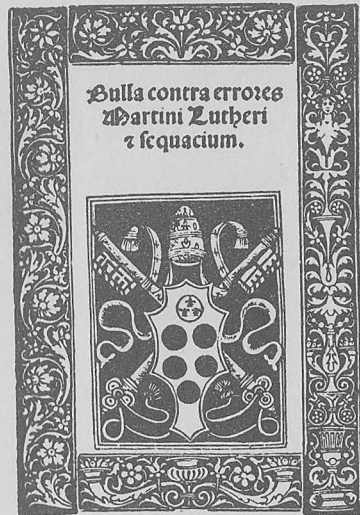
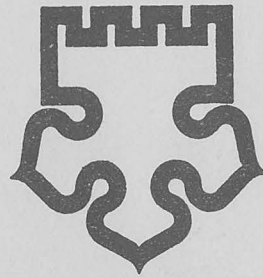
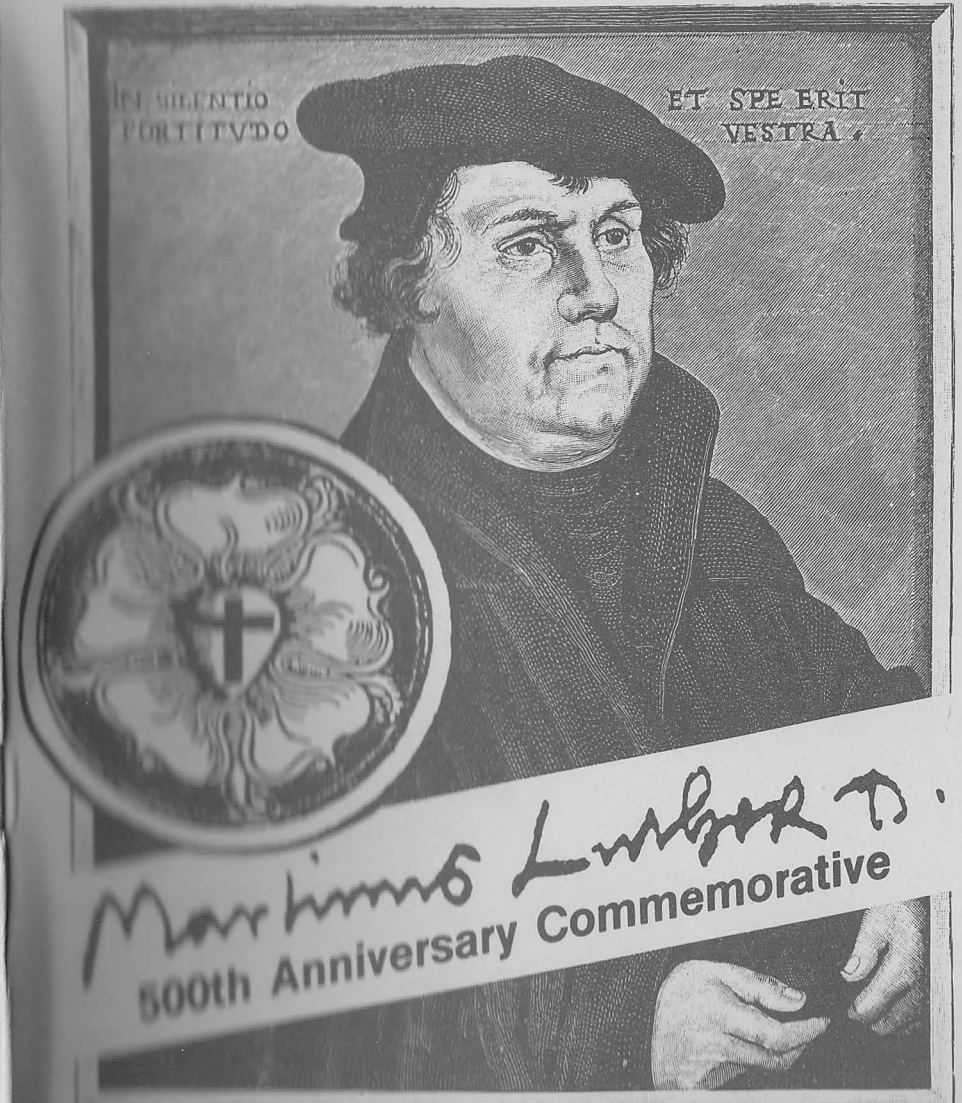


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 Vom Hochwürdigem Sacrament des Altars / Durch
 Doctor Jo. Coelus.



DOUBTFUL CHRISTIANS MAKE QUEER SAINTS!

RALPH BLAIR



Dr. Blair is a psychotherapist in private practice in New York City. He attended Dallas Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary before completing his graduate studies at The University of Southern California and at Pennsylvania State University. He is a member of The Christian Association for Psychological Studies, The American Scientific Affiliation, and The Evangelical Theological Society. A shorter version of this text was presented by Dr. Blair at connECTION83 during July, 1983, at San Juan Bautista in California and at Kirkridge in Pennsylvania.

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INTRODUCTION.

Doubtful Christians make queer saints. Do "queer" Christians make doubtful saints? To too many of us, Christians who are full of doubt certainly do seem to be queer candidates for sainthood. And, no doubt, so do "queer" Christians about whom so many conventional Christians are full of doubt.

At the beginning of the Darwinian controversy, -- a time that was as disruptive to the 19th century evangelical world as the gay controversy is to the evangelical world of our own day -- Christian geologist and evolutionist Henry Drummond took note that "all religious truths are doubtful." [1] As a scientist, he also knew that all scientific truths are doubtful. Less than a century later, a writer for *Science 200* confesses that the "sudden confrontation with the depth and scope of ignorance [is what] represents the most significant contribution of 20th century science. ... We are at last," he says, "facing up to it. In earlier times, we either pretended to understand how things worked or ignored the problem, or simply made up stories to fill the gaps." [2] Science was late to copy religion in this respect.

There is not very much evidence that people in either religion or science these days have become as frank about their ignorance as the writers just quoted. Cocksure fundamentalist absolutists still abound in both religion and science, as well as on the general secular scene, and this has been nowhere better illustrated than in the matter of homosexuality and Christian faith. As Lutheran historian Martin E. Marty appraises the current picture, "the fundamentalist worlds are still overconfident about their absolute hold on absolutes, too pouncing and predatory in eagerness to press their advantage in the name of a very belligerent cocksureness-producing God. They grow by attracting the nostalgic, the frightened, the misled, the besieged." [3] Religious liberals or "mainliners" offer no better reality since, as Marty says, many

of them "still waver in conviction, are apathetic about belief, or are 'merely' tolerant as they settle for passionless decline." [4] No better reality is offered in this regard by those whose commitment to scientism judges evangelical Christian faith to be a most unsophisticated heresy.

Drummond recognized that some doubts are simply intellectual problems and, as such, he said that "It would be a pity if all these problems could be solved. The joy of the intellectual life would be largely gone." [5] Some doubts are honest difficulties, what Drummond called "can't believe." But other doubts are really unbelief or what Drummond called "won't believe." He saw the former "doubt [as] honesty" but, he said, "unbelief is obstinacy." [6] He recognized that in both religion and in science, "Heresy is truth in the making, and [honest] doubt is the prelude of knowledge." [7] Honest doubt is natural, inevitable and can be productive. As Drummond observed, "We are born questioners. ... The child's great word when it begins to speak is, 'Why?'" He said that "That is the incipient doubt" in our very nature. "Respect doubt for its origin. It is an inevitable thing. It is not a thing to be crushed." [8]

Evangelist D. L. Moody spoke of Drummond as "the most Christ-like man I ever knew" but Moody had to fight off the criticism of less gracious Christians who constantly objected to Moody's repeatedly offering the Northfield platform to this queer Christian evolutionist and proponent of higher criticism of the Bible. Apparently Christ-like people can be seen as mighty queer Christians.

According to George MacDonald, another queer 19th century Scottish Christian -- booted out of the established church because his doubts were unacceptable: "Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to the honest. They are the first knock at our door of things that are not yet, but have to be, understood. ... Doubt must precede every deeper assurance." [9] C. S. Lewis considered MacDon-

ald to be his "master." Lewis attributed the conversion or baptism of his own imagination, as he put it, to the "holiness" of MacDonald's "greatest genius" for troubling "oldest certainties till all questions [were] reopened" for his pilgrimage to Christ. [10]

Well why do so many of us seem so afraid to exercise doubt of this healthy, even "holy," variety? Fundamentalists of all stripes try to dispel all doubt. They try to do this by changing the spelling from D-O-U-B-T to D-O-G-M-A. It spells doubt just the same. Intellectuals can especially weary of doubt. Out of his *Sturm und Drang*, Goethe somewhere insisted: "Tell me of your certainties, I have doubts enough of my own." Out of his Roman Catholicism, G. K. Chesterton complained that "Moderns permit any writer to emphasize doubts ... but let no man emphasize dogmas." [11] Agnostic restriction in the name of doubt can spell dogma just the same.

Yes, as we've said, evidence of honest, humble and holy doubt is scant. Absolutists everywhere insist on their party lines. Absolutists on the left as well as on the right seem to be in charge in the churches as well as in the secular establishments. This includes the lesbian and gay liberationist establishment, no matter how disarrayed it may be or how much it may advertise its liberality. There are so few persons today to call attention to the fact that our demand to know *for sure* is the most certain evidence of unspoken doubt. It was of fellow Christians that MacDonald said: "The [person] that feareth, Lord, to doubt, in that fear doubteth thee." [12] It is of all of us, -- Christian, non-Christian, gay, non-gay, anti-gay -- that we can say: The person who fears to doubt, in that fear doubts whatever position she holds to be true.

Now notice how we've already, somehow, drifted uncomfortably from something we readily granted was natural and productive -- intellectual doubt -- to something we feel as *distress*. There is

talk of fear. There are raised voices; there's defensiveness. It's because we *profoundly* doubt that we know where we stand, that we try to pretend so desperately that we know for sure exactly where we stand. "Here I stand!" is as much a trembling and defensive cry for help as an unequivocal statement of certitude. Even "intellectual doubt" can seem to us to be too dangerous, for we come to assume that unless we have certainty we are in much more danger than simply intellectual trouble.

The doubts we're going to look into are not any simple skepticism and incredulity. The doubts we're going to look at are fear, apprehension, misgivings, qualms, anxiety, trepidation, terror and dread of the most awful kind. These are the terrible doubts of the besieged. For a long time we've been the targets of fundamentalist terrorists who have tried their damndest to put what they call the "fear of God" into us "to scare the hell out of us." And they have succeeded in frightening all of us at some time or other and to some degree or other.

We have wrestled with homosexuality for a long, long time. We were not at all quick to accept it, to whatever degree we have accepted it. Oh, we can parrot the correct responses to the infamous clobber passages, or at least we hope that somebody can. But alone with our bad consciences we wonder: What if our critics are right after all? What if all our responses are but rationalizations? We say gays are just like straights, but how can we overlook the fact that some gay men have had genital contact with thousands of partners? Is that just like straights? Maybe the heterosexual Christians really are right and we really are dead wrong. Yes, we know of all the "ex-gay" flops, but we wonder whether those men and women waited long enough for a change. How do we know for sure that we cannot have "deliverance" from homosexuality if only we really believed in that strongly enough. It's true that we didn't choose our homo-

sexual desires, no matter what our ignorant critics say, but how can we say with such certainty that God does not expect us to keep even those uninvited desires in check and carry our homosexuality as "a cross to bear?" What if it is true, what they tell us Paul means in I Corinthians: that no homosexual will ever get to Heaven? What if Paul really does mean in Romans that God has given up on us? What if all our fancy footwork finally means nothing against the plain fact we've suspected all along: that homosexuality *is* an abomination against God? How in the world can it be that our critics have all been wrong all these years and only we now are right?

Have you ever had these thoughts? Do you continue to experience such thoughts? This weekend we are surrounded by people who suffer these doubts and anxieties. There are others who are not here this weekend because their suffering of these doubts and anxieties and their denials are even more overwhelming than are ours.

But we and they are not alone. Such doubts and resultant depressions -- though not always of homosexuality -- have been common throughout Christian history. The names of the afflicted read like an honor roll of Christianity's foremost daughters and sons. They include, of course, David and Moses, Thomas and Peter, and then St. Francis, William Cowper, Roger Williams, Alexander Cruden, Menno Simons, Peter Waldo, William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, C. H. Spurgeon, Katherine von Bora, Mary Dyer, Anne Hutchinson, and even the author of "Blessed Assurance," Fanny Crosby! In fact, a careful study of the lives of all outstanding Christian saints who seem at times so much bigger than life, reveals a throbbing theme of doubt. They were, to themselves, not bigger than life. They were, to themselves, you see, the hard experiences of living their own lives from the beginning on down to the ending. They did not live their white-washed biographies. They lived what we all must live, on our own: our own struggles.

If we go back 500 years, we come to a brother who suffered just such doubt. This year is the 500th anniversary of his birth. Martin Luther was one tremendous prototype of an anxious gay Christian.

To Martin Luther, there was no greater enemy than doubt. It was not, for him, a simple intellectual difficulty, but a "monster" and the Devil himself. He called it *Anfechtung!* *Anfechtung* is a German word for which there is no good single English equivalent, but Luther scholar Roland Bainton tells us that *Anfechtung* is "all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of" a human being. [13] "I was myself more than once driven to the very abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created," Luther confided. "Love God? I hated him!" [14] And no wonder, for to Luther, "the most devastating doubt of all" was this: "Perhaps not even God ... is just." [15]

And as women or men who have tried to overcome our homosexuality, tried to become "ex-gay," tried to be celibate, and then tried to really accept the homosexuality with too little success, too many disappointments and great pangs of loneliness, isolation, and persecution, perhaps we, too, have wished that we'd never been born. Perhaps we, too, have hated God and perhaps we, too, have concluded that everything is so hard and miserable -- gay isn't good -- and maybe even God isn't good!

Bainton reminds us that, for Luther, "the question forever recurred whether God would ... be gracious." When haunted by doubt that goes to the very core of life experience, where shall one turn? According to Bainton, "Luther would say that one never knows where, but always somewhere. To inquire after the starting point of Luther's theology is futile. It begins where it can." [16] His was no merely intellectual system. It was one of existential pain; of very personal search. Somebody once recorded Luther's saying at his supper

table: "We ought to abandon and resist anxious thoughts, by all means possible." [17]

And so it is with us. We, too, must "begin somewhere," *anywhere* we can, using "all means possible" to deal effectively with such draining doubt and anxiety. We owe that to ourselves, to each other and to God. That's why, at least in part, so many of us come back year after year to these summer meetings. To begin "somewhere" is to begin *where we find ourselves*, where we are, with all of our doubts, depressions, and anxieties. "All means possible," though, do not include the ineffective and even counter-productive means of repression and denial, -- approaches so many of us have taken at times.

