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# Did Luther Teach That Christ Committed Adultery?

By ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

### I

As every pastor discovers, Roman Catholic ignorance — clerical hardly less than lay — of Lutheran and Luther's theology is often abysmal.

Something of a new nadir, however, was achieved by the Rev. Richard Ginder in the Roman Catholic weekly, *Our Sunday Visitor*, Vol. XLII, No. 44, February 28, 1954, page 12, when he wrote:

"Did Martin Luther believe that Jesus was God?"

"In his 'Table Talk,' Weimar edition, ii, 107, one reads the following hair-raising blasphemy: 'Christ committed adultery first of all with the woman at the well about whom St. John tells us. Was not everybody about Him saying: "Whatever has He been doing with her?" Secondly, with Mary Magdalen, and thirdly with the woman taken in adultery whom He dismissed so lightly. Thus even Christ, who was so righteous, must have been guilty of fornication before He died.'"

Even the most casual reading around in the Weimar edition would have furnished abundant explicit evidence for a positive answer to the Rev. Mr. Ginder's leading question. Hence charity compels us to assume that, in his desperate determination to find something with which to discredit blessed Martin Luther, the Rev. Mr. Ginder reached for a volume of the Weimar edition at random, chanced to take down the second volume of the *Tischreden*, and opened it by accident at page 107.

Those who find such an assumption too unlikely may conjecture that the source of the Rev. Mr. Ginder's quotation — although he does not say so — is a passionately partisan pamphlet published

in England in 1945 under the title *Martin Luther: Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor* (London: Hutchinson and Co. [1945]). Dedicated to Lord Vansittart of Denham, the pamphlet is No. 3 of the "Win the Peace" series put out by the identically named movement that Lord Vansittart headed. The author of the pamphlet was a Berlin-educated refugee teacher of German at Rugby and Stowe. On page 29 he includes a translation of the same quotation that the Rev. Mr. Ginder cites. Astonishingly Mr. Wiener's translation and the Rev. Mr. Ginder's translation are in word-for-word agreement! (We may note in passing that it was Mr. Wiener's scurrilous pasquinade that drew the attention of the English Roman Catholic lay convert Arnold Moore Lunn to this passage from the *Tischreden*. Mr. Lunn referred to it on page 53 of *The Revolt Against Reason* [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1950] as "an obscene blasphemy . . . the like of which it would be difficult to parallel in the pamphlets of the atheist underworld," and relegated the macaronic German-and-Latin original of "the inexplicable blasphemy" — with a partial English translation — to an appendix [page 233] because it was "too terrible to quote" in the text. Mr. Lunn is a brilliant essayist, and at least he took the trouble to look up the original, but his information about Luther and Luther research is partial, synthetic, and largely secondhand.)

But what about the "hair-raising blasphemy" that the Rev. Mr. Ginder cites?

Here is how it appears in the Weimar edition — in full, complete with the pertinent footnotes:

"1472. (Schlag. 239; Clm. 943, 175) *Christus adulter*. Christus ist am ersten ebrecher worden Joh. 4. bei dem brunn cum muliere, quia illi dicebant: Nemo<sup>17</sup> significat,<sup>18</sup> quid facit cum ea? Item cum Magdalena, item cum adultera Ioan. 8., die er so leicht davon lies. Also mus der from Christus auch am ersten ein ebrecher werden, ehe er starb.

"17) *So ist wohl zu lesen und nicht mit Preger: Nro. 18) Text undeutlich: Stat oder Scat, oder ist scit zu lesen?*"<sup>1</sup>

In literal translation:

"1472. (Schlag. 239; Clm. 943, 175) *Christ an adulterer*. Christ first became an adulterer St. John 4 at the well with the woman, because they said: Nobody<sup>17</sup> indicates,<sup>18</sup> what is He doing

with her? Again, with Magdalen; again, with the adulteress St. John 8, whom He dismissed so lightly. Thus the righteous Christ must first become also an adulterer before He died.

