Italy. Luther did not return to Germany by way of Lombardy and across the Tyrolean Alps, but, due to the danger of war, made a detour over Nizza and the Avignon country, up the valley of the Rhone towards Switzerland and thence to Bavaria. Some traces of this journey have been preserved.<sup>11</sup> Nor did the pilgrim return to Erfurt, but, in compliance with the orders of his superiors, went to Wittenberg to teach, a choice which probably conformed with his own desire.

#### 4. IN WITTENBERG

The Augustinians of Wittenberg did not participate in the attack upon Staupitz in connection with the Observantine controversy. The party of the vicar was in control there. What attitude did Luther assume towards him? When he re-entered Germany, his views about this internal question of discipline were different from those which impelled him to visit Italy. He became an opponent of the so-called Observantines and espoused the party of Staupitz. What caused this striking change has never been fully cleared up. Perhaps the opposition which he encountered at Rome influenced him. Possibly his transfer from Erfurt to Wittenberg had something to do with his altered attitude. It is also possible that Staupitz himself influenced him decisively. Cochlaeus, his subsequent opponent, who at that time was in touch with the brethren of the Order and had learned from them some things about Luther, drastically expresses the change in his conduct thus: "He has apostatized to his friend Staupitz." For the rest, his change of attitude need not cause too much surprise in view of the sanguine temperament of the young monk. It is also permitted to inquire whether the consolidation contemplated by Staupitz, did not possess some merit. A uniform government of all the Augustinian monasteries in Germany under an energetic general and active provincials, according to the general rule of the order, was in itself a rather desirable thing.

<sup>11</sup> H. Grisar, *Lutheranalekten*, I ("Zu Luthers Romfahrt; Neues über den Reiseweg") in the *Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft*, Vol. XXXIX (1919-1920), pp. 487 sqq.

The internal conflict was settled in May of the following year at a chapter of the Augustinian congregations held in Cologne. The settlement was effected as a result of the conciliatory policy of Staupitz, who had previously brought about a certain union of the seven convents at Jena, in July, 1511. The proposed consolidation of these congregations with the Saxon province, *i. e.*, with the non-reformed German Augustinians, was to be abandoned—a proposition with which the general now agreed. The Cologne chapter was held without the participation of the "Province of Saxony." This fact alone would indicate a certain retreat on the part of Staupitz, even if it was but a temporary one. In the meantime the opposition within the congregation, once having manifested itself, continued to smoulder. There were friends of the Observance, and, as it appears, some enthusiasts, who exhibited a strict compliance with the statutes. On the other hand there were enemies of the Observance, who complained of unkindnesses and calumnies on the part of their opponents. In the congested atmosphere of the monasteries the conflict grew more and more acute.

At Wittenberg, Luther soon became the passionate spokesman of the opponents of the Observantines, who were by far the more numerous party. He had participated in the chapter at Cologne (1512), as his works testify. On the return journey from Cologne, he visited the valley of Ehrenbreitstein near Koblenz, where a monastery of his Order was situated at Mühlthal.<sup>12</sup> Paltz, a celebrated Augustinian and a native of Erfurt, had retired to this monastery some time previously, having become dissatisfied with his position as theological teacher at the "studium generale" of his Order at Erfurt. It is possible that Luther, while at Cologne, had been proposed for the doctorate in theology at Wittenberg. According to his later story he raised strenuous objections to the doctorate when Staupitz subsequently discussed this matter with him in more definite terms at Wittenberg. His objections were based principally on the state of his health. In spite of this, however, the superiors would not alter their decision.

In Wittenberg various tasks diverted him from the preparation for the doctorate. Thus he was obliged to preach in the smaller monastery church. He was also made subprior in the monastery. On

<sup>12</sup> H. Grisar, "*Luther zu Köln und Koblenz*," in the jubilee number of the *Koblenzer Volkszeitung*, February, 1922.

October 4th, he obtained the academic title of licentiate in theology. A few days later, on October 9th, we find him at Leipsic, where he writes out a receipt for fifty guldens, which the Saxon Elector, Frederick, had assigned to him out of the local exchequer to pay the expenses of his pending promotion.<sup>13</sup> Staupitz declared to the Elector that the office of Biblical lecturer, which he himself had occupied at Wittenberg, was henceforth to be entrusted permanently to Luther.<sup>14</sup> According to the terms of their endowment these lectures were assigned to the Augustinian monastery. After passing the required examination, Luther was promoted to the doctorate, on October 19, 1512, in the castle-church at Wittenberg. The ceremony was held under the direction of the university professor Andrew Bodenstein of Karlstadt, with whom Luther in after years lived in strained relations on account of the controversies which arose over the new doctrines.

<sup>13</sup> *Briefwechsel*, I, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Scheel, II, pp. 311 and 431.

## CHAPTER III

### STRIKING OUT ALONG NEW ROADS—THE INTERIOR PROCESS

#### I. LUTHER'S FIRST BIBLICAL LECTURES—HIS MYSTICISM

The first lectures of the new professor of Biblical science were delivered in the years 1513 to 1515 and dealt with the Psalms. Those of his pupils who were monks and had to recite the Divine Office in choir, were particularly interested in the Psalms. The interpretation offered them by Luther has been preserved in his works. It is, however, not an explanation made in accordance with our modern ideas, but rather a collection of allegorical and moral sentences based upon the text, as was the custom in those days. Luther justly abandoned this allegorical manner of interpretation in later life. Non-Catholics have endeavored, without justification, to discover in these lectures the germs of his later teaching. His manner of expression is often indefinite and elastic and generally more rhetorical than theologically correct. His teaching on justification, grace, and free will, is, like his other doctrines, still fundamentally Catholic, or at least can be so interpreted if the dogmatic teaching of the Church is properly understood. Still there are a few indications of the coming change. Take, for instance, his emphatic assertion that Christ died for all men and his exaggerated opposition to the doctrine of justification by means of good works.<sup>1</sup> In general these lectures reveal talent, religious zeal, and fertile imagination—qualities which must have charmed his auditors to an unusual degree.

Luther was very amiable and communicative towards his pupils. His entire personality, the very gleam of his eye, exerted a certain fascination over those who associated with him.

The young professor of Sacred Scripture displayed a pronounced inclination towards mysticism. Mysticism had always been cultivated

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Boehmer in *Allg. Evang.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, 1924.