Of some 6,000 studies of "anxiety" since 1950, psychologist Rollo May says that most really are not of anxiety at all but of stress. [18] We can, of course, experience stress without anxiety. Anxiety is not just stress but something more profound. According to May, and I agree with him here, anxiety is our awareness of *death* and all that that means to us. It is a subjective state of conflict with ourselves and death. People try to flee from such awareness. "We [try to] go on," as Luther put it, "like the blind, who see as little at midday as in the pitch-dark night." [19] Or, without success in flight, we stay and try to turn things around in such a way that old meanings no longer have value, and, as Luther said, we try to "flatter ourselves with ... very frivolous and vain ideas." [20] But that can be an unsuccessful endeavor if we really never manage to change our minds at all, if we manage to change only the rhetoric and to raise the volume or pitch of our protest.

It was this anxious awareness of death and its consequences that was Luther's *Anfechtung*, as it is, I suspect, ours. Luther saw "death before us, beside us, and behind us." [21] What was so terrible about it all was that he feared "God's wrath and judgment, which," he thought, "follow

upon death and are eternal." He spoke of "the misery of knowing that we are sinners, of awaiting the judgment of God and of ever being exposed to death, which we can neither ward off nor escape. ... My heart," he confessed, "is troubled and sorrowful and does not know which way to turn. ... I worry about God's wrath, punishment, and eternal damnation." [22] Luther knew well that his death would not be the same as that of an innocent dumb animal but that his death, frankly, was the wage of his sin. "Sin kills," he said. [23] One of the most commonly circulated woodcuts of Luther's early years was that of "Christ the Judge," sitting on a rainbow. A lilly was in his one ear (symbolizing the saved) and a sword was in his other ear (symbolizing the damned). Luther testified that he "was utterly terror-stricken at the sight of Christ the Judge." [24]

And in moments of frankness, we, too, share the distress that Luther felt. And just as the medievalists saw depression as a terrible sin, we have been conditioned to see homosexuality as a terrible sin. John Todd tells us in his life of Luther that "Despair was the one unforgivable final sin which might damn a person." To despair of a good outcome from God was blasphemy. Yet Luther seemed unable not to despair. It seemed to him his very nature in a way, I suppose, as our homosexuality seems to us. And what happens to us as we fixate on our "unforgivable" homosexuality happened to Luther as he, too, he says, "look[ed] at [his doubt] too intently and brood[ed] over it too deeply." He explained that "The timidity of our conscience, which feels ashamed before God and punishes itself terribly, helps to bring this about." [26] And just when one thinks she is in the clear over the rightness or the wrongness of something, she is reminded of the fact that the Devil can deceive "as an angel of light" and she could be damned all the same. For example, when Luther tried to convince his father of the rightness of his decision to enter the monastery, old

Hans' disapproving retort about his son's so-called "calling" was to scold: Are you sure it wasn't the Devil who put this vision into your head! His father argued paternalistically that Martin's "vision" was in direct opposition to the clear word of Scripture that commands the honoring of father and mother and *their* wishes. This thought was not at all lost on Luther. It haunted him for a long time afterward. How could he be so sure he wasn't being duped by the Devil to go contrary to what did indeed seem so plainly to be the teaching of the Holy Bible? [27] We, too, are told that we're being duped into believing what is contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible on homosexuality. In the monastery, Luther's doubts persisted. Recalling those earlier years, Luther wrote: "Even when I was most devout, I approached the altar a doubter; a doubter I returned. After I had said my penance, I still doubted. If I did not say it, I doubted again; for we were dominated by the false notion that we could not pray and would not be heard unless we were altogether pure and without sin." [28] Such, too, is what 20th century fundamentalists have taught us about homosexuality in a Christian's life.

During his month in Rome in 1510, Luther climbed the famous Scala Santa which were supposed to have been transported from Pilate's judgment hall in Jerusalem. Luther thereby tried to gain the indulgence attached to this performance. Afterward, he said: "Who knows whether it is so?" As historian Philip Schaff comments, "at the very height of his mediaeval devotion [Luther] doubted its efficacy in giving peace to the troubled conscience." [29] As Bainton assesses Luther's experience in Rome, this incident of doubt on these "holy" stairs "was the truly disconcerting doubt." Says Bainton: "The priests might be guilty of levity and the popes of lechery [as the young monk discovered to his horror] -- all this would not matter so long as the Church had valid means of grace." But the question was: "Who knows

whether it is so?" [30] This was, of course, a few years before his experience of the impact of his insight from Romans 1:17.

If we are to know what sort of life Luther went through and if we hope to learn from him we cannot simply recite romanticized biographical facts any more than we could know our own experience by reciting our résumés. As Bainton puts it, "The great outward crises of his life which bedazzle the eyes of dramatic biographers were to Luther himself trivial in comparison with the inner upheavals of his questing after God." [31] And beyond biographical statistics we need to know yet more than what Goethe (writing at the time of the 300th anniversary of the posting of Luther's 95 Theses) said was all that was worth knowing about the Reformer: his character. Goethe thought that "Everything else is confused rubbish, with which we are still daily burdened." [32] Without much that has been taken as "rubbish," though, we will not have the touchstone which produced Luther's character, gave meaning to his life -- including the doubts -- and gave him hope for the life to come.

So it is with gay people who would try to know God. What observers see are some of the manifestations of the organized gay movement or public behavior and rhetoric. But what is more profoundly going on are the internal struggles of gay Christians. The outward "practice" that so absorbs the prurient attention of conservative complainners bent upon denunciation is not what gay Christians are all about. Our critics seem to believe that if only we don't "practice" homosexuality -- by which they mean: no genital activity -- we no longer are struggling internally, existentially, with homosexual desires consistent with homosexual orientation, or with doubts that have us surrounded. But we dare not stop short of a thoroughly investigated revision of our theological priorities and a faith that acts in terms of real needs if we are to do as Luther did in the

midst of his own terrible doubts and anxieties.

Luther and his contemporaries had to face death more frequently than we can imagine, and it would have been natural to view that encircling death as divine punishment for sins. When, for example, the Black Plague struck at Wittenberg in 1527, it seemed to that population at risk what AIDS seems to urban gay men today. And it, too, struck "quite cruelly and suddenly," as Luther reported, even if far more extensively than is the case with AIDS. [33] For almost 200 years it had been striking cyclically, sometimes killing up to 45 percent or more of the population. As such it was a far more epidemic "curse" than AIDS is. [34] This is not to say that it carried the same awful taboo as AIDS does, for the Plague did not strike so specifically at the disenfranchized and despised minority but was indiscriminate. It was not so easily linked to "sins" and "sinners" hated by the majority. The Plague hit at Luther too. He wrote: "For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell ... All my limbs shook. Christ was wholly lost. I was convulsed with despair and blasphemy against God." [35] We should not fail to note that this was in the summer of 1527, several years after his seemingly glorious "Here I stand!" reply in the Bishop's palace at Worms and his powerful *Freedom of the Christian* tract. Keep in mind that there was a pervasive ignorance about the nature of disease in those days and it was very easy therefore to interpret disease as a direct curse from God. [36] It's in this historical context that we have to understand that in 1527, it was as easy for Luther to think of the Black Plague as God's punishment as it is for some today -- even with all of our medical sophistication and the assumptions of secularism -- to think of AIDS as God's punishment. Luther was, after all, one with all of the other citizens of Wittenberg -- all superstitious. Mingled with their Christianity was the Old German paganism that saw in their Harz Mountains, Thuringian forest and fields around

their village the elves, sprites, gnomes, demons and fairies that could so influence their lives. "Luther himself was never emancipated from such beliefs" of his day. [37] And so, when the Black Plague struck Wittenberg, covering "little Hans" with those ugly black spots and his son nearly died, and his wife Katie was ill and pregnant again, there were dark days indeed. Luther wrote: "There are battles without and terrors within, and really grim ones; Christ is punishing us." [38] He personalized: "I am suffering God's anger because I have sinned against him. Pope and Emperor, sovereigns and bishops, and the whole world hate and attack me; and even this is not enough, even my brothers torment me." All of this was seen to be "God's rod" crashing down upon him. He details the Plague's misery in his own family and among others, and says: "Thus we Wittenbergers are the object of hate, disgust and fear." [39] And so are the victims of AIDS today. And so are the so-called "worried well," as they frighten themselves with millions of "symptoms" that bespeak the "punishing" plague that looms overhead.

At table in 1532, Luther spoke from his own grisly experience of five years before: "I do not like to see people glad to die. I prefer to see them fear and tremble and turn pale before death but nevertheless pass through it. Great saints do not like to die. The fear of death is natural, for death is a penalty; therefore it is something sad. According to the spirit, one gladly dies; but according to the flesh, it is said, 'Another shall carry thee whither thou wouldst not.'" (John 21:18) [40] And though, in a sermon preached five years later, he seems to have gotten away from such realism expressed in confidence, the realism is still there, for he says that "All saints cry out over death" and that, if they loved God as they should they'd "very gladly" die -- but wisely adds: "Where are the people with such a will?" [41]

As late as 1533, when Luther was 50 years old, he was still experiencing awful doubt. He confided that "when the Devil comes he is the lord of the world and confronts me with strong objections." Luther continues, however, by saying that "the name of Christ often helped me when nobody else could." [42] As John Todd states, "Luther was often still obsessed with thoughts of what had flowed from his actions -- was it really all right?" [43] Luther could imagine that heavy millstone from the biblical warning that would be tied around his own neck one day for having led others in the wrong direction, indeed into Hell itself. (Luke 17:2)

Now if Luther was undergoing such doubt as late as this, what in the world was he experiencing more than a decade earlier when he was having to stand before the established powers of The Holy Roman Empire in the Bishop's palace at Worms? And what was he going through when, even earlier (in 1517), he posted his rather modest 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg? His "whole life was a struggle against [depressions], a fight for faith," as Bainton reminds us. [44] This fact is missed by over-confident evangelical dogmatists today. An example of this is a recent *Christianity Today* "Eutyclus" column too cutely entitled "Here I Stand, I Think." The columnist foolishly faults any Christian who "oozes around" I John 4:8 and he pompously mocks any poor soul who pleads "feel with me, relate to me" instead of loudly yelling what is ignorantly believed to have been Luther's ironclad oath, "Here I stand!" [45] (It doesn't seem to phase such columnists that the oath itself may well have been a fabrication of later date, read romantically back into the events of Worms.)

Back there in 1521, where he seems to have been so wonderfully confident, here is what he heard his adversary say to him in what were, no doubt, mocking tones that triggered all of his own deep-seated self-doubt. Johann Eck, Chancellor of Trier, add-

ressed him thus: "Do not, I entreat you, Martin, do not claim for yourself that you are the one and only man who has knowledge of the Bible, who has true understanding. ... Do not place your judgment ahead of so many distinguished men ... as wiser than others." [46] That hurt! But *openly*, hear what Luther's response was. His defense made just enough sense to him that he had to stick with it, but it also didn't do away with all of the seeming reasonableness in Eck's challenge -- no matter what he might have thought about Eck personally. Luther, no doubt, doubted himself even more than did Eck, for Eck could deal only with what he heard Luther say out loud and not with what Luther heard himself think nor with what Luther felt in the pit of his churning stomach. *Openly*, however, Luther replied: "I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves." [47] And that, of course, was very true. (And today we have five more centuries of such experiences with which to bolster our own sagging confidence against the established powers of the ecclesiastical authorities.) Luther concluded quite biblically with these stirring words which have inspired us all: "I cannot and I will not retract anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience," and it was noted that he added in seeming triumph: "*Hier steke ich: Ich kann nicht anders: Gott helfe mir! Amen.*" While boldly asserting "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise," he nonetheless added a word of prayer: "May God help me! Amen."

Well, yes, that's what we've heard he said *publicly* -- and it's depressingly inspiring. But he *was indeed* going against conscience, at least in part. For what he wrestled with *in private* sounds different. He confessed: "I've found it very difficult to justify my conscience: I one man alone, have dared to come forward against the Pope, brand him as the Antichrist, the bishops as his apostles and the universities as his brothels. How much

did my heart quail ... Are you the only wise man? Can it be that all the others are in error? ... What if you are mistaken?" Indeed, "Here I stand, *I think*" is *not* different from what he *thought*, even if it is different from what he said openly.

Does that sound like a familiar thought that gnaws through your own brain about where you stand on homosexuality? Does that tie your belly in knots? Luther went on: "When [we] look about in the wide world and see that countless people despise, slander, and persecute our teaching -- and that they are not insignificant, unimportant folk but mostly those of the highest intellect, the most learned, and the most powerful, and those, too, who want to be the most pious and the holiest -- this is a severe blow to the heart with a weak faith. Then it begins to think: Is it possible for such people to be entirely wrong; and is everything they do and say, decide and conclude, false and confounded?" [48] "I myself," he said, "have often choked on ... [the] thought: We are such a tiny and poor little flock, despised and condemned by everything high and great on earth. Do we have a right to defy the whole world, to boast that only our cause is right?" [49] "I see my neighbor and the whole city, yes, the whole world, living differently." [50]

And we gay Christians today, we, too, look all around us and we see everyone living so differently, believing so differently. We're attacked by the churches on the right and by gay pride voices and other secularists on the left. Our own families and friends attack us -- as did Luther's family and friends. Even Luther's shy friend Spalatin once sent word to Luther saying that maybe his doctrine was, after all, one of the causes in the breakdown of morality round about! [51] That too, sounds familiar to us, doesn't it? His enemies had been saying that and now his closest friends were wondering out loud if it might not be true. Luther complained: "Every evil that happens, happens because of us, they say." [52] It

sounds so familiar to us, doesn't it? We can "feel with" Luther, "relate" to him, can't we?

Luther wondered whether or not his "proposal is perhaps too bold, and an unheard-of-thing, especially for those who are concerned that they would lose their job and means of livelihood."