"17) *This is the probable reading rather than Preger's: Nro.*

18) *Text unclear: Stat or Scat, or should the reading be scit?"*

In 1888, Wilhelm Preger, the first person to publish this fragment, had reproduced the item thus:

"239. Christus ist am ersten ein ebrecher worden Jo. 4 bei dem brunn cum muliere, quia illi dicebant . . . . .<sup>1</sup> quid facit cum ea? item cum Magdalena, item cum adultera Joan. 8, die er so leicht davon lies. Also mus der from Christus auch am ersten ein ebrecher werden, ehe er starb.

"1) Die Worte nach dicebant: *n̄rō stat* sind undeutlich. Vgl. Joh. 4, 27: *Nemo tamen dixit: Quid quaeris, aut quid loqueris cum ea?*" [The words after *dicebant: n̄rō stat* are unclear. Compare St. John 4, 27: Yet nobody said, 'What are You seeking?', or, 'What are You talking about with her?']<sup>2</sup>

In both instances we have reproduced the item completely. There is no context. It is simply a briefly scribbled note of part of a conversation, none too intelligibly recorded or transmitted, with several important words illegible. But the Rev. Mr. Ginder's confident quotation indicates none of this.

Whence do we have this snatch of table talk? It was originally recorded by a friend of blessed Martin Luther, the Rev. John Schlaginhausen (or Schleinhausen, or even, translated into Latin and Greek after the fashion of the times, Turbicida, Ochloplektes, Typtochlios). We know little of him. The careful research of G. Bossert indicates that he was probably born in the Upper Palatinate; that he probably matriculated at the University of Wittenberg in 1520; that he took a Master's degree in philosophy; that he was a guest in the Luther household from November, 1531, until the fall of 1532; that then he became rector of the parish of Zahna and a year later rector of St. James' Church, Köthen; that Duke Wolfgang appointed him Superintendent of the churches in the Duchy of Anhalt-Köthen; and that he died some time after 1549.<sup>3</sup> He seems to have recorded the particular item that we are discussing between April 7 and May 1, 1532.<sup>4</sup> The sole manuscript containing this item is a quarto volume that found a final resting

place in the State Library at Munich, where it was catalogued as *Codex latinus 943*. The page containing our item was copied from an earlier copy—possibly Schlaginhaufen's original manuscript—between November 4, 1551, and some time in 1567.<sup>5</sup> The copyist may have been Schlaginhaufen's son-in-law, the Rev. John Oberndorfer of Ratisbon.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the "hair-raising blasphemy" turns out to be an inaccurately translated version of a somewhat uncertain, uncontrolled and unverifiable quotation of an offhand remark of blessed Martin Luther, without a shred of context or any indication of the circumstances that evoked the words it purports to reproduce. Since the item was destined to remain in manuscript form for 356 years after it was set down, it is quite probable that blessed Martin Luther himself never saw what Schlaginhaufen had written down.

## II

We shall now let Luther himself answer the Rev. Mr. Ginder's question, "Did Martin Luther believe that Jesus was God?" and at the same time illuminate the statement that Schlaginhaufen attributes to the great Reformer, by quoting a few of the almost endless passages to which we might turn.

At the outset we may note that for anyone familiar with Luther's German the word *from* in the last sentence of the item would have supplied the key, because *fromm* in Luther does not mean primarily "pious, religious, devout, God-fearing," as it does in modern German, but "morally righteous, holy."

