

# **LUTHER'S TABLE TALK**

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Luther's Table talk by Martin Luther

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**MARTIN LUTHER**

**LUTHER'S  
TABLE TALK**



Companions for a Quiet Hour.

I.

A COMPANION TO THE LORD'S TABLE.

II.

PRIVATE THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

III.

AN INFALLIBLE WAY TO CONTENTMENT.

IV.

LUTHER'S TABLE TALK.

## PREFACE.

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THE history of the book known to us as "Luther's Table Talk" is briefly this:—

Anthony Lauterbach, a friend and formerly a pupil of Luther at Wittenberg, was in the habit of noting down the doctor's familiar discourses with Philip Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, John Bugenhagen, and others. In the pictorial life of the Reformer by Gustav König, one of the pictures presents Luther in his garden with his family and several guests, while Lauterbach is busily taking notes even of the informal talk of this time of recreation. This accords with

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the tradition as to the real historical origin of this biographical record.

In 1569, Doctor John Aurifaber having obtained these manuscript notes of Anthony Lauterbach, added many other discourses, and, arranging the whole under certain Loci Communes, or Common Places, published them at Eisleben. In his preface, after making reference to the manuscript notes, he says: "And whereas I, Johannes Aurifaber, in the years 1545 and 1546, before the death of that most famous divine, Luther, was much with and about him, and with all diligence writ and noted down many most excellent histories and acts, and other most necessary and useful things which he related: I have, therefore, set in order and brought the same also into this tome."

The book had wide circulation, and was deemed to have so great influence in supporting the cause of the Reformation, that the Pope, Gregory XIII., induced the Emperor Rudolf II.

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to issue an edict that all copies should be burned, and that it should be death for any person to possess a copy.

In consequence of this edict being carried out with great rigour, the work became excessively scarce. But in the year 1626, Captain Henry Bell, when on a mission on some State business for King James I., obtained from a German gentleman a copy which was said to have been wonderfully preserved, and accidentally discovered in making some alteration in his house. The edict still being in force, the possessor was glad to allow this copy to go to England, where Captain Bell translated it.

The book had a singular history before it saw the light. Archbishop Laud heard of it, and desired to see both the original and the translation. After retaining them for two years, he sent the books with a message through his chaplain, and fifty livres in gold, promising to obtain an order from King Charles for the



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printing of the work. When the Archbishop fell into his troubles nothing more was heard of this order; but the House of Commons, having notice of the translation, sent for Captain Bell to appear before a Committee, sitting in the Treasury Chamber. Sir Edward Deering, being chairman, said he knew a learned German, then beneficed in Essex, Mr. Paul Amiraux, to whom he would like the work to be referred. The report being favourable, the Committee then referred the translation to two members of the Assembly of Divines then sitting at Westminster—Edward Corbet, of Merton College, Oxford, and Charles Herle (who was President or Prolocutor after Dr. Twisse). These divines made report that they found it an excellent work, whereupon the House of Commons, on the 24th February, 1646, gave order that it should be printed.

A second edition appeared in 1791, with a preface by John Ryland, of Northampton, and

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a life of Luther by Dr. John Gottlieb Burckhardt, Minister of the German Lutheran Church at the Savoy, London. It was published by subscription, in forty-five numbers, at 6*d.* each, appearing weekly, the whole forming a large folio of 502 pages, with xxiv. pages of prefatory matter. A reprint forms one of Bohn's series of volumes.

Our selection of extracts is made from the second edition. The title-page informs us that in addition to the original notes there are "all sorts of comforts, advices, prophecies, admonitions, directions, and instructions." Dr. Aurifaber knew that there was a great demand for everything connected with Luther, and he included in his book much that is of slight value, and much that ought never to have been put on record. Some of the subjects also have lost their interest for modern readers, such as those which relate to the petty potentates and the wars of the time, the temporal power of the

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papacy, and "the Turks," who then formed a real menace to Christendon. There is also much repetition even on questions of more permanent interest, so that a brief selection from the large volume seems sufficient to present the real opinions and words of Luther concerning points most important to the Christian Church. And the reader will agree with Dr. Aurifaber, who says, "These most profitable discourses of Luther, containing such high spiritual things, we should in no wise suffer to be lost, but worthily esteem thereof, whereout all manner of learning, joy, and comfort may be had and received."