[53] We wonder that about some timid ecclesiastical employees today. Here again we see the recurring influence of totalitarian church power structures and Christians who can out-class secularists when it comes to organizational power plays. [54] Organizational might made right. Only Rome could interpret the Bible; "drunken Germans" weren't allowed to do it. [55] Today, only the self-appointed rulers of evangelicalism are supposed to be heard interpreting the Bible -- or so they tell us -- on anything including homosexuality. "Drunken gay Christians" are not supposed to know how to "rightly divide" the Bible on anything, especially homosexuality. Even Staupitz, his dear old confessor and mentor, was being pressured by Cardinal Lang, in a "totalitarian style" (as Todd describes it) to stay with the orthodox line against Luther. Staupitz had some significant sympathy for what Luther was saying, but he was forced to acknowledge that Luther was heretical nonetheless. In an anguished letter to Staupitz, Luther wrote: "You are too yielding, I am too stiff-necked ... but, Dear Father, ... your submission [to the Pope] has saddened me not a little." [56]

And, of course, to Luther, there were not merely the human accusers, friends as well as foes, with whom he had to contend. There was also and always the great accuser himself: Satan, the supreme slanderer. At table, Luther confided that "The Devil plagues and torments us in the place where we are most tender and weak." [57] Isn't that what the devil always does? Luther told his table companions that the devil repeatedly accused him, saying: "You are preaching the Gospel; but who commanded you to do so? Who has

called you? And, in addition, you are preaching it in a form in which no man has preached it. ... What if God is displeased and you are guilty of misleading all the souls? [58] Such accusations were, of course, no more based in good church history than are the accusations of "new ideas" hurled at us, but what is historical accuracy to the "father of lies?" Our critics tell us that what we are saying about homosexuality and Christian life is not what the churches have said from the beginning and down through all of church history. But there is documented evidence to the contrary. Even so, what our conservative critics say carries weight with those of us who are not familiar with the variety of approaches to homosexuality which have obtained in history. Luther knew, too, that at his best he was in solidarity with Paul and Augustine and other Fathers but that did not keep him, at his weakest, from dreading that he may be completely out of step with the will of God.

Luther once admitted to Justus Jonus, the theological dean at Wittenberg and one of his closest friends: "I don't think that Paul believed as firmly as he talks. I cannot believe as firmly, either, as I can talk and write about it." [59] Another man at Wittenberg who seems to have suffered the same sorts of doubts as Luther and Jonus was John Schlaginhauffen. Luther spent much time and effort trying to reassure him that God was not angry with him. He quoted the Bible to him. He even mocked Satan and joked with him in a usually vain effort to cheer him up. Luther would say: "When the devil comes at night to worry me, this is what I say to him: 'Devil, I have to sleep now.' ... If he keeps on nagging me and trots out my sins, then I answer: 'Sweet devil, I know the whole list. Also write on it that I have shit in my breeches. Then hang that around your neck and wipe your mouth on it.'" [60] At other times, said Luther, he would fart at the devil to make him go away. But finally, late one night, the great Reformer confessed to his friend

Schlaginhauffen: "I am displeased with myself that, in the bottom of my heart, I do not really believe our sins are forgiven." Haile recounts that Luther then "went ahead to describe his worries in a detail which he knew would strike a responsive chord in pensive Schlaginhauffen." [61] How different from the inflated prattle of so many cocksure preachers today!

What it is that is most important to grasp about all of this doubt which we share with Luther is well said by Lewis Smedes of Fuller Seminary. He puts it in terms of what he calls "the frolicking logic of grace." [62] We must see that such pained doubt is itself evidence of the desire to be faithful and therefore it is evidence of faith itself, already beginning to sprout. As Luther himself put it: "Only when we are genuinely entrapped does God say, 'Now I can help you.'" [63] "No wonder," writes Marty, that Luther "had to argue that 'he who doesn't think he believes, but is in despair, has the greatest faith.'" [64] This basic fact of faith, will lead, as we'll see, to the better resolution of both Luther's doubt and our own.

DOUBT IS A PERSONAL BATTLE.

I think that James Atkinson is not entirely correct when, after reflecting on the fact that "Few realize the long years of anguish [Luther] paid for his freedom," he avers: "we simply live on his achievement." [65] But we should know we are no different from Luther in our susceptibility to doubt as well as in our battles to find a way out. We cannot succeed by simply "liv[ing] on his achievement." To try to do so is to miss the whole point and fail to learn a thing from the fact that Luther struggled. While appreciating his intention, we may also challenge Edward Donnelly's saying that "We would not wish on anyone Luther's dark nights of the soul." [66] For how else are we to learn Luther's solution? Donnelly wisely objects

to "Pastors [who today] offer quick, glib remedies for soul-sickness -- the slogans of positive thinking, the latest 'how-to' manual, [or] a few slashes with the nouthetic razor" of Jay Adams or one of his simple cohorts. [67] Donnelly notes that Luther's own struggles "should encourage those of us who know the meaning of *Anfechtung*" to be "gentle, sensitive and patient" with our people. As Marty says, we "misportray or mishear the Luther message [if we] ... try to grasp his solution without having his problem." [68] Gay Christians are blessed with Luther's problem. Thus, we're in a very good place from which to learn his solution.

Now of course it is true that Luther did support others by his example -- as with dear Schlaginhauffen, for instance -- even as he "had for himself" what Bainton calls "a perpetual battle for faith." [69] As is apparent in these repeated bouts with depression and the defensive hostilities against the "different" and opposing ones around him, however, the Reformer never did completely integrate into his own life experience what he discovered and so effectively shared about the grace of God. Nobody does. Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, too, is only partly correct when, with reference to both Luther and Gandhi, he observes that each "solved for his period in history and for his own people what he could not resolve in his private life," and Erikson says that this is what "makes a leader." [70] Perhaps it is what makes a leader. But it is not the case that Luther "undergirded others with faith," as even Bainton goes on to put it, much less that he "solved [existential problems of faith] for his own people," as Erikson puts it. If Luther's own experience can model anything it is that his battle was *personal* and that so must ours be *personal*. Bainton correctly asserts: "The content of the depressions was always the same, the loss of faith that God is good and that he is good to *me*." [71] It was this very personal matter that mattered most to Luther as

it does to us. Just as we do, Luther knew very well he had his own soul at stake in his "new" and "heretical" position against the organized powers of the church. He knew what personal agenda had brought him to despair and to what seemed a questionable "re-making" of theology in his own image. And so it was not at all easy to stand there alone. It is not easier for us. Have we created a "gay theology" in our own misguided image in order to remedy our own inability or unwillingness to submit to the powers that be? Is that what we are doing? We, too, know what personal agenda is at stake in our minority position against the majority. Of course we take this position. What position would one expect homosexuals to take? Wouldn't it be expected that a homosexual Christian would try to make the two identities fit -- whether or not they really do fit? Like Luther before us, we wonder: Are we right? What if we're wrong? At times it's almost too much to bear.

As with us and our own theological heritage and present social milieu, so too with Luther, neither he nor we were prepared for what was to be encountered. Atkinson, though, considers that "it was [Luther's] glory that he steadfastly refused to accept a theology of salvation which did not fit the facts of his own historical experience. It was precisely because he held on to his doubts long enough, and persisted to set the right sort of questions to orthodoxy long enough, that God broke through his questions with answers." [72] Luther did not go for the pat answer, the quick fix that satisfied niceties of theoretical thought but that was far from satisfying the real needs of his human experience. The establishment's "Shut up and take what we dish out!" was no good for him. And what was no good for him was no good for others. He had no patience for scholasticism, "sophistry" as he called it. Haile says Luther saw it as "speculation which had only academic reference and was not a response to the disturbed souls

who were, in Luther's view, the only justification for theology." [73]

Luther knew that God has not created us to be "wood and stone" but has given us "five senses and a heart of flesh" so that we experience feelings. [74] He did not try simply to cover up his feelings and put on a happy face. He knew what his feelings were. But significantly, he did not dare to rest with his feelings. He knew well that for all our feelings, "We are not to judge by feeling." [75] Luther, here, was a good "cognitive psychologist." He knew that what he *felt* came from what he *thought*. Thoughts produce feelings. We *interpret*. Our interpretation of our experience determines what our feelings will be. But Luther learned not to try to cope with such severe doubt and anxiety by simply trying to replace old thoughts with new ones. That works in cases of everyday problems, but such substitution would not do in profoundly *spiritual* warfare. Instead of just changing his mind, he needed his mind "*renewed*" (Romans 12:2) by the Word of God. [76]

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE BATTLE.

Before looking further into Luther's resolution of his problem, I'd like to detour somewhat to say a few words about the political context for the experience of both the problem and solution of doubt.

If we are waiting around for comfort from the evangelical establishment, as an institution, we will wait in vain. If we are looking for it to come round and for it to seriously debate and discuss with us, much less agree with us or condone us, we will wait, as Luther himself did, until we die.

Without the same establishment vested interest at stake, Pope John Paul II can now afford to say a few nice words, in what Marty terms a "less than grudging embrace" for Luther on his 500th birthday. [77] Popes Leo X, Adrian VI, Clement VIII, and

Paul III could not, of course, afford to do even that during Luther's lifetime and at least forty other popes could not afford to do so during the time since Luther's death. But Rome has never lifted the excommunication it imposed on Luther and, as Merle Severy reports in his excellent commemorative piece for the *National Geographic*: "I pursued the matter in the Vatican itself. Politely but firmly officials parried my question. Clearly, the time still is not ripe." [78] Moreover, John Paul II is still defending the indulgence Luther attacked. As the Pope sees it: "It may become clear that indulgences, which were at the origin of Christianity's division and which will this year [1983] once again cross Luther's path, are intended simply as a concrete response to that fundamental truth of faith explained by the Council of Trent in saying, 'All Christian life is a continuous practice of penance.'" [79] Though the Vatican can now seek to apologize to Galileo, Joan of Arc, and others wrongly condemned by ecclesiastical courts centuries ago and though after almost a thousand years Rome welcomed back millions of Eastern Orthodox excommunicants, there is still a problem with Luther. But it is no different in the evangelical world. Even in this Quincentenary year, I have searched in vain for Luther books in fundamentalist book stores. Sometimes the prophets who were stoned are *not* honored with memorials by the descendents of the stone-throwers (Luke 11:47) and sometimes even the descendents of the supporters fail to remember. [80]

Naturally, in ecclesiastical controversies, as in any other institutional dispute, there are political and economic issues at stake -- whatever ideological or "biblical" issues there may be as well. The indulgences controversy which in a sense started the wider dispute was, of course, an economic and political issue as it surfaced much more than it was an ideological one,

though then as now, an ideological rationalization can be easily fabricated.

In October 1517, Thomas Cajetan had just become a cardinal and Luther posted his 95 Theses. It was Cajetan who was assigned the job of getting Luther to recant at the Diet of Augsburg the following October. As Todd says, Cajetan was coming as a representative of an "organization ... [so] there was no way he could actually discuss with Luther." There was much more going on than at first meets the eye. The church's opposition to Luther was a complicated, self-serving reaction. Todd states: "To try to tackle Indulgences was to start to tamper with the whole ecclesiastical economic structure, held together by financial, political and psychological ties." [81] When the 95 Theses began to make the rounds in scattered copies going hither and yon, those who were in charge of the organization got nervous. Luther began to see this and likened the official response to that of the Jewish leaders responding to the first century Christians and likened the timidity of his own quiet supporters to that of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem (John 7:13), to Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion (John 19:38) and to the Lord's disciples on the first Easter evening, meeting behind closed doors "because of their fear of the Jewish authorities." [82] In fact, Cajetan agreed with many of Luther's theses but, of course, "the Pope's authority should not be impugned." [83] Cajetan had been so embarrassed by Luther's excellent biblical knowledge that he began to do more studying of the Bible himself. Later, he wrote biblical commentaries that were even critical of Roman doctrine, and, naturally enough, he himself became suspect. But he remained effectively loyal to Rome and therefore was safe.

At the Imperial Ban Proceeding in Worms, Luther was naive enough to be *surprised* by the lack of any argued or reasoned debate from the authorities. In a post-mortem to his good friend, the

painter Lucas Cranach back in Wittenberg, Luther complained about the brusque way his ideas were handled by the authorities. He had gone to Worms prepared to discuss and debate deep theological issues but his meeting was postponed so that entertainments could be enjoyed by those in charge while he was kept waiting. He was so inexperienced with big power politicians that, as he wrote, "I thought his Imperial Majesty would have got together one or fifty scholars and overcome this monk in a straightforward manner. But all that happened was this: Are these your books? Yes. Do you want to renounce them or not? No. Then go away!" [84] Todd recounts Luther's earlier experience with Roman authorities: "They had not looked at his texts, and it was clear they just wanted to shut him up, and any method open to them would do." [85]

This reminds me of the censorship, black-listing, and other strategies of the present evangelical establishment vis a vis gay Christians and the issues of homosexuality. I don't need all the fingers of one hand to count the major leaders of the evangelical movement who have sustained -- much less initiated -- any real give-and-take discussion with me on homosexuality. Recently, an otherwise respected seminary president indicated that he had never bothered to read John Boswell's milestone study, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, and an evangelical editor indicated that he had not only not read Boswell's book but had seen no reason to have the book reviewed in his widely-circulated and influential periodical. Both men were responding to the challenges of their own colleagues -- after more than three years had elapsed since publication of the book. Neither man has inquired directly into Evangelicals Concerned. Both, though, in their chosen ignorance, continue to make statements, editorials, sermons, etc. condemning the practice of homosexuality,

support and even celebrate others who join in condemnation, and blacklist those who differ from them on homosexuality. On virtually no other issue do they take such a stance of total isolation of different points of view.

But their deliberate "know-nothingism" is suspect; they are defensive. They are not so sure they are right and they think they cannot afford to be wrong. They are ignorant, to boot. So far, the men at the top -- there are virtually no women there -- show no sign of even Cajetan's teachability. They are, however, as *subjective* as we are. We tend to forget that because we don't experience their subjectivity. We experience only our own. However, our allies have overheard some of our opponents at seminary conferences and at meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, for example, wonder out loud about their own doubts and of their own thoughts that, on homosexuality, maybe they are the ones that are wrong and maybe we are right. In the meantime, we are finding out that there is much more evidence for our position than we may have realized there was, and there is so much less for the other side than we suspected there was when we first began to study these issues. But it may be decades, if not centuries, before the authorities catch up with reality insofar as homosexuality is concerned and so we must not sit around waiting for official ecclesiastical validation. It will not come to our generation as it did not come to Luther's. We, too, will have to wend our own way without the assistance of the churches while watching out for their attacks.

JESUS: PROTOTYPE OF AN ANXIOUS MARTIN LUTHER.