Turning to Luther himself, we begin with the *Operationes in Psalmos* of 1519—21:

"We have said that Christ became sin for us, that, God deserting [Him], He became, although without guilt, in all things like the very worst (*novissimo*) sinner, into whose conscience the very wrath of God penetrated and drove to desperation."<sup>7</sup>

"And this is that rich mystery of divine grace toward sinners, that by an astonishing interchange (*admirabili commertio*) our sins are henceforth not our own, but they are Christ's, and the righteousness of Christ is not Christ's, but ours. For He emptied Himself of it, that He might clothe us and fill us with it, and He replenished Himself with what was ours, so that He might empty

us of it, in such a way that Christ's righteousness should henceforth be ours not only objectively (*obiective*), as they say, but also formally (*formaliter*), just as our sins are Christ's not only objectively but also formally. For in the same way that He mourns and is brought to confusion (*confunditur*) through our sins, in just that way we rejoice and boast in His righteousness, but He Himself mourns on their account also formally, as we see here."<sup>8</sup>

We turn next to the *Deuteronomion Mosi cum annotationibus* of 1525:

"If everyone who is hanged is accursed by God, as Moses teaches, then Christ also is the accursed of God. And if everybody who is hanged is a criminal (*facinorosus*), then Christ also is a criminal. Therefore the issue under discussion ought not to have been how Christ was without sin, but how Christ had sin. Again, the issue under discussion ought not to have been how the Blessed One could not have been subjected to execution by hanging, but how He was and could be subjected thereto.

"St. Paul solves the entire difficulty by this one word, in that he says, 'He became a curse FOR US.' *For us*, I repeat, not for Himself. By this word he teaches once more that there are two ways in which a person can have sin and have God's curse descend on him. One way is on one's own account and because of one's own sin, in which category all persons other [than Christ] belong; the other way is on account of others and because of somebody else's sin, in which category Christ belongs exclusively by Himself (*solus et unus Christus*). In Psalm 68 [69:9] He says: 'The reproaches of them that reproach You have fallen on Me.' And Isaiah 53: 'He Himself carried our sins.' And again: 'I have beaten Him because of My people's sins' and 'The Lord willed to crush Him on account of our sins'; and so forth. If therefore somebody is hanged either on his own account or on account of others, the simple understanding of the statute remains, that everybody who is hanged on account of sin is accursed by God. Therefore Christ in bearing our sin for us truly became accursed, in the literal meaning of the text. In exactly the same way He was circumcised and subjected to the whole Law on our account, since, as far as He Himself was concerned, He was free from all Law. So He who knew no sin became sin, that *we* might be the right-

eousness of God in Him, 2 Corinthians 6 [5:21]. So He who knew no curse became a curse, that *we* might in Him be the blessing of God."<sup>9</sup>

In a sermon of 1526, on "Das Euangelion am ersten Sonntag der Dreyualtickeit," we find this comment:

"This is what St. Paul says to the Romans in the eighth chapter: 'Out of sin He condemned sin.' He has condemned sin with sin, put death to flight with death, conquered Law with Law. How is that? Amid knaves He became a sinner on the cross with its superscription; as an archvillain (*ertzboswicht*) He suffers the judgment and the penalty that a sinner ought to suffer. He was innocent, He never committed any sin, and the two were not over Him either in name or in deed (*noch waren die zwey uber yhm der name mit der that*). That means that He has become a sinner; that He loaded them on Himself, even though they were not His own; and that He annihilated sin through precisely those sins which He thus loaded on Himself and for which He let Himself be judged and condemned as a criminal. If one looks at Him on the cross with eyes of reason, He is an evildoer, because He was punished by God in such a way that the Jews said that He was deserted by God. There you have nothing but sin and the shape (*gestalt*) of the serpent; nevertheless He is innocent, just as the bronze serpent was innocent, yes, more than that, salutary. Even though He is altogether salutary and innocent, He is nevertheless the equal of a sinner, so that only the shape is there, and through His sin He helps us out of our sin."<sup>10</sup>

From another sermon at the end of the same year, on "Die Epistel des Propheten Jesaia, so man in der Christmesse lieset," we take this remark:

"A means had to be found and devised whereby He could simultaneously be born of a woman and yet not be born of the flesh. That took place in this way: His mother had to be born<sup>11</sup> not by the power and the inborn nature of the flesh, but supernaturally, by the particular power of the Holy Ghost. That is, His mother had to be a virgin and had to become pregnant without the co-operation of a male, as we confess in the Creed: 'Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,' and so forth. Thus it was possible for Him to be a human being without sin and the Lord

of sin, and sin could not have Him under itself from the first moment of His humanity. For it was also fitting that God's Son be born in this way, because it could not be that God's Son were under sin; otherwise God Himself would have become a sinner and would have needed a Redeemer, just as we do. Who, then, could have helped us?"<sup>12</sup>

In a sermon on the Sunday after Christmas from the year 1522, Luther declares that St. Mary "is not chosen a virgin for her own sake, but for Christ's sake, in that He wanted such a woman to be His mother that He could be born of her without sin, which would have been impossible unless she were a virgin woman (*iungfrewlich weyb*), who would become pregnant and bear without the co-operation of a male."<sup>13</sup>

### III

It may be well to observe at this point that in his concern that the deity of our Lord be given an altogether indisputable theological basis, Luther regularly refers to the blessed Virgin Mary as the mother of God. Thus in his exposition of the Magnificat, he asserts:

"The 'great things' are nothing else than that she has become the mother of God (*gotis mutter*), in which work so many and great benefits have been given to her that no one can comprehend them. For thence arises all honor and all bliss (*selickeit*), that of all human kind she is a unique person above all others, peerless, in that she has conceived a Child—and such a Child!—by the heavenly Father. . . . Therefore you have comprehended all her distinction in a single word when you call her the mother of God, and no one can say anything greater about her or to her, though he had as many tongues as there are leaves or blades of grass, stars in the heavens, or sand in the ocean."<sup>14</sup>

In the Postil of 1522 he says in a sermon on the nativity of the blessed Virgin Mary: "Behold, here you have the honor of the mother of God, that she is a special child of God, endowed and graced above all women. We also shall call her a gracious lady."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, eleven years later, in a sermon on the visitation of the blessed Virgin Mary, delivered in 1533, he declares: "Mary is the mother of God (*mater Dei*), and she knew she is and she believes. Elizabeth knew it, too. Therefore she is meetly called lady above



all empresses. But she is no prouder by so much as one hair. Indeed, she even gives herself up to menial duties and becomes a maid, stays there till St. John is born."<sup>16</sup>

In *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* (1539), Luther affirms that the Angelic Salutation (Luke 1:28), the greeting of St. Elizabeth (Luke 1:42), the good tidings of the Christmas angel (Luke 2:11), and St. Paul's words in Gal. 4:4 afford "sufficiently certain proof—that I know right well—that Mary is the mother of God."<sup>17</sup>

In *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* (1543), he says: "It is necessary, if our faith is to be right, that in the moment that Mary spoke her word of consent to the Angel Gabriel and said, 'Let it happen to me according to your word,' Christ, our Lord, was simultaneously God and a complete human being in a single person, as the beloved Fathers at the Council of Ephesus affirmed against Nestorius. For if it were not so, she could not be called *Theotokos*, the mother of God, nor could Christ be called her son."<sup>18</sup>

In the same strain he consistently affirms the perpetual virginity of the mother of God. In the opening sentence of *Das Jhesus Christus eyn geborner Jude sey*, Luther passionately denies the "new lie" that he had preached and written that "Mary, the mother of God, had not been a virgin before and after [our Lord's] birth, but that she had Christ by Joseph and other children after Him."<sup>19</sup> In the same tract he also says: "The Scripture affirms consistently (*bleybt da bey*) that she was a virgin before and in bearing, for God stood in dire need (*nodlich bedurft*) of her virginity that He might give us the blessed Seed of promise without any sin."<sup>20</sup>