The closer he came to Christ, the closer Luther came to resolution of his problem. But it was not to "Christ the Judge" of his earlier *Anfechtung* that he came closer. As he later recalled: "Is it not a shame that we are always afraid of Christ,

whereas there was never in heaven or earth a more loving, familiar, or milder man, in words, works, and demeanor, especially towards poor, sorrowful, and tormented consciences." [86]

As Luther read his Bible, he concluded: "The truth is that the godly have peace by faith; but it is invisible and above all understanding (sensus). ... In our flesh and feeling we have very great perturbation and restlessness." [87] It is "not as the world gives peace." He discovered this in a most moving experience of his study of the 22nd Psalm. There he was, reading the familiar Psalm once again and yet this time he heard it speak in a new way the woeful cry of Jesus on the cross: "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?" Why me? Why me? And it hit him right in the midst of all his own dread: Jesus, too, had experienced *Anfechtungen!* He thought to himself: Jesus Christ must have taken all our sins onto himself to have been *forsaken by God*. What a different picture of Christ he now had! Christ was not a condemning Judge after all! "He who sees God as angry," Luther concluded, "does not see God rightly." [88] Jesus had felt what Luther himself felt! And yet -- and yet, Jesus had prefaced his own expression of *Anfechtung* with these words: "My God, My God." His cry was also a confession of *faith!* What an explosive discovery for Luther. [89] Jesus experienced what I experience. He felt forsaken by God and yet he cried out: "My God. My God." With Jesus, we ourselves feel our fears in our senses, but by our trust in God we have hope. Jesus Christ was the prototype of the anxious Martin Luther.

You will recall that the end of that same Psalm, begun in anguish, finishes in joy when the psalmist says: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him ... all who go down to the dust will kneel before him -- those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will

serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn -- for he has done it." And when the Jewish exiles were lamenting near Zion: "God has abandoned me, the Lord has forgotten me," the prophet Isaiah conveys the oracle of God's promise: "Does a woman forget her baby at her breast, or fail to cherish the child of her womb?" (Isaiah 49:14-16) Does she not have compassion, *racham* -- literally, a "womb-love?" Of course, some people do abuse and abandon their children. So God's promise goes further: "Yet even if these mothers forget, I, your God, will never forget you. See, I have engraved you on my hands. ... your walls are always in my sight." Even when the walls are demolished, plans for a New Zion are inscribed on the hands of the One. Luther called our "Mighty Fortress." Our God is a Mother who will never abandon us. Therefore the people can joyfully, though with bewilderment and even confusion, look about them and marvel: "I was left all alone -- now where do these blessings come from?" (49:21) And, as Luther could continue into the song of Isaiah 53, he could see that the servant of Yahweh -- to Luther's own mind as to our's, Jesus the Messiah -- was the one who bore all our sufferings and sorrows, "he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed. ... If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs ... and through him what Yahweh wishes will be done." And so, in Isaiah 54, we may "Shout for joy" for we are told not to be afraid, we will not be put to shame, for our spouse is our Creator, "Lord Sabaoth his name" (as Luther lifted the line for his hymn) and Yahweh's covenant of peace, of shalom, of every kind of well-being, will never again leave us alone. Luther reflects: "It is no small comfort to know that grace has not been taken away but is truly constant and unchangeable. Never-

theless, our feeling and awareness of grace (experientia) are removed for a while, and fear and trembling set in, dejecting and disturbing the soul." [90]

Feelings are all too real. But feelings are not necessarily true. Therefore, feelings are not to be trusted as indicators of the truth. Feelings are indicators of ideas and thoughts which may or may not be true. Luther confessed: "My temptation is this, that I think I don't have a gracious God." [91] We *think* more of our sinning than we do of God's forgiving. That's wrong. It's not at all biblical. It's natural enough, though, and it is absolutely devastating. But we must remember that we're not saved through opinions. We're not saved through feelings. We're saved through trust in the trustworthy Truth, Who is Love and Lord over every feeling and every opinion. We can feel doubt; we may find peace. Addressing Christians, Luther said that God "tells you that what you feel in your heart and imagine about the wrath and punishment of an ungracious God, who could damn you to hell, is not the truth but your own erroneous, foolish notion and a deep deception of the devil. Therefore let the Word and command of God be and mean more to you than your own feeling and the judgment of all the world, lest you charge God with lying and deprive yourself of the Spirit of Truth." [92] "If conscience accuses you of sin, if it sets the wrath of God before your eyes, if it tears Christ the Redeemer, from you," Luther advised: "you must not assent but must judge against your conscience and feelings that God is not angry and that you are not damned." [93]

Luther had for so long wrestled with the question: "Who could love a God who was angry, who judged and condemned people?" He said that "This misunderstanding continued until, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I finally examined more careful-

ly the word of Habakkuk: 'The just shall live by faith.' (2:4) From this passage I concluded that life must be derived from faith." [94] He said that this "angry God" who proves his righteousness "by punishing sinners" [95] was what he had been taught to believe as orthodox "by the usage and custom of all teachers to understand [in accordance with] scholastic philosophy." [96] It was "customarily explained to mean [that] God ... condemns sinners." [97] In other words, the "orthodox" line was unbiblical. When he realized that "the righteousness of God" meant rather that "through which the merciful God justifies us by faith ... [he] felt as if [he] had been completely reborn." [98]

How was it that Luther could turn around such terrifying doubt? On what same basis might we overthrow our own anxiety? The Reformer was freed from anxiety when he challenged the traditional teaching of the church by going back to the original, to the Bible. What he saw, of course, was not entirely new. As he himself said, Augustine had taught what he had rediscovered. [99] And so had Jan Hus and Wyclif, (as, indeed, Eck had charged -- calling it "heresy") and so had Peter Waldo and the Poor Men of Lyons, the Beghards, and others -- not to mention Paul and the other biblical writers.

This all reminds us that what at first seems to be a *new* view on homosexuality in the church is, as Boswell and others have clearly shown, not so very new after all. We, too, can go back before present conventions to church fathers before the 12th century and back before that to the Bible, and thereby escape the awful spirit of our own age's fundamentalism. What Luther was not able to do through his constant effort at unbiblical self-justification, speculation, defensiveness, and just plain grunting, he was able to do by trusting God to be God as the Bible invited him to do. The same can be true for us. Luther's solution leads the way for us.

One can, I suppose, with warrant, read some reaction formation and the same old doubt into Luther's having name-called everyone in Rome "mad, foolish, raging, insane, fools, stones, hell, and evil ... [even] antichrist" upon whom "the anger of God has come." [100] But a few months later he told Spalatin that he was "feeling so free now." As Todd says, the "need to express his aggression fell away [for] in the heart of the mystery, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, understood as the Christ, the Word, in the God of Mercy, he found total assuagement for his bitterness and aggression." [101] He found this assuagement so long as he kept his eye of faith on a gracious God. Throughout his life, whenever he remembered the mercy of God his anxiety and his bitterness would subside; but, also, throughout his life, whenever he took his attention off the mercy of God his anxiety and his bitterness returned. The remedy was one that needed to be lived daily, down to the very end of his life.

The argument from numbers was now no longer convincing. He was now able to say quite candidly that "Great numbers do not make the church. ... We must look to the Word alone and judge on the basis of that." [102] "On no account must you look at the great mob, but only at the Word of God." [103] "The argument does not hold when [they] boast ...: There are many of us, and we have believed this for a long time. Therefore it must be right." [104] Luther even turned his minority standing into a legitimacy. He reasoned that it is not the so-called moral majority but what is often called the immoral minority that is shown the mercy of God. In response to the pope's official Bull condemning him, he linked himself with predecessors who also stood alone against established authority. Said Luther: "Moses was alone when the Israelites were led out of Egypt; Elijah was alone, in the time of King Ahab; Ezekiel was alone at Babylon. God has never chosen for his prophet either the high priest or any other person of exalted rank;

he has generally chosen men of a mean and low condition, -- in the instance of Amos, even a simple shepherd. The saints of every age have been called upon to rebuke the great of this world -- Kings and princes -- priests and scholars -- and to fulfil their office at the peril of their lives. Has it not been thus under the New Testament dispensation? Ambrose, in his time, stood alone; after him, Jerome was alone; later still Augustine was alone. I say not that I am a prophet; but *I say that they have the more reason to fear because I am alone and they are many.*" [105] If Luther could have but looked out into the future he would have seen another long parade of witnesses, each of whom, in his own time and place, stood just as alone as did Luther and the other queer saints who went before him. Along would come Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Barton Stone, Alexander Campbell, Charles Finney, William Booth, J. Gresham Machen, Martin Luther King, and now even a few openly gay Christians. Sadly, throughout this long stretch of time, millions of gay Christians have stood in silence, alone, under the blast of anti-gay preaching. We all must pronounce with Luther himself, that great term of faith: "Nevertheless!" Luther asserted: "Nevertheless, I have an Ally ... when I am all alone, therefore, I am still not alone." [106] He learned, as every queer saint has had to learn and as we must now learn, that truth is not established by counting noses but noses count because Truth is already established in the compassionate Person of Jesus.

THE WORD, FAITH, AND THE PROMISE OF GOD'S MERCY.

The Word and Faith and the Promise of God's Mercy -- these were Luther's answers to doubt and a tormented conscience. But before he was able to grasp this, or rather to be grasped by this [107] he had to go through his own personal

hell. "Without [*Anfechtungen*]," Luther testified, nobody "can understand Scripture, faith, the fear or the love of God. He [or she] does not know the meaning of hope who was never subject to temptations." [108] As he knew Augustine had known before him, the joy of God's mercy is sweeter by reason of the anguish that comes before it. [109] Luther said he would not wish "to be without feeling of my sins, or to think I need no remission of them; for if that were the case, all the treasure of Christ were lost on me, seeing he says himself: 'He came not for the sake of the just, but to call sinners to repentance.'" [110] "Our trust in God," said Luther, "is not achieved by speculation; it must be learned in the school of temptation and prayer." [111] This realization prompted even his sense of humor when he reflected on Eck, his most clever opponent. Luther entertained his friends by saying: "My enemies have made me learned. I cannot thank Eck enough for what he has taught me; and the pope cannot punish him enough for having misguided the ship." [112]

It was in the Word that Luther saw that there is One of whom Isaiah wrote who said: "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands." (65:1f) Is there, then, thought Luther, reasonable doubt that such an One holds out hands to those who are seeking, who do want to be faithful, who do know themselves to be needy sinners? He discovered what had been happening with him when he found that Scripture says that God "is at our side even before we cry." (Isaiah 65:24) [113] Luther's "Here I stand" was overwhelmed by his Lord and Savior's "Here am I."

Luther took note, as we might do today, that his foes as well as his friends called themselves Christians and all say they follow the Bible. Even the devil appealed to Scripture. The devil would

rebut him with jibes: "Tell me, my friend, where do you find that in the Bible? ... where did God teach or command it?" [114] We hear that today. That such controversy is not new, he knew. "It has been going on from the very beginning and at all times." He asked "how one is properly to distinguish those who teach aright from those who teach falsely." He answered: "You must look where the doctrine of the Gospel about faith in Christ prevails without any addition, together with its fruits and truly good works, done in accordance with the same Word." [115] *The Gospel -- without any addition!* The establishment is constantly devising additions that set its self-righteousness against God's grace. Such endeavor is the heart and soul of every religion, but it is utterly foreign to the Gospel.

This applies today to our insisting that believers see their way clear to affirm homosexuality as well as to their insisting that believers see their way clear to speak against homosexuality. Both demands are additions to the Gospel. Luther cautioned that "A Christian should learn not to let anyone easily create an evil conscience in him [or her]; but if he [or she] believes in Christ, would gladly be pious, fights against sin to the best of his [or her] ability, yet goes wrong, failing and faltering at times, then he [or she] should not let this failing spoil [a] good conscience." He advised that we should "say: Let this error and this failing pass away with my other imperfections and sins, which I must include [when I say]: I believe in the forgiveness of sins and [when I pray]: Forgive us our trespasses." [116]

It was Christ who was, for Luther, the Word incarnate. It was Christ who was the center of the written Word. "Christ is the Word Incarnate, which was true God from the beginning. This Word has been revealed to us," he told his tablemates. [117] The Truth is a Person; not a dogma, not a

matter of mere intellectual correctness. Christ is the Truth that shall make us free (John 8:32). Luther concluded, therefore: "Let the Word do the work." [118]

And Luther saw that just as the struggle with doubt was a personal matter, so too was the Word a personal matter. Both problem and resolution are personal. The Word was addressed to him, personally, and he wanted every woman and every man to know that it was addressed to each of them personally. On Acts 15, he said: "Everyone must take care to be certain and sure of the true doctrine by himself [or herself] and must not found certainty on what other people have determined and concluded." [119] Here Luther was counting on God to reveal God's Word. "The inseparable associate of Scripture," for Luther, "is the Holy Spirit, who in various ways moves and lifts up the hearts ... through the Word." [120] Nobody can believe for somebody else. On the Bible commentaries, of which he himself wrote many, Luther admonished that "it is better to see with your own eyes than with foreign eyes." [121] Faith through the Word was always a personal matter of relationship with the Word incarnate. He said that this is "what the Apostle means when he says a [person] is justified by faith. It is to believe that this is spoken, not only about the elect but rather about yourself, and it is to be appropriated by you that Christ died for your sins and gave satisfaction for them." (Romans 8:16) [122] Addressing God, Luther prayed: "What is it to me that you have done great wonders to Noah, and enabled Peter to walk on the sea, and commanded the leper to show himself to the priest? ... You, Lord, have redeemed me through the blood of your Son, Jesus Christ." [123] The Word was such a relational event -- so very personal -- for Luther, that he at least intended, if he did not actually always practice, a refusal to speculate on God's relationship through the Word to other people. He said: "How

God deals with the whole world I will leave in [God's] care. I will cling to [the] Word and follow it regardless of whether I see the whole world going differently." Luther remembered Jesus' mother and said: "So Mary, too, must have thought: I shall let God worry about what God is to do with others. I will abide by the Word that I hear, telling me what God plans to do with me. So we, too," Luther reasoned, "must argue [while others are] smugly despising and mocking us; and [even] I might say: Do you imagine that only you are right against all these?" [124]

Throughout his life-long spiritual struggles, Luther learned to do what biblical characters did throughout biblical history: to dispute with God. He acknowledged that "I dispute much with God with great impatience and I hold God to his promises." [125] It is known that Luther was profoundly impressed and comforted by the story of the Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to cure her daughter. She was, perhaps, Luther's favorite Bible character. Jesus asked this Gentile -- one whom the Jews viewed as a dog -- whether it would be right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs. She replied that even dogs get the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Jesus remarked about her great faith and he granted her request. Her daughter was healed. (Matthew 15:21ff) "All Christ's answers sounded like no, but he did not mean no. ... He had not said that she was a dog. He had not said no. Yet all his answers were more like no than yes," observed Luther. Nevertheless, as Luther interpreted the story, "this shows how our heart feels in despondency. It sees nothing but a plain no. Therefore it must turn to the deep hidden yes under the no and hold with a firm faith to God's word." [126] Luther imitated that woman's counting on God's grace and its overwhelming Yes to every apparent No which we might think we hear at first. It is for us to imitate both that woman and Luther when what seems to us to be God's clear No can

be seen through eyes of faith and hope to be rather God's amazing and wonderful Yes.