In a sermon of December 26, 1540, Luther affirms that Is. 7:10 ff. "sets her before [our] eyes as a virgin both in conceiving and in giving birth (*cum conceptione et nativitate*). . . . She remains a virgin when she conceived and when she brought forth."<sup>21</sup> On December 31 of the same year he says in another sermon: "She became neither ill nor weak, but immediately after giving birth she could have walked, and her Son did not violate her virginity, but rather confirmed it (*sed plus gestercket*)."<sup>22</sup>

On occasion he goes even farther in speaking of the mother of God, as when on Christmas Day, 1533, he preached a sermon to

his household in which he said that God "infused the flesh, the body and the soul, of Mary full of the Holy Ghost, so that she might be without sin (*an sunde*)." <sup>23</sup>

Luther apostrophizes St. Joseph in a sermon of 1540: "Do not be offended because she is pregnant. She is a pure virgin and purer than when she was betrothed to you. And nevertheless she is a mother. The Holy Ghost is working in her, and He has taken in addition what is necessary to an offspring (*fructus*), so that this foetus should be the Son of God. I think you have a pure bride all right! Here is a sevenfold purity, a hundred, a ten thousand [fold], an immeasurable purity, above all the purities of virgins, because the Holy Ghost purified her and made her meet (*dignam*) that her flesh and blood should give a human nature to the Son of God." <sup>24</sup>

#### IV

We return to our main line of evidence. In 1527 there was published *Eine gute predigt, Von der krafft der Himelfahrt Christi*, in which blessed Martin Luther declared:

"Just as the Law takes us captive, so sin also takes us captive. . . . What, then, shall we do to it so that we get rid of it? Look at Christ; He has taken captivity captive, He has taken one sin away through another. How so? He became a sinner, yes, sin itself, and so He has taken away the sin of the world through His sin. St. Paul speaks of this to the Romans, chapter 8: 'God sent His Son in the shape of sinful flesh and through sin condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteousness demanded by the Law would be fulfilled in us.' And in 2 Corinthians 5: 'God has made Him who knew of no sin, sin for us so that in Him we should become the righteousness that counts before God.'

"Thus you hear that through His sin Christ takes away and condemns the sin of the world. But it is a strange and marvelous way of speaking: Sin takes sin away, sin condemns sin. Would it not have been said more nicely: Righteousness takes sin away, and by His righteousness Christ has taken away and condemned the sin of the world? No! Why? Because the sin and punishment of the whole world lies upon Christ's neck, St. John 1: 'Behold, that is the Lamb of God which takes on itself the world's sin.' There He stands caught under sin, is accounted according to the

Law of Moses an accursed person and regarded as the worst sinner, hangs as an archknave (*ertzbube*) between two murderers. Thus the passage of the lxxix. Psalm has been fulfilled, 'The insult of those who insult you has fallen on Me,' and in the xxxii. Psalm it says: 'I confess My sin, and I do not hide My misdeeds.' Christ speaks these very words, and He speaks them as a sinner.

"But if Christ has not committed any sin, and if no deception has been found in His mouth, how is He then a sinner? According to His person, He is no sinner, but He is pure, holy, just, yes, righteousness itself, and so forth. But He is the Lamb of God that has taken my and your and all the world's sin on itself, and in order to make satisfaction for them, He has poured out His precious blood. Thus Christ by means of His sin, which He took on Himself, has torn up and driven away all the sin in the world. If you believe on Him, His sin is so powerful that it consumes and condemns your sin."<sup>25</sup>

Very close both in point of time and in mode of expression to the item under discussion is the lecture which blessed Martin Luther delivered on September 12, 1531, on Galatians 3. We have the essence of these lectures in the notes taken by George Rörer. In 1535 some of the great Reformer's disciples expanded the notes on these lectures into the famous *Commentary on Galatians*. Rörer's notes on Gal. 3:13 read in part:

"Paul fortified his words well: Made a curse not for Himself, but for us. Emphasis on 'us.' Christ innocent. Every robber (*latro*) ought to be hanged. Therefore Christ, because He bore the person (*personam*) of every robber. I ought to die and be damned. Christ does this. Therefore it is proper for Christ to be (*facere*) a robber and so forth. The prophets saw these things, that the Christ who was to come was to be the greatest robber, blasphemer, desecrator (*sacrilegus*), thief (*fur*) of all, because He no longer bore His own person. Christ was not born in divinity from the Virgin, but a sinner who perpetrated and committed all our sins; not that He Himself [did them], but should have committed them (*com-miserit*) [over this word, Rörer has added, "*quod commissa a nobis susceperit*, that He should have assumed those committed by us"] in His own body. And so it is understood that someone else, who (was) among thieves, even though innocent. When all the more

if of His own accord and by the will of the Father He wanted to share the body and the blood of those who were robbers, sinners. Therefore submerged in all.

"This is to be noted well. You see how at once from the start reason labors so that it makes Christ nothing else than separate from sins and sinners, so that he is an Example that can be imitated and to make Him a Judge. But we ought to roll (*involvere*) Christ up and to know that as He is rolled up in flesh and blood, so also in sins, death, and all penalties. If I deny the sinner, I deny the Crucified. But since our Creed says, 'Suffered, and so forth, under Pontius,' if this is not absurd, then this is also not: Sinner of sinners. 'Lamb of God.' And indeed He is innocent, but His innocence pays for the sins of the whole world, because at the same time defendant (*reus*) on account of all the sins of the world. Whatever things at all that I have done ill are so much Christ's own that He Himself has done them.

"They have obscured this insight, which Paul and the Prophets have transmitted. 'On Him'<sup>26</sup> and so forth. God is not joking in His words; He is speaking with great love (*charitate*) and seriously that the Lamb ought to carry the iniquity of us all. To be punished, because they are imputed to Him. As He says in the Psalm: 'Because I have sinned against Thee.' The whole Psalm speaks in the person of Christ: 'My sin, My folly (*insipientiam*).' They are Christ's statements, not of an innocent one, but of one who has assumed the person of all sinners. Therefore He has been made defendant on account of all things. Thus not only death is laid on Him there, but by the love of God sin also; this done, the Law comes along: 'If You want to bear sin, be the Defendant, bear the penalty, too!' Since He took sin on Him, He therefore bears the cross. Therefore Paul correctly declares: 'Everyone who hangs on a tree (*ligno*) is God's accursed.'

"This is our highest consolation, so to roll Christ up in the sins of the whole world and to behold Him bearing the sins. So beheld, one easily puts aside the fanatical opinions of works-righteousness. They operate (*ghen ber*) with their faith-informed-by-love; they want to take away [sins] through the works of the Law, of love. What about this? To extricate and disentangle Christ from sins, and to make Him innocent, and to load ourselves with our sins,

and I see my sin in myself and not in Christ. This is to do away with Christ. If therefore it be true that we cast off sins by the Law, then one does not carry them to Christ. But if the other be true, that the Lamb of God has been made a curse and rolled up in our sins, then it is not necessary for us to be justified by love, because my sins are not laid upon me but upon the Son of God. But the entire Scripture and the Creed: 'I believe in Jesus Christ for us.'

"That is the most joyous doctrine that we possess this inestimable mercy of God, that God saw us oppressed by the Law, held in the curse. 'You be (*Tu sis*) Peter the denier, and Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and the adulterer David, and You be the person of all men and commit (*feceris*) the sins of all men. Then you figure out how to solve it and to make satisfaction for them.'" <sup>27</sup>

From 1537 we have the following paragraphs out of *Etliche Capitel St. Johannis*:

"The pernicious devil . . . cannot bear this article of the Godhead and the manhood of Christ, but Christ must be true God, as the Holy Scripture testifies mightily about Him, and St. Paul in particular says that in Him the entire fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, otherwise we are damned forever. Thus also, according to His manhood, He must be a true, physical (*natürlicher*) Son of the Virgin Mary, from whom He has taken flesh and blood in the same way that another child takes them from its mother. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, who came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, St. Luke, Chapter 1, but the pure (*reine*) Virgin Mary had to co-operate by giving of her seed and her physical blood which flowed down from her heart, so that He took everything from her that a normal child takes from its mother, yet without sin. This we must believe, otherwise we are lost. . . ." <sup>28</sup>