And Luther knew that reading the Law apart from the Gospel could be a hopelessly terrifying experience. So he took his own advice: "When the Law would attack me and frighten my heart, it is time to grant the good Law a holiday." [127] He added elsewhere: "When your conscience is terrified by the Law and wrestles with the judgment of God, consult neither your reason nor the Law, but rest upon grace alone and upon the Word of consolation. Then act only as if you had never heard anything whatever about the Law of God." [128] In 1523 Luther preached a sermon on Luke 15 in which he reminds us who are murmured against not to rest with Moses but with Him of whom the Pharisees murmured, "This man receiveth sinners." The leaders of the moral mob of Jesus' day were as indignant over what they interpreted as his very queer behavior as were their self-righteous descendants with Luther, and their descendants with us. Luther was remembering that although "Jesus was, in a sense, a Pharisee," as Bainton puts it, and "dined three times with a Pharisee and cordially received a 'ruler of the Pharisees,'" he nonetheless did not separate himself from the ostracized and condemned of his day (as Pharisees did) but rather welcomed solidarity with the outcasts. [129] Jesus was known for the "bad company" he kept, taking up the cause of a prostitute and other outsiders against Israel's moral majority. (John 8:1ff) Jesus went contrary to convention, conversing in public with strange women and taking such women with him throughout his travels as important co-workers and supporters (John 4:7ff; Luke 8:1ff and 10:38ff) though one would hardly know of this from 20th century Sunday School literature in fundamentalist churches. What queer behavior for Jesus' day! Identifying with Jesus, Luther, too, "was attacked and misrepresented ... everywhere they were assiduously inculcating among

the people that I was an obstinate heretic, an enemy of all religion and a dangerous man to be left at large ... they would like to place me in the light of a beast, fit only to be hunted down." [130] Lumping us, too, with beasts -- claiming we're advocating bestiality and sex with six-year-olds and discarding of all Christian moral standards and discipline -- our enemies, too, lie about us in the name of morality just as earlier generations of the self-righteous misrepresented Luther and, before him, Jesus. The prideful efforts in Rome's presenting itself as morally superior to Luther and others can be seen today in the religious establishment's disdain for the testimonies of all gay Christians. Totalitarian religious authorities seem ever to think that their every pronouncement against the nonconformist must be greeted by the victim with gratitude and quick submission. Luther put it bluntly: "We know pretty well that the Romans do not consider us Germans to be human beings, but empty shells and shadows ... they think that when a cardinal farts, the Germans believe a new article of faith is born." [131]

The Reformer knew that what promises the Bible presented about God's grace were centered in Jesus Christ. If we were to read the Bible rightly, Luther contended, we would "carefully see to it that [we] ... lead it to the fountain, that is, to the Cross of Christ. ... [We are] nothing and can do nothing and thus [we] learn to despair of [ourselves] and hope in Christ." [132] To Luther, "it would be the greatest disgrace and blasphemy of the name of Christ if we did not concede to Christ's blood the glory that it washes away our sins, or if we did not believe that this blood sanctifies us." [133] There was nothing at all cheap about the grace that Luther knew. He said: "Woe to those who despair and erroneously consider deficient a payment so great [as Christ's death]; but wretched also are those who presump-

tiously sin in reliance on this payment!" [134] Luther believed what Ernst Käsemann, in our own day, has put in these words: "The gospel is ... the final word beyond which there is no more to be said or experienced." [135] As Käsemann has written: "Christ is ... the decisive content" of that gospel. [136]

Is our sin more profound than God's grace in Jesus Christ? If it were, God's grace could never change a thing. But the grace of God changes everything. It's a whole new world now that the Kingdom of God has been ushered in by Jesus Christ. God makes all things new and our continuing to sin does not cancel the mercy and love of God; it is this mercy and love of God that cancels our sin. Luther reasoned that the One who instructed disciples to forgive 70 times 7 will not do any less. In Luther's words, "To grant pardon and mercy is the nature of God ... for God 'will have all persons to be saved.'" (I Timothy 2:4) [137] Luther was so comforted when he realized that it was "The great, unending love God bears us that moves God to die for us." [138] This, Luther discovered, is the love that casts out all anxiety. This is the realization that prompted him to pen these lines of one of his hymns:

Thus spoke the Son, "Hold thou to Me,
From now on thou wilt make it.
I gave my very life for thee
And for thee I will stake it.
For I am thine and thou art mine,
And where I am our lives entwine,
The Old Fiend cannot shake it." [139]

Having suffered over sexual temptations, especially during the early hot and humid weeks of his "Patmos" at the Wartburg Castle, by the first of August, Luther was writing to his closest companion, Melancthon, saying that he realized again that "God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners." In this he was echoing Jesus' saying that he had come to call sinners to repent-

ence and not the "righteous." (Luke 5:31f) So Luther said to Melancthon: "Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world. As long as we are here, we cannot avoid sin. ... [But] No sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day. ... Pray boldly -- you [Philip Melancthon] too are a mighty sinner." [140] Of course we, too, are just as mighty sinners. But our God, too, is a mighty savior. *We are all more profoundly sinful than homosexuality could possibly make us; and we can all be more profoundly saved than heterosexuality or celibacy could possibly make us!* As Luther prayed, so we may also pray: "My Lord, it does not trouble me to know who I am. Though I am wicked and sinful I know it does not make you so. You are righteous and gracious. The more wicked and sinful I am, the less I can rely on anything else, the more fervently will I implore you. This is no time to argue whether I am elected or not. ... the woman of Canaan was a heathen and was not among the chosen. As she did not let this hinder her from praying, I too will pray. I need help. ... Where else could I look and find it but with you?" [141]

Even though Luther did rest his case with God's revelation, he readily acknowledged that the Bible doesn't tell us everything we may want to know. So what? God keeps his privacy as well as granting his disclosures; God is hidden as well as revealed, *Deus absconditus* as well as Jesus of Nazareth. [142] For Luther, the Bible does contain that "which God wants us to know." Concerning "other matters, which are not revealed in the Word," Luther was content to "let us disregard" as speculative. [143] But "rather let us discuss matters that are not uncertain and unsettled, matters which have been enjoined upon us by the divine Word. Let us not be concerned with what God does with others ... but let us commit them

to the divine goodness." [144] There is something in all of us that wants to know more about God and things than we can know. At the same time, perhaps we want to know less about God and things than we can know. The Bible is very clear about matters which seem to matter very little to many church leaders while the Bible is very unclear about matters which seem to matter most to so many of them. Luther knew full well that there were those in his day -- just as we know there are those in our day -- who fabricate pronouncements where the Bible is silent, who never tire of telling us about everything "God" has told them. He chastized: "Friend, do not consider it a trifle to forbid what God does not forbid, to destroy the Christian liberty that cost Christ his blood, to burden consciences with sin where there is no sin." [145] He said, too: "Where there are no plain and sure testimonies of Scripture, impertinent and presumptuous men think they are at liberty to imagine and invent whatever they please." [146] We are faced with the same sort of presumptuous preachers today. On both right and left they make up their own stories about a homosexuality of which the Bible says nothing, reading it into Paul's condemnations of prostitution or reading it into the friendship between David and Jonathan.

LUTHER WAS A QUEER SAINT, AND SO ARE WE ALL.

In his day, what with the indulgences scandal and enough relics of the "True Cross" to build an exact replica of Noah's Ark, remembrance of and the honoring of long-dead believers was getting way out of hand. Luther warned that the one-sided stories of hero and heroine saints needed to be taken in a more "judicious spirit." [147] Once at the table in Wittenberg he said that "it is a plague of the devil himself that we do not have any legend of the saints in pure form." [148] Today, as then, sincere people intimidate them-

selves by contrasting their own versions of themselves with erroneous images of their heroic idols. These "saints," then, are seen as too one-sidedly good. They're no longer seen as human, no longer as the sinners they were. Perhaps, too, we tend to see our enemies and ourselves as too one-sidedly bad. Luther has been seen at times as both too good to be true (real) and as too bad to be true (straight). He himself made the mistake of seeing some of his own enemies -- actual and imagined -- as too bad. But he rightly insisted that "One should not turn the saints into sticks; one should let [them] and nature remain what they are." [149] According to Luther, "God wants our nature to be preserved, not destroyed. ... [God's] grace does not break nature in pieces." [150]

Luther's account of his coat of arms, the famous "Luther Rose," (pictured on the cover) illustrates Luther's views of God's preservation of our natural selves. Here is what he wrote about it to Lazarus Spengler, a lay friend and apologist in Nuremberg: "First of all there is a black cross in a heart presenting its natural color, by which I intend to remind myself that we are saved by faith in the crucified One. If we believe with the heart we are justified. Through it runs a black cross, because the cross mortifies and gives pain. At the same time it leaves the heart in its original color. It does not destroy natural affection. It does not kill, but keeps alive; for the just *lives* by faith, faith in the crucified One." [151] Centuries later, the colorful pastor of the old Brooklyn Tabernacle, T. DeWitt Talmage, echoed this perspective when he said that "After God has made a nature [God] never eradicates the chief characteristics of its temperament. ... Conversion plants new principles in the soul, but Paul and John are just as different from each other after conversion as they were different from each other before conversion." [152] This applies to our continuing homosexual orientation as over against the insistence of "ex-gay" advocates that our or-

ientation be changed. The Bible doesn't teach that our basic personalities change; they are part of the wide variety within God's creation.

We who are sinners and simple believers in Jesus Christ are true saints so far as the Bible is concerned and Luther attested to that while noting that experientially, it doesn't seem so. He said: "Every saint is a sinner to his [or her] certain knowledge, [by which he meant experiential knowledge], but righteous in a sense beyond the capacity to know [as God knows the person]." [153] He said that in contrast to erroneous notions about saints, "the real saints of Christ must be good, stout sinners." [154] What truly queer saints we doubtful Christians have to be!

With reference to Luther himself, Gerhard Ebeling says that "we may be taken aback by the discovery that he was no 'saint.'" [155] Ebeling quotes G. E. Lessing, though, as saying that he was "most pleased to have discovered a few small deficiencies in [Luther], for in truth I would otherwise have been in danger of deifying him. The traces of humanity that I find in him are as precious to me as the most dazzling of his perfections." Luther himself noted that with regard to a purpose of the story of Lot, for instance, it is "recorded in order to illustrate that [nobody] is so holy or stands so firmly that he [or she] cannot fall again. If this man [Lot] could fall so deeply, is it surprising," asked Luther, "that we stumble?" He said that it was "written as a comfort for those who believe, to keep them from despairing even though they fall now and then." He went on to illustrate: "Jacob the patriarch stumbled when he was weak and despondent and made a miserable showing." (This is so like Luther's own personal history in his own old age, as we shall see later.) Luther continued: "If God had not pictured the saints to us as playing the fool in this way, we could not learn to know God's kingdom as consisting of nothing else than the forgiveness of sin."

That the doubtful Luther himself makes a rather queer saint is to be seen from the following examples of his kindness on the one hand and his cruelty on the other.

In 1515 Luther preached an excellent sermon on the "vice of slandering." He said that "When people slander others, they remark: I do not say this because I wish to slander him, nor do I want to have it told behind his back. Fine talkers these, who with a rhetorical coloring deny that they are saying what they are saying very emphatically, and denying that they are saying it in the very manner in which they are saying it. ... Others commend their action by saying that what they are relating is, after all, the truth. ... But," countered Luther, "why do you not publicly confess your own sins, since these, too, are true? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? About his defects you should not be silent, but about yours you hold you should be. Behold how beautifully you are condemning yourself!" [156] He continues: "Picture the scene to yourself. When defamers come together, their entertainment consists in taking someone, placing [that person] in their midst, and taking turns at tearing him [or her] apart with their teeth, as dogs tear the cadaver of a horse in the field. ... For shame, for shame! What a horrid monster a defamer is!" [157] In an exposition on praying that God would forgive us as we forgive our debtors, Luther writes: "O you hypocrite ... if you were [a person's] friend, you would keep silent and not circulate the misfortune of your neighbor with such pleasure and delight." What about pity and mercy and what about taking heed lest the defamer himself fall (I Corinthians 10:12)? "The widespread vice of slandering, and of harping on, the sins of others comes close to being the most miserable sin on earth," Luther declared. [158] "I may indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins, but I have no command to report the matter to others. If I act rashly, judging and passing sentence on

him, I fall into a sin that is greater than his." [159] In his tract on Christian liberty he says therefore that he will "give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ." [160]

Well, all of this sounds very much like what Martin Luther, the great Christian saint, should have said, -- and he did say it. But there was more that this saint would say, in no way in the spirit of forbearing love.

In his lectures on the Letter to the Hebrews, he called the Jews "the very Sacrament, that is, the kind Father's beloved children in Christ." [161] Luther taught that the Jews are "blood relatives of Christ" and "we are aliens and in-laws. ... [the Jews] are actually nearer to Christ than we are." According to Bainton, Luther had thought that Jews "might readily be excused for their rejection of Christianity by reason of the corruptions of the papacy" which would provoke "a Jew [to] rather be a sow than a Christian." Luther wondered: "What good can we do the Jews when we constrain them, malign them, and hate them as dogs? When we deny them work and force them to usury, how can that help? We should use toward the Jews ... Christ's law of love. If some are stiff-necked, what does that matter? We are not all good Christians." [162] Commenting on the Psalms, Luther digressed to say (about 1520): "The fury of some Christians (if they are to be called Christians) is damnable. They imagine that they are doing God a service when they persecute the Jews most hatefully, think everything evil of them, and insult them with extreme arrogance and contempt amid their pitiable misfortunes. ... By the example of this cruelty they are, as it were, repelling Jews from Christianity whereas they ought to attract them by all manner of gentleness, patience, pleading and care." [163]

Well, all of this, too, is an admirable demonstration of Christian charity, something we'd expect of Martin Luther, the great Reformer. But that is not all a doubtful Christian or queer saint can say. When in his last years (1543), Luther wrote a tract entitled *On the Jews and their Lies*, a response to a Jewish apologetical pamphlet. It has been characterized correctly as showing Luther's "extreme combativeness, aggression, bitterness and cruelty." Twenty years before he had deplored Christian anti-Jewish harangue -- even to the point of challenging whether such terrorists could rightly be called Christian. That was back when he had been enthusiastic about the possibility of changing Jews into Christians. When he saw that such a conversion was not what was happening and when he heard of what he believed to be accurate tales of atrocities committed against Christians by "blind, hard, incorrigible" Jews, he now went so far as to urge the torching of their synagogues. [164]

I have stood in the high pulpit of St. Andrew's Church in Eisleben and felt humbled in the memory of a great forerunner. What a life was lived between his baptism across town at Sts. Peter's and Paul's and the time, four days before his death when he stood in that very pulpit and preached his last sermon. But the memory was marred in my recalling that in that final sermon, a sick Luther raged again against the Jews as dangerous public enemies who must not be tolerated. As he railed, he became weaker and finally was not able to go on to finish the sermon. Tottering down around those winding stairs to the rear of the pulpit, he was led back across the street to the house in which he was to die. His time of service was over; it was time for this stout sinner to go home to that rest promised in the text of his unfinished sermon (Matthew 11:25ff).