"We believe Holy Writ, and with the holy Christendom that has ever been and will ever be until the end of the world we confess that this article of our holy Christian faith, together with all the others, is firmly and mightily established by explicit testimonies of the holy Prophets and Apostles, through whom the Holy Ghost has spoken, that Christ, our Lord and God, took upon Himself a genuine human nature, not a spook (*gespenst*), and became a natural human being like anyone else that has flesh and

blood; that He did not flit around like a spook, but lived among people, and so forth, and had eyes, ears, mouth, nose, chest, abdomen, hands and feet, like me and you; that He drew milk from His mother's breasts; that she took care of Him like any other child; that He acted like any other human being; that He is true man, born of the Virgin Mary, except that He was not born in sins, as we are; that He likewise did not commit any sin; and that no deception was found in His mouth. . . .<sup>29</sup>

"Here is God's only Son, of whom Isaiah says that He did no one any wrong, and, as St. Peter asserts, who did not commit any sin, neither was any deception found in His mouth, that is, everything that He did and said and thought, and so forth, was good, profitable, and salutary. So now all believers from the beginning of the world until its end are hallowed and made children of God, however highly (*als hoch*) they may otherwise have been enlightened and endowed with divine gifts, not through their own sanctity, miracles, and praiseworthy deeds, but through this only-begotten Son of the Father, of whom alone St. John says that He is full of grace and truth, as the One through whom alone they are redeemed from the curse and made blessed. . . .<sup>30</sup>

"Adam fell into sin through his disobedience and violation of the divine commandment. Thereby his body and his soul have been corrupted, so that he is full of sin, wrath, and disgrace (*ungnade*). He has bequeathed this misery and frightful corruption to all his posterity, that is, to the whole human race, so that, just as he fell into sin and became subject to death, all of us must trace our descent from him, join him in bearing sin, all sorts of misfortunes, and the death that is the penalty of sins, even though we have contributed nothing thereto beyond being born of the sinful flesh that was his after the Fall. . . . All children are conceived in their mothers' wombs, carried about and born in sins, for they are begotten of sinful seed and vicious flesh, not in the sense that we have committed sin, but in the sense that we are descended from him who once sinned.

"St. Paul goes on: 'As through the disobedience of one person many became sinners, so' again 'through the obedience of one person,' Jesus Christ, who was the only human being in grace, 'many become righteous.' Christ alone, he wants to say, is holy,

righteous, full of grace and truth, who did the will of the Father, as it is written in the 40th Psalm: 'I gladly do Your will, My God.' 'And obeyed Him to the point of death on the cross.' We all are beneficiaries of this our Lord's grace, truth, holiness and righteousness. He puts His Word in our mouth and faith in our heart, so that we are loyal to Him, know that He 'washes us clean through the washing of water in the Word,' and also communicates to us the grace and the righteousness that are His. . . . That is what 'grace for grace' means, that we are really pleasing to the Father for the Lord Christ's sake, and that through Christ we obtain the Holy Ghost and become righteous."<sup>31</sup>

On April 1 and 2, 1540, blessed Martin Luther preached twice at the Baptism of Bernhard of Anhalt at Dessau. In the course of the first sermon, he said:

"Why does [Jesus] come to be baptized, since there is no sin, or impurity, about Him, which Baptism is to take away? That will be a blessed Baptism! St. John has here a sinner who has no sin as far as His own person is concerned and who is yet the greatest Sinner, who has and carries the sin of all the world. For that reason also He lets Himself be baptized, and in that act confesses that He is a sinner, yet not for Himself, but for us. For He appears here in my person and yours and stands in the place of all of us who are sinners. And because all—notably the proud saints—do not want to be sinners, He must become a sinner for all, take upon Himself the shape of sinful flesh, and, as many Psalms witness, lament upon the cross in His Passion about the burden of the sins that He carries, and say, Psalm 40: 'My sins have laid hold on Me that I cannot see; they are more numerous than the hairs on My head.' And Psalm 41: 'Lord, be gracious to Me, heal My soul, for I have sinned against You.' And Psalm 69: 'God, You know My folly, and My trespasses are not hid from You.' Again: 'The insults of those who insult you fall on Me.' And Psalm 22: 'My God, why have You deserted Me?'

"In these as in other Psalms Christ speaks in the person of a sinner (*in einer sundlichen person*). Wherein, then, has He sinned, or how has He come to be a sinner? He has come thereto as Isaiah says of Him in the 53d chapter: 'The Lord cast all our sins upon Him.' For when, as the Prophet says, 'All of us went

astray like sheep,' then God devised this plan, took the sin of all men and laid it upon the neck of Him who alone was altogether without sin. And thus He becomes the great, yes, the greatest and the only sinner upon earth and no one else beside Him. For the text says that the Lord cast the sin of all of us upon Him.

"Now because He has become such a sinner who has the sin of all of us lying upon Him, He indeed stands in need of Baptism and must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, not for His own person, which is innocent and stainless, but because of us, whose sin He bears. These He plunges into Baptism and washes them from Himself, that is, from us, in whose person He appears, that in His Baptism they might all go under and drown."<sup>32</sup>

## V

The evidence is thus conclusive:

1. That blessed Martin Luther held tenaciously throughout his career to both the perfect deity and the perfect manhood of our blessed Lord from the first moment of His incarnation to His atoning death and His subsequent exaltation;
2. That he believed in the personal *de facto* sinlessness of our Lord from the first moment of His conception in the womb of the mother of God;
3. That he took with complete seriousness the full implications of the Incarnation and the Atonement as the divine revelation sets them forth; and that therefore the cited tabletalk, in so far as it has been correctly transmitted, is simply a somewhat more vivid formulation of these implications than the parallels that we have quoted above contain.

St. Louis, Mo.

## NOTES

1. D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden, 2. Band (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1913), p. 107. References to Luther's works are hereunder cited according to the Weimar edition (WA).
2. Wilhelm Preger, ed., *Tischreden Luthers aus den Jahren 1531 und 1532 nach den Aufzeichnungen von Johann Schlaginhausen* (Leipzig: Dörfling und Franke, 1888), pp. 71—72.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. v—ix.
4. E. Kroker, in WA, *Tischreden*, 2, 107.
5. Preger, pp. iv—v.
6. *Ibid.*, p. x.
7. WA, 5, 607.



8. WA, 5, 608.
9. WA, 14, 699—700.
10. WA, 20, 430—431.
11. Editors of Luther are generally agreed that this is a slip for "had to become pregnant."
12. WA, 19, 151; see also 24, 396.
13. WA, 10 I 1, 357; see also 10 I 1, 67 and 53, 640.
14. WA, 7, 572—573
15. WA, 10 III, 325.
16. WA, 37, 93—94.
17. WA, 50, 591—592.
18. WA, 53, 642—643
19. WA, 11, 314.
20. WA, 11, 320.
21. WA, 49, 182.
22. WA, 49, 186
23. WA, 37, 231; see also 17 II, 288 and 53, 640.
24. WA, 49, 173.
25. WA, 23, 710—712.
26. The reference is to Is. 53:6.
27. WA, 40, 433—437. For an English translation of the subsequent expansion of these notes see Philip S. Watson, ed., *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians Based on Lectures Delivered by Martin Luther . . . in the Year 1531* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1953), pp.269 to 272
28. WA, 46, 555.
29. WA, 46, 634.
30. WA, 46, 640.
31. WA, 46, 656—657.
32. WA, 49, 120.