There has been much misunderstanding concerning Luther's attitude toward the Jews and it would be good to pause long enough to examine his senti-

ments more closely. It certainly would not be right to do as too many have already done: to malign Luther in an effort to denounce malignity itself.

According to George Wolfgang Forell, the distinguished ethicist, Luther "did express vicious and deplorable anti-Jewish sentiments, precisely because he took the Old Testament and its patriarchs and prophets seriously." But Forell says that Luther was not an anti-Semite. [165] Luther's anti-Judaism was not anti-Semitism. It was aimed against the "lies," as Luther saw them, of Jewish biblical interpretation. "Even his treatise entitled *On the Jews and their Lies* contained mostly exegetical discussions of disputed messianic passages in the Old Testament," -- the area of his own academic expertise. [166] As Scott H. Hendrix points out, this distinction between theological anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism with all its later Aryan racist overtones, is a distinction of "importance ... long recognized." [167] It is a shame that a malicious effort at rubbing out this distinction continues in the name of anti-defamation.

In his diatribe of 1543, Luther wrote that the Jews' "abominable blasphemy" must be shown for what it is and attacked, their synagogues should be burned down and we must "deal harshly with them, as Moses did in the wilderness, slaying three thousand lest the whole people perish." He called this approach one of "sharp mercy ... to see whether this might not help" to bring about their conversion to Christ. "Like a good physician," the boorish Luther advised, we must proceed "without mercy to cut, saw, and burn flesh, veins, bone and marrow" to extract the terrible "gangrene that has set in." [168] In short, it was to do "good" to the Jews that he proposed to do what certainly was ill. Eric W. Gritsch notes that so far as Luther was concerned, "If they turn from their blasphemies, we must gladly forgive them" and fully welcome every Jew who con-

verts to Christ (as did, e.g. Anthony Margaritha, whom Luther welcomed). [169]

Is not Luther's argument the same one used by evangelicals today in their efforts at "converting" gay people? Does not this kind of argument allow evangelicals today to fight against gay civil rights propositions and even monogamous gay relationships? Don't evangelicals today argue against the extending of the right hand of fellowship to gay Christians for these very same kinds of reasons? To this, Luther added a refrain that is familiar in homophobic circles today: that we must oppose them by all means "so that we do not become partakers of their abominable blasphemy and all their other vices and thus merit God's wrath and be damned with them." Luther's arguments against the Jews are really the same as evangelicals' arguments against the gays. In both cases, it is the practice of something theologically deemed abominable to God and worthy of eternal damnation that is made the grounds for "Christian" condemnation. In neither case is the fact of having been "born that way" -- as a Jew or as one who develops desires for the same sex -- the basis for the condemnation. In both cases, conversion -- either from Judaism to Christianity or from homosexuality to heterosexuality (or celibacy) -- is judged sufficient to remove the condemnation. The argument, whether in Luther's version or in the homophobic version of evangelicals today, is made as a theological argument.

We must remember that there were rumors of Jewish plots to kill Luther and of Jewish efforts to convert Christians in Bohemia and Moravia [170], as there are today rumors of gay plots to molest heterosexuals and "convert" them and their little children to "homosexuality."

In a letter dated June 11, 1537, Luther wrote to Rabbi Josel of Rosheim, who had sought his help in gaining safe conduct for Jews through Sax-

ony, and said that he still favored kind treatment of Jews -- as evangelicals today say they favor kind treatment of gay people -- "but not so that through my good will and influence they might be strengthened in their error." [171] Here again is the same argument made today with reference to gay people and the evangelical attempt not to really encourage homosexuals in ways that they might remain "practicing" gays.

It should be recognized that the conversion Luther looked for and about which he became so angry when he did not find it, was at least a conversion which could and did take place with some Jews. The "ex-gay" conversion evangelicals look for today among homosexuals and about which they become so angry when they do not find it, is a conversion which cannot and does not take place in anyone.

It should also be recognized and admitted that just as Hitler and other racists misused Luther's preaching to inflict the horrors of Auschwitz and other death camps upon all Jews, hateful homophobes and "queer-bashers" misuse the preaching of evangelicals to batter mercilessly all homosexuals. Whatever blame for Nazi crimes that can be carried back across the centuries and laid at Luther's door is debatable. Not so easily dismissed is the blame homophobic evangelicals (as well as orthodox Jews and other "fundamentalists") must bear for the concurrent oppression waged against gay people in the name of the moral majority.

We should say that Luther's bitterness in his final years was not only directed at the Jews but against Christians on his left as well as on his right, and even against himself. Being the "stout sinner" each of us is, Luther was fully capable of such merciless attack against his neighbor. And he knew it as well as anyone knows it. And he acknowledged it as well as anyone acknowledges it. In a prayer he based on the eighth commandment, he said: "I confess and ask

for grace, for I have spent my life so sinfully and ungratefully with lies and evil talk against my neighbors. All this, when I ought to protect all their honor and innocence even as I would like to have it myself." [172] Luther had called Andreas Karlstadt "Jack Absurdity" and Caspar Schwenkfeld "Stinkfield." The Zwickau Prophets, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Thomas Müntzer, and the other "evangelical fanatics" to his left were, according to Luther, false brethren and the minions of Satan. He called Müntzer the "archdevil, the Satan of Allstedt, rebellious, murderous, seditious." Close at hand he saw Satan driving German peasants while far to the south the pope was still the whore of Babylon. As he judged the change he had tried to institute, he was depressed and frustrated over where it all seemed headed. Complaining to Katie, the tired Reformer said that he had "torture[d] and upset my old age and final days with the filth of Wittenberg which destroys my hard and faithful work ... I am unable any longer to endure my anger and dislike." With his closest intimate, Melancthon, he shared: "my heart has grown cold." The tasks surrounding him now "became intolerable to the weary, prematurely aged revolutionary," as Todd calls him. [173] He no longer could do much about his "followers," was repeatedly disappointed and frustrated, trying to do impossible things and this led to anger and scapegoating. In today's spent jargon, we'd say Luther was suffering "burn-out."

What a queer saint that doubtful Christian made! But as Luther himself reminds us, "the kingdom of Christ is nothing but pure forgiveness." [174] Thus we should not be surprised when "the real saints of Christ must be good, stout sinners." [175] We must not be surprised when Luther himself was such a "good, stout sinner." And we must not be surprised -- or despairing -- when we are ourselves such "good, stout sinners." As Luther saw it, Christians "become holy through a foreign holiness, namely, through that of the Lord Christ,

which is given them by faith and thus becomes their own." [176] He said that "Christianity is nothing [if not this]; that you [now] have no sin although you have sinned, that your sins rest on Christ, who is the eternal Savior from sin, death, and hell." [177] Luther concluded: "To call yourself a saint is, therefore, no presumption but an act of gratitude and a confession of God's blessings." [178] In that sense, Luther was a saint to the end -- albeit a wonderfully and terrifyingly queer saint. In that sense, each of us, too, is a saint -- and we will be wonderfully and terrifyingly queer to our end.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The Bible says that on the cross, Jesus prayed: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) He was praying for his executioners as nobody had ever prayed for his executioners. This reminds us of the extent of Christ's mercy, even to those who'd seen him and his work but who went on to kill him. But such is the contrasting nature of human revenge that, at some point in the transmission of one manuscript to another in the long history of the text of Luke 23, a copyist apparently dropped this prayer out of the text. It is missing in some of the early manuscripts. Perhaps this was done because this copyist "wished to insist on Jewish responsibility and could not believe that the Jews were forgivable, even by Jesus!" [179] As they were Roman soldiers who were carrying out the execution under orders of their superiors and the Roman governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, was it also the hated Roman who was unforgivable? We have seen that Luther, too, had his problems with related vengeance, but we must take note that Luther did not blame "the Jews" for the death of Christ. Even as late as 1544, during the last years of his life (and a year following his publication, *On the Jews and their Lies*) when he was

so vitriolic in his attacks on both disagreeing Jews and disagreeing Christians, his sentiment was this: "Our great sin and grievous misdeed have crucified Jesus, the true Son of God. But for that reason we cannot call you, poor Judas, and the rest of the Jews enemies, for it our sin." [180]

There are those today who would try to say that "practicing" homosexuals are not forgivable, even by Jesus! They believe that Jesus would exclude "practicing" homosexuals from his intercession with his Father. "Do not forgive *them*, Father, for they know exactly what they're doing!" are the words some fundamentalists would put in Jesus' mouth. "Do not forgive *them*!" They are "unrepentent, practicing homosexuals" to these self-appointed judges, even though their homosexuality is their natural and un-asked-for orientation and even though the only "Christ" they have been shown is the "Judge," the angry god whom they see in the glowering faces of their accusers and in the false god Luther said nobody could love. Sadly, some who say that homosexuals are unforgivable are homosexuals. And just as sadly, some of us are tempted not to forgive the hateful homophobes. But we must remember Christ's example during his execution on the cross and in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who trespass against us." "The realization that all human beings are sinners," suggests Forell, "might help to reduce the barriers among us which we have magnified and embroidered out of all proportion. This path, suggested by Luther, seems more promising than the proposal that we might accept each other as being really good people, or as the popular psychology would have it, as being 'O.K.' It is easier to admit that we are all sinners, since this assertion conforms to our experience, than that we are all 'good.'" [181] When we keep in mind Luther's "Simul Principle," that we are all saved sinners,

we who are such queer saints can put into practice Paul's admonition not to repay anyone evil for evil (Romans 12:17) and Jesus' instruction that his disciples should love enemies and pray for the ones who persecute us (Matthew 5:44) and abuse us (Luke 6:28). We can radically identify with our enemies. They are one with us: "all have sinned."

Ros Rinker has effectively demonstrated that it is as we *pray* for those who are not so easy for us to like since they actively oppress us, that we can come more and more to love them, to seek their welfare as well as our own. We can be tempted to sing with Gene Scott: "It's harder and harder to love some damn Christians, it's harder and harder each day!" But Rinker encourages us to pray: "Jesus loves him!" "Jesus loves her!" As we pray this way we do find that we begin to feel more kindly toward him or her. This is not to say that we should not willfully seek the enemy's welfare even before we have been able to develop a kindly *feeling* toward the person, to love "in deed" no matter what our feelings are (I John 3:18). When Jesus was asked how often we should forgive others, Jesus made it clear that we must *always* forgive others (Matthew 18:22) -- imitating God's love and not that of the tax-collectors (Matthew 5:43ff). If Jesus should instruct us to forgive always, "seventy times seven," can we then not count on the One who so instructed, to so behave in relationship to us? Are we to think that God imitates the tax-collectors?

Again, we see that Luther did not look to his own feelings or his own accomplishments to know the true picture of his relationship with God. He saw that his identity was *in Christ* -- just as Christ identified with him. It was an overwhelming blessing when Luther finally realized and accepted the fact that, as he put it, "my God became my flesh and blood." [182] "The devil came close to us; but he did not come so close as to assume our nature ... to become our flesh and blood." [183] Luther knew that Jesus

had identified with him because he heard his own lonely despair in Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane. He recognized his own cry in Jesus' cry from the cross: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" -- "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) "Why me?" Luther knew that "The cross was the altar on which [Jesus Christ], consumed by the fire of his heart, presented the living and holy sacrifice of his body and blood to the Father with fervent intercession, loud cries, and hot, anxious tears (Hebrews 5:7). That is the true sacrifice. Once and for all it takes away the sins of all the world and brings an everlasting reconciliation and forgiveness. ... Undoubtedly this sacrifice, which he completed once for all the world's sin, suffices until the Last Day." [184] In Christ's righteousness instead of in his own unrighteousness, Luther was the object of the gracious forgiveness of God. Again, we have it: this idea that the kingdom of God is pure forgiveness -- period! In his commentary on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:9-11), Luther defines Christians as "people who believe in the forgiveness of sins. If then, you believe in Christ, if you love his Word and embrace it by faith, you are a true Christian." [185] Period.

We gay Christians can become so preoccupied with our homosexuality, our gay identity, and our worry over its perhaps being too big a sin for God that we can fail to see our Savior. We keep glancing nervously into our own silly little mirrors instead of looking into the eyes of a gracious God who looks into our eyes and sees us as we cannot see ourselves. We put the emphasis on ourselves instead of seeing Christ. We emphasize *our* agenda instead of *God's* agenda. Then, by putting too much stress on us, we put too much stress *in* us. The care and anxiety is then never transferred to the One who has willingly borne it before, and the One who invites us to cast all our care on him because he does care for us forever.

We need to get out of our preoccupation with our own efforts and rest under the sheltering wings of Christ, our "Mother Hen." (Matthew 23:37) In a Christmastide sermon on Titus 3:4-8, Luther preached: "Throughout the Gospel, Christ does no more than draw us out of ourselves and into himself; He spreads his wings and invites us to take shelter." [186] According to Ian D. K. Siggins, "Luther's favorite image for Christ is the brood-hen: 'Look at the hen and her chickens and you will see Christ and yourself painted and depicted better than any painter could picture them.' He nourishes us with his strength as a hen feeds her chickens and warms them with her own body.'" [187] It is only from the perspective of such safety that we can get on with our role of being Christians in this world. In a sermon on Matthew 22:34-46, preached in 1526, Luther said that "We do please Christ by dedicating our entire life with all possible diligence solely to the service of our neighbor. Down, down, says Christ; you will find Me in the poor; you are rising too high if you do not look for Me there." [188]

Citing Galatians 5:1, Luther called on everyone to "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" -- not in *civil* liberty and not in *devilish* liberty (as Luther thought of them), but in a conscience which "must be instructed and prepared beforehand, that when we feel the accusation of the law [or of the Old Testament Satan, the adversary, our now fallen chief prosecutor or of *diabolos*, the accuser] the terrors of sin, the horror of death, and the wrath of God, we may remove these heavy sights and fearful fantasies out of our mind, and set in place thereof the freedom purchased by Christ, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, life, and the everlasting mercy of God." [189] We might reply: Easy for you to say, Martin Luther. But no. Luther himself said that this is "not so soon be-

lieved as it is named. [But] if it could be apprehended with a true and firm faith, then no rage or terror of the world, of the law, sin, death, or the devil could overwhelm us. But blessed is he that understandeth and believeth." [190] Faith is not so much a matter of the head as it is a matter of the heart, or as Luther put it so vividly: "Faith is under the left nipple." [191]

According to Luther's reading of the Bible, all of this overcoming of disquiet and anxiety is done through *faith*, through *trusting* God to be God -- to be the Love, Wisdom, Mercy, and all Power as God is revealed to be in the Word. In his Preface to his commentary on Romans, Luther wrote: "Faith is a living, *daring confidence*, in God's grace." [192] To Luther, "The chief part of Christian doctrine is to learn to trust in God."

[193] What is faith anyway? What is such trust? In Hebrews 11:1 we read what Luther read: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see," because as F. F. Bruce puts it, we are "taking God at his word."

[194] There's the only certainty. There's the basis on which we can be sure. It's trusting God to be God, to be Good, to be Wisdom, Love, Mercy, and all Power and all Justice. And if we can't, with confidence, trust God, who is there to trust? Nobody! If not Jesus, there is nothing! If not the love of the One who died that we might live -- what is there?! Such faith takes us beyond what we can know by our senses, our feelings, our conditioning, our reasoning, our social learning, our experimentation. We can't have certainty through our senses, feelings, reasoning, rationalization, and so on. But we do want a kind of control through such experiential certainty that is precisely what Christian faith is not. The Word of God tells us that it is not for us to be in such control, that to try to be in such control is what sin was all about in Eden and what sin is all about today. Our trust that God is in control is what faith is all

about. And knowing the kind of God who is in control -- seeing God in the flesh in Jesus Christ -- is what makes faith such a substantial hope. We walk by faith, not by sight. "Our theology is certain," said Luther, "because it sets us outside ourselves." [195] The certainty is with God through faith. Therefore we see the way we need to go when we trust *The Way* that Christ is. We know the *truth* we need to know when we trust *The Truth* that Christ is. We live the *life* we need to live when we trust *The Life* that Christ is.

Because of the daily experience of the utter futility and bad consequences of pride and self-righteousness, it was for Luther and it will be for each of us, a lifetime of learning to trust God that will overcome again and again our doubt and anxiety. As we have seen, it was Luther's experience that "Satan has often said to me: What if your teaching ... were false? He has often caught me so unawares that I broke into a sweat." [196] And it is for us as though we were there at Luther's table back in the old converted friary at Wittenberg, and we were nodding assent to his experiences: "Yes, Martin, we know what you mean. We've been troubled by that same distress." Is it for us, also, that we could nod assent with him as he continued to relate: "But finally I replied [to Satan]: Go and speak with God, who has commanded us to hear Christ (Matthew 17:5). This Christ must do everything." [197] And then, with Luther and his friend Melancthon, could we gratefully raise our mugs of Katie's golden brew?

Over these past five centuries, from that warn wooden table by the tower, come Luther's words of counsel: "All heaviness of mind and melancholy comes of the devil; especially these thoughts that God is not gracious ... that God will have no mercy. ... Whoever you are, possessed with such heavy thoughts, know for certain, that they are a work of the devil. God sent his Son into the world, not to affright, but to comfort. Therefore be of good courage, and think, that henceforward

you are not the child of a human creature, but of God, through faith in Christ." [198] Through faith in Christ. This faith, this trust, is not merely a matter for learned theological discussion. Dogma won't do. As Luther, the Doctor of Theology, was fond of saying: "I have often need, in my tribulations, to talk even with a child, in order to expel such thoughts as the devil possesses me with; and this teaches me not to boast, as if of myself I were able to help myself, and to subsist without the strength of Christ. I need one, at times, to help me, who, in his whole body, has not so much theology as I have in one finger." [199] Luther liked to watch those who took life blithly: the birds that Jesus had said "neither sow nor reap," the flowers that Jesus had said "neither toil nor spin," and the trusting little babes that Jesus had compared to the kingdom of heaven. Seeing his tiny son quietly nursing, the besieged Luther once mused: "Child, your enemies are the pope, the bishops, Duke George, Ferdinand, and the Devil. And there you are sucking unconcernedly." [200]

It was out of the depths of Luther's worst depression, in the summer of 1527, that he saw what's what and who's who, and composed his best known hymn. It is not a trite tribute to militarism. It is a hymn of spiritual struggle and strong faith in a God whose mercy is welcome as the protection of high walls around a besieged medieval city in old Saxony. [201] "A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills, prevailing!" Luther didn't always remember the truth of these words and when he forgot them it went very badly for him.

Eleven days before his death, away at Eisleben, Luther wrote to his worried wife back in Wittenberg: "To my dear wife, Katherine Luther, doctor-ess and self-tormentor at Wittenberg, my gracious lady. Grace and peace in the Lord! Read, dear Katie, John and the Small Catechism ... For you want to assume the cares of your God ... I have

a better Caretaker than you and all the angels. He it is who lies in a manger and nurses at a virgin's breast, but at the same time sits at the right hand of God, the almighty. ... Therefore be at rest. Amen." [202] Here in these words, meant to comfort "Sir Katie," as he called her, Luther returned again to his double theme of God's imminence as both the little baby Jesus and "A Mighty Fortress." In the last letter Luther sent to Katie, just four days before his death, he tried again to reassure her: "Pray, and let God have the care. It is said: 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.' (Psalm 55: 22)." [203] He wrote this letter on the same day he preached his last sermon. The sermon, as we have noted, was based on Matthew 11:25-30 in which Jesus said: "Come unto me, all you who are weary and overburdened, [including the now long-spent, weary and overburdened Martin Luther] and I will give you rest!"

After his death, some notes were found in his rooms that indicate that even at the end of his life -- even as he was writing to calm Katie with the promises of God -- he was still faced with the ultimate question about what it is that we really can ever really know. We all have our own limited experience with which to try to judge, Luther mused. Who can know? One of these notes contained the following statement: "Let none think he has sufficiently tasted Holy Scripture unless he has governed the church with the prophets for a hundred years!" Was this merely hyperbole or was Luther again expressing, through this figure of speech, the difficulty he had had throughout his life to solve epistemologically what could only approach satisfaction by faith? If 100 years were required, Luther still had 38 years to go, in these his final hours. It had taken him 38 years to get to Worms and to the Wartburg. Looking back to where he was 38 years before the end, he could see that he had still almost a decade to go even to get to the posting of

his 95 Theses. He did not spend even close to 38 years in the Reformation. Nobody would ever "sufficiently taste" of Holy Scripture if what was needed was a century of experience. But, of course, Luther had, in fact, tasted what he could in what time and with what insight he had been given and he had found that the Lord was good indeed. He had written about that for some 60,000 pages. But even after all that tasting and chewing and digesting and after all the great Doctor's theologizing, debating and wrestling with the powers of Rome, the leftward rebels and the devil as well as all his own doubts, he was still not sure of himself. In only a few short days his "beloved disciple" Melancthon would be standing before the other mourners in the Castle Church in Wittenberg as one of the "now entirely poor, wretched, forsaken orphans" and eulogizing him as one with only four peers who had clearly laid forth the pure Christian gospel (Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul, and Augustine). Luther himself, though, in these final hours, was ruminating about how impossible it was even with long experience, to really begin to know anything about anything -- whether of Virgil, or of Cicero or of the Holy Bible. "Ah, great is the wonder," he wrote. "Lay no hand on this divine *Aeneid*. Rather, fall down on your knees and worship at its footsteps. For we are truly beggars." [204] The believer's heart knew far better than did the great Doctor's head!

"We are truly beggars." This was his old refrain. What did this mendicant monk mean? "Beggars!" As Bishop Werner Leich, chairman of the East German Churches' Luther Committee said of these words in his address launching the GDR's 1983 *Lutherjahr*: "This is not the resignation of age, but the experience of a rich life, once more confirmed in the face of death: that one is dependent on God, that one lives by His grace alone, that one is beholden to Him and not to oneself for everything." [205] Luther knew well that, just like every beggar, he lived through-

out his life by the gifts of others and by the Gift of Another. Not that Luther sat by and waited as he objected that some people did, "wait[ing] until God lets a roasted goose fly into their mouths." [206] Far from it. He had honestly worked long and hard at resolving his needs *under* God. [207]

He may have had a number of examples in mind, culled from his life-long struggles and faith. Was he now reminiscing about his boyhood in Eisenach, and about his days in the Erfurt cloister when, as he often said, "I have been a beggar of crumbs?" We know that he had concern for the welfare of Katie and the children when shortly she would be a widow and they might later become orphans, so did he perhaps have in mind the 37th among his familiar Psalms? Was he again mindful of his debt to Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, who protected his life and limb when papal powers were out to kill him? Perhaps he was considering his warm relationship with Melancthon for which he had thought himself so unworthy and for which he was so very thankful. Perhaps he was thinking again of that favorite of his, the Canaanite mother who insisted on having the crumbs that were left over from the table spread for the Jewish children (Matthew 15:21ff). Perhaps, too, in these final days of pain, he was contemplating the beggar Lazarus about to be taken home to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22) or the beggar God lifts up from the dunghill in Hannah's song (I Samuel 2:8). Here, away from home, was it with his Lord he once more identified, with the One whose life on earth was bracketed by a borrowed manger and a borrowed tomb? Or maybe he was thinking about that crippled beggar by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple to whom Peter and John had said: "Silver and gold we don't have, but what we do have we give to you: Walk, in the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 3:6) That freely-given gift of what we really need is

what God invited us to receive when, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God said: "Come to the water, all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come!" (Isaiah 55:1) That's what Luther had learned to do. That's what this beggar did. From those early days of encounter and controversy over the buying of God's favor by indulgences through to the last day of his life, with all the ups and downs, through and even along side all the "good, stout sinning," through and even along side all the terrible doubts, that's what he did. He came empty-handed, like the beggar each one of us is, and he accepted and was still accepting his merciful God's gracious invitation to come and freely quench his thirst, -- forevermore.

Let us bow our heads and pray a prayer written and prayed by Martin Luther, centuries ago. [209] It's a prayer we all need to pray.

"O Father, relieve our consciences, now and in the hour of our death, from the terror of our guilt and the fear of your judgment. Let your peace come into our hearts that we may await your judgment with joy. Let us regard your mercy as higher and broader and stronger than all our being. Amen."

REFERENCES.

To facilitate reference and to lighten apparatus, unless otherwise noted, Luther's quotations are footnoted according to location in the standard 82-volume Weimar edition (1883-1948) and abbreviated WA (for the main body of his works), WA Br (for the correspondence), and WA TR (for the Table Talk). The Quincentenary of Martin Luther's birth is also the Centenary of the founding of the Weimar edition.

1. Henry Drummond, "Dealing with Doubt," *Addresses* (New York: Donohue, n.d.), p. 270.
2. Lewis Thomas, "Hubris in Science?" *Science* 200, 1978, pp. 1459ff.
3. Martin E. Marty, *Context*, April 15, 1983, p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Drummond, *op.cit.*, pp. 282f.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 267f.
9. George MacDonald, "The Voice of Job," *Unspoken Sermons*, (Second Series).
10. C. S. Lewis, "Preface," *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), pp. xxviff and xxxii.
11. Quoted in Alzina Stone Dale, *The Outline of Sanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).
12. George MacDonald, *Disciple*, Pt. xxxii, st. 15.
13. Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), p. 31.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
17. WA TR, no. 418.
18. Rollo May, "Understanding and Coping with Anxiety," *Psychology Today* cassette no. 20184 (New York: Ziff-Davis, 1978).
19. Erlangen edition of Luther's works, 3, 547.
20. WA 40, III, 486.

21. WA 22, 284.
22. WA 52, 156f.
23. WA 36, 689.
24. Bainton, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
25. John M. Todd, *Luther: A Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 65.
26. WA 2, 687.
27. Bainton, *op. cit.*, pp. 32ff.
28. WA 22, 305.
29. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume VII (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 129.
30. Bainton, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
32. Cited by Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), pp. 27f.
33. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
34. Cf. Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1983).
35. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
36. At this very time, down in Verona, the pioneering epidemiologist Fracastoro, who had been born in the same year as Luther, was just writing his three volumes on syphilis and virtually two more decades would pass before Fracastoro's greatest contribution would appear in the year of Luther's death: the laying of the groundwork for future understanding of contagion.
37. Bainton, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
38. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 288.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
40. WA TR, 1, no. 408.
41. WA 45, 158.
42. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 343.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
44. Bainton, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
45. *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1983, p. 7.
46. Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
48. WA 45, 570f.

49. WA 32, 500f.
50. Ibid.
51. Todd, op. cit., p. 166.
52. WA 37, 403.
53. Todd, op. cit., p. 172.
54. Cf. Cheryl Forbes, *The Religion of Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) for a discussion of the misuse of power in churches today.
55. Todd, op. cit., p. 170.
56. Ibid., p. 193.
57. WA TR, no. 424.
58. WA TR, 1, no. 912.
59. WA TR, 2, no. 222. Two hundred years later, John Wesley wrote in his *Journal* (January 24-29, 1738): "I can talk well, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled." He went on to say he needed to be "freed from fear ... freed from doubt."
60. H. G. Haile, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1980), p. 191.
61. Ibid., p. 190.
62. *The Reformed Journal*, April 1983, p. 17.
63. Haile, op. cit., p. 189.
64. Martin E. Marty, "M.E.M.O.," *The Christian Century*, November 30, 1983, p. 1119. B. A. Gerrish may give a useful balance to a possible over-emphasis on this "darkest-night-of-the-soul" approach when he cautions that, unhappily, Luther's own "experience of God is canonized in the Lutheran confessions." Gerrish continues: "When Melancthon asserts in his *Apology* that faith is conceived in terrors of conscience, we are bound to ask: Surely not always? Luther proclaimed the good news that there is hope even for those who have drained the last drops of despair. Does it follow that there is no hope for those who have not?" [B. A. Gerrish, "Doctor Martin Luther: Subjectivity and Doctrine in the Lutheran Reformation," in Peter Newman Brooks (ed.) *Seven-Headed Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 13f.]
65. James Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1968), p. 72.
66. Edward Donnelly, "The Personal Piety of Martin Luther," *The Banner of Truth*, December 1983, p. 27.
67. Ibid.
68. Martin E. Marty, "Martin Luther's Reckless Grasp of Grace," *The Christian Century*, October 26, 1983, p. 963.
69. Bainton, op. cit., p. 281.
70. Erik Erikson quoted in an interview conducted by Elizabeth Hall, "A Conversation with Erik Erikson," *Psychology Today*, June 1983, p. 30. Unfortunately, Erikson's 1958 psychoanalytical study, *Young Man Luther*, suffers from having been based too much on the anti-Luther diatribes of Johann Cochlaeus.
71. Bainton, op. cit., p. 282.
72. Atkinson, op. cit., p. 61.
73. Haile, op. cit., p. 234.
74. WA 36, 238f.
75. WA 25, 387f.
76. For a study of the thesis that Luther's "faith-consciousness was significantly molded by mystical experience and that western dependence on rationalism has obscured or eclipsed this mystical light," cf. Bengt R. Hoffman, *Luther and the Mystics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976).
77. Martin E. Marty, *Context*, January 1, 1984, p. 1. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago is quoted as having said the following during an Advent vesper service attracting some 1,400 Lutherans and Roman Catholics to Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago: "The 16th century need never have happened and probably would not have happened if the mutual charity and openness of our dialogue today had existed then. ... Martin Luther has taught us that we are called to constant renewal by the word of God. It is this same Luther who today calls us to listen anew." [*The Christian Century*, January 4-11, 1984, p. 9.]
78. Merle Severy, "The World of Martin Luther," *The National Geographic*, October 1983, p. 462. As exemplified in the anti-Luther cartoons of the sup-

porters of the pope, the papacy viewed Luther as as much the Antichrist as did Luther view the pope. One example of the many anti-Luther stories in Roman Catholic historiography, and one that was "repeated down into the nineteenth century," was the story that Luther was a changeling, that Luther's mother worked in a bathhouse where she had engaged in sex acts with an unclean spirit in the form of an incubus. Martin Luther was supposed to have been the offspring of these sex acts. The story was meant to connect Luther to Antichrist. [Ian Siggins, *Luther and his Mother* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 37 and 32].

79. Cited in *Jubilee*, "a special publication of the Office of Communication and Interpretation, Lutheran Council in the USA," March 1983, n.p.

80. "In some ways, Roman Catholics may even be said to have a keener ear for Luther's voice than their Protestant brethren, whose faith was more radically transformed by the intellectual changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." [Gerrish, op. cit., p. 3]

81. Todd, op. cit., pp. 139 and 104.

82. Ibid., p. 111.

83. Ibid., p. 131.

84. Ibid., p. 207.

85. Ibid., p. 135.

86. WA TR, no. 212.

87. WA TR, 1, no. 865.

88. Bainton, op. cit., p. 50. It is alleged that an exasperated Staupitz finally confronted the ever-guilt-ridden young Luther with this assessment: "God is not angry with you. You are angry with God!" Much later, in his *Table Talk* (no. 79), Luther is said to have remarked: "God is not an angry God; if he were we were all utterly lost and undone."

89. Cf. Bainton, op. cit., p. 290.

90. WA 42, 553.

91. Todd, op. cit., p. 328.

92. WA 21, 448f.

93. WA 25, 387f.

94. WA 43, 537.

95. WA 54, 185f.

96. Ibid.

97. WA 43, 537.

98. WA 54, 185f.

99. WA 43, 537.

100. Todd, op. cit., p. 174.

101. Ibid., p. 182.

102. WA 42, 334.

103. WA 32, 500.

104. Ibid. As Luther recalled later, "No one can know what I suffered those first two years, and in what dejection, I might say in what despair, I was often plunged. Those proud spirits who afterwards attacked the Pope with such boldness, can form no idea of my sufferings; ... But whilst they were satisfied to look on and leave me to face the danger alone, I was not so happy, so calm, or so sure of success; for I did not then know many things which now, thanks be to God, I do know." [Quoted in J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Germany, Switzerland, etc.*, Volume I, (London: Walther, 1843), pp. 332f.

105. Ibid., (Volume II), p. 181. Italics mine.

106. Ibid. In *A Farther Appeal*, John Wesley observed that "Whenever it has pleased God to work any great work upon the earth, he hath stepped more or less out of the common way." In *Lectures on Calvinism* (Eerdmans, 1931), Abraham Kuyper wrote that "history shows, almost on every page, that very often the *minority was right*."

107. WA 25, 383.

108. Bainton, op. cit., p. 283.

109. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, iii.

110. WA TR, no. 606.

111. WA 43, 243.

112. WA TR 4, no. 4936.

113. WA TR 1, no. 924.

114. WA 38, 202.

115. WA 46, 28f.

116. WA 28, 296f.

117. WA TR 4, no. 5177.
118. WA 10, III, 18f.
119. WA 15, 582f.
120. WA 40, III, 543.
121. WA TR 4, no. 4691.
122. WA 56, 370. On May 17, 1738 John Wesley was near despair, reading Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*, specifically on 2:20: "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." According to Wesley: "This he did of inestimable love; for Paul says, 'who loved me.' For he delivered neither sheep, ox, gold, nor silver, but even God himself entirely and wholly 'for me, even for me.' ... Read therefore with great emphasis these words 'me' and 'for me,' and so inwardly practice with yourself that you with a sure faith may conceive and print this 'me' in your heart and apply it to yourself." He continued: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." [John Wesley, *Journal*, May 24, 1738 (I, 475f).]
123. Herb Brokering (ed.) *Luther's Prayers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), p. 5.
124. WA 32, 501.
125. Bainton, op. cit., p. 284.
126. Ibid.
127. WA 36, 279f.
128. WA 40, I, 204.
129. Roland Bainton, *Yesterday, Today and What Next?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), pp. 82f.
130. John H. Treadwell, *Martin Luther and his Work* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884), p. 80.
131. Todd, op. cit., p. 320.
132. WA 1, 52.
133. WA 12, 262.
134. WA 1, 344.
135. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 10.
136. Ibid.
137. WA 42, 646.
138. WA 28, 228.
139. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, op. cit., p. 51.
140. Todd, op. cit., pp. 217f.
141. Brokering, op. cit., pp. 2f.
142. Cf. Luther's *Bondage of the Will*.
143. WA 42, 14.
144. WA 42, 646.
145. WA 18, 141f. Throughout church history, an over-scrupulous conscience has been, in John Wesley's words, "a sore evil" plaguing many Christians. Wesley, who may have been even obsessively diligent in his pursuit of holiness in living, expressed sadness for the plight of those who "fear where no fear is; who are continually condemning themselves without cause; imagining some things to be sinful, which the Scripture nowhere condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty, which the Scripture nowhere enjoins." [Quoted by Frederick C. Gill, *Through the Year with Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1954) p. 49).]
146. WA 42, 18.
147. WA 17, II, 251.
148. WA TR 5, no. 5674.
149. WA 24, 631.
150. WA 44, 493 and WA 10, 63f.
151. John Stoughton, *The Homes and Haunts of Luther* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1903), p. 314. Continuing with his description of his Rose, Luther explained that "this heart must be put in the middle of a *white* rose, to show that faith gives peace, consolation, joy. The rose is *white*, not red, because white is the color of spirits and angels. This rose is amidst a field of heavenly *blue*, for spiritual joy and faith are the beginning of future bliss, which is already embraced by hope, though not fully manifested. Round the *blue* field is a golden ring, to show that bliss in Heaven lasts

forever, having no end, and is glorious above all things, even as gold is the most precious of metals."

152. T. DeWitt Talmage, *The Pathway of Life* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing for The Christian Herald, 1894), p. 403.

153. WA 1, 149.

154. WA 28, 177f.

155. Ebeling, op. cit., p. 33. Heinrich Heine, the German Christian poet, humorist, and literary critic of Jewish descent, sang the praises of Luther's combining "in his character all the virtues and vices of the Germans ... in the grandest manner." According to Heine, even the "failings" of this stout sinner "have been of more use to us than the virtues of a thousand others." Heine chided those pouting critics of Luther in these words: "The dwarf who stands on the shoulders of the giant can indeed see farther than the giant himself, especially if he puts on spectacles; but for that lofty point of intuition we want the lofty feeling, the giant heart, which we cannot make our own." [Cited by Philip Schaff, op. cit., pp. 741f.]

156. WA 1, 48.

157. WA 1, 54.

158. WA 2, 121.

159. WA 30, I, 170.

160. Cf. Luther's *Freedom of the Christian*.

161. Todd, op. cit., p. 85.

162. Bainton, op. cit., pp. 296f. Certainly Luther's words can apply today to employment rights of gay people. And, we might ask, how can it help when powerful ecclesiastical rulers try to force gay people out of stable relationships?

163. WA 5, 428.

164. Todd, op. cit., p. 361. Cf. Schaff, op. cit., p. 62.

165. George Wolfgang Forell, *The Luther Legacy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), p. 8.

166. Scott H. Hendrix, "The Controversial Luther," *Word and World*, Fall 1983, p. 396.

167. Ibid. During the sixth in a series of confer-

ences involving Jewish and Lutheran theologians (begun in 1969) in New York City in the fall of 1983, Johannes Wallmann of the University of Bochum in West Germany conceded that the Nazis had used Luther's anti-Jewish writings but said that there wasn't clear indication that anti-Semites of the last two centuries had even been aware of Luther's statements. According to Wallmann: "I cannot see any historical line between Luther and Hitler." [Cf. *The New York Times*, October 16, 1983, p. 37.] "Luther was not a forerunner of Hitler (who unlike Karl Marx was not even nominally 'Lutheran') or even an anti-Semite," according to Forell. ["Why Recall Luther Today?" *Word and World* Fall 1983, p. 337.] Forell explains that Luther "did express vicious and deplorable anti-Jewish sentiments, precisely because he took the Old Testament and its patriarchs and prophets so very seriously. He felt threatened in the very center of his theology by the rabbinic exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and by the hopes of his Jewish contemporaries that his critique of the established church might lead to a reexamination of all Christian claims and thus presage the coming of the Messiah."

168. WA 53, 541f.

169. *Luther and the Jews: Presentations by Eric W. Gritsch and Marc H. Tanenbaum* (New York: The Lutheran Council in the USA, 1983), pp. 6f.

170. Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin: God's Court Jester* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 135.

171. Ibid.

172. Brokering, op. cit., p. 57.

173. Todd, op. cit., p. 367.

174. WA 28, 177f.

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.

177. WA 25, 331.

178. WA 32, 91.

179. E. J. Tinsley, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965), p. 20.

180. Cited by Peter Manns, *Martin Luther: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 217.

181. Forell, *Word and World*, op. cit., p. 340.
182. WA 52, 44.
183. WA 37, 336. Elsewhere, Luther wrote that, in Christ, God could not be nearer to us. [WA 23, 147.]
184. Cf. Luther's *Commentary on Hebrews*. Regarding Jesus' oneness with our own humanity, Hebrews 5:7 adds to the gospel account of Jesus' Gethsemane experience. Commenting on Hebrews 5:7, Leon Morris writes: "There are three kinds of prayers, each loftier than the preceding: prayer, crying, and tears. Prayer is made in silence; crying with raised voice; but tears overcome all things ('there is no door through which tears do not pass')." -- a rabbinic saying. [Leon Morris, *Hebrews in the Expositor's Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 49.]
185. WA 43, 64.
186. WA 10, I, 1.
187. Siggins, op. cit., p. 78. Cf. also Ian Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University, 1970), p. 265.
188. WA 20, 517.
189. Cf. Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 299.
190. Ibid., p. 300.
191. Cited by Martin E. Marty, *Context*, June 15, 1983, p. 3 from John Gross, ed., *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms* (New York: Oxford, 1983).
192. Cf. Luther's preface to his *Commentary on Romans*.
193. WA 28, 678.
194. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 277.
195. WA 40, I, 589f.
196. WA TR 2, no. 2372.
197. Ibid.
198. WA TR, no. 408.
199. WA TR, no. 425. "The title 'doctor' ... probably comes nearer than any other to the heart of Luther's self-understanding. ... in his own self-image," according to B. A. Gerrish [op. cit., p. 4.] Luther had once said that he would not trade

- his doctorate for all the riches of the world. [Cf. WA 40, 387f] Though as Hermann Steinlein documented, Luther's doctor consciousness ebbed and flowed during different stages of his life. [Cf. Gerrish] Perhaps these periods corresponded to the relative strength and weakness of his doubt, as measurements of his doubt reflected as defense mechanism.
200. Bainton, op. cit., p. 285.
201. Ibid., pp. 290ff.
202. WA Br 11, 286. Elsewhere, Luther had written: "Reason and will would ascend and seek above, but if you would have joy, bend yourself down to this place. There you will find that boy given for you who is your Creator lying in a manger. I will stay with that boy as he sucks, is washed, and dies. ... There is no joy but in this boy. ... I know of no God but this one in the manger." [WA 23, 731.] On another time, Luther said the following: "To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save." [*The Martin Luther Christmas Book*, translated and arranged by Roland H. Bainton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948), p. 40.]
203. Ibid., p. 291.
204. WA TR 5, 317. Nearing 90 years of age, Roland Bainton shared Luther's own feelings of doubt when he acknowledged: "I have never found a clearcut position without problems." [Quoted in his obituary in *Presbyterian Journal*, February 29, 1984, p. 5.]
205. Werner Leich, "Linked to us all in the Search for the Meaning of Life," *Martin Luther and Our Age: Constituent Meeting of the GDR Martin Luther Committee* (Berlin, June 13, 1980), p. 22.
206. WA 32, 472.
207. Ibid.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

[Cover] Portrait of Martin Luther in his doctoral cap, a copy of his autograph, and the Luther Rose, his coat of arms (see p. 43 and footnote 151).

[p. 77] A woodcut by Hans Sebald Beham of Luther disguised as Knight George at the Wartburg Castle. The castle exterior is at the top of the page and, at the bottom, is Luther's room there. Note his desk (at which he translated the New Testament from Greek to German), the whalebone footrest to the right of the desk, and the tile stove at far right.

[p. 78] Luther's headquarters for most of his adult life was the converted Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg (top). Note the famous tower at center. The Luther family rooms were on the second floor to the right of the tower. The main Luther room is shown at the bottom. Note the table of *Table Talk*. Also reproduced here is a copy of "A Mighty Fortress is our God," in Luther's hand.

[Inside back cover] Engraving of Luther as a monk (1520) and title page of his 1518 discussion of his 95 Theses. Note the flying loincloth representing Christ's resurrection. Both illustrations are by Luther's good friend Lucas Cranach.

[Back cover] Two anti-Luther cartoons. At top, is the Cochlaeus seven-headed Luther monster. It shows (left to right) Luther as doctor of theology, monk, knight, priest, cultist with hornets in his hair, lawless law-enforcer, and as the destructive Barrabas with spiked club. Below and to the right is Luther as a bagpipe being blown by the Devil. These are typical Roman depictions of Luther the doubtful "Christian" and queer "saint." At the bottom left is the title page of the pope's *Bull against Martin Luther and Followers*. At the top right are two symbols of the Luther Quincentenary: that of the City of Worms (above) and that of the German Democratic Republic [East Germany] below.

