

# The Reformer Remembers—Luther and his Father (June 5, 1530)

## Abstract

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Around 1482, Hans Luder (Luther) (d. 1530) brought his wife, Margarethe, from Eisenach (her birthplace) to Eisleben, where their son, Martin Luther, was born in 1483. In 1484, Hans moved with his wife and one year-old son to the area around the town of Mansfeld, where he first entered the business of mining, then of smelting copper from the local mines. Hans Luder did well enough to send Martin to the university at Erfurt. Martin studied there from 1501 to 1505, at which point he broke off his studies and dedicated himself to the monastic life—a decision that angered Hans. On June 5, 1530, after the death of his father, Martin Luther wrote to his Wittenberg colleague and collaborator, Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560). In this letter (reproduced below), Luther begs for more news from the Diet of Augsburg (1530). At the end, he reminisces about his father’s role in his life and his new status as the eldest of the Luthers.

## Source

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### Martin Luther to Philipp Melanchthon

[Coburg Castle] June 5, 1530

Grace and peace in Christ! In my last letter, my dear Philipp, I told you that we were chagrined that [all of] you let the messenger return to us without letters, since there are so many of you and almost everyone knows how to write. And now you have let yet another messenger return without letters, first it was Apel’s messenger, and now it’s the Coburg waggoner who brought the venison. I really cannot determine whether all of you are [indeed] so negligent or whether you are in some way displeased, since you must know that we are here in the desert, as in a parched land, and that we are thirsting for your letters, from which we wish to learn everything about your affairs. We have of course heard that the Emperor has ordered the Augsburgers to dismiss their soldiers and remove the chains barricading the streets.

The day before yesterday Argula von Staufen was here, and she told us of the unimaginable pomp with which the Duke of Bavaria received the Emperor in Munich, with theater plays and other newfangled honors. Moreover, the people in Nuremberg are beginning to convince us that the Emperor will not come to the Diet [*Reichstag*], and that the Diet will continue to be useless, namely because of the zeal and cunning of the bishops. If this were to happen, it would be a sign of God’s implacable wrath toward the bishops, it would be as though God did not wish to hear the prayers we offered for them.

If opinions on my book [*Admonition to the Clergy Assembled at the Diet of Augsburg*] diverge, do not be troubled by that. My God is the God of fools and mocks the wise. Therefore I do not concern myself with them.

Today Hans Reinicke wrote me that my dearest father, the old Hans Luther, departed this life on Exaudi Sunday [May 29, 1530] at one o’clock in the morning. This death has cast me into deep grief, since I have thought back not only on his nature, but also on his heartfelt love; for, through him, my creator endowed me with all that I am and have. And though it comforts me that he [Reinicke] writes that my father passed away gently, strong in his faith in Christ, the pain and memory of my affectionate relationship with him shakes me to the core, such that I have rarely ever despised death so much. But “the righteous man is taken away from the evil to come, and he shall enter into peace” [Isa. 57:1], that is, we often die [many times] before we truly die.

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I now assume the legacy of the name, in that I am the oldest Luther in my family. Now I must follow him, not by chance but by rightful choice, through death into the Kingdom of Christ; may this [kingdom] be granted to all of us by him, for whose sake we are more miserable than all humans and a nuisance to the whole world.

I am, truth be told, too sad to keep on writing, for it is worthy and proper that I, as a son, should grieve for such a father, from whom the Father of Mercies [II Cor. 1:3] brought me forth, and though whose sweat he [the Father of Mercies] nourished me and formed me into what I am. I am truly glad that he lived long enough to behold the light of the truth. Praise be to God in all his acts and plans, for all eternity, Amen. More at another time. Greetings to all of ours. On the day of the Pentecost, 1530.

Martinus Luther D.

Source: The letter was originally written in Latin. For the Latin original, please see “Luther an Melanchthon. [Veste Coburg,] 5. Juni 1530,” in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*. Weimarer Ausgabe (Sonderedition). Part 3: *Briefwechsel*. Vol. 5, pp. 350–51.

Translation: This English translation by Thomas Dunlap is based on the German version published as, “An Melanchthon. [Veste Coburg,] 5. Juni 1530,” in Martin Luther, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Vol. 6, Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1995, pp. 117–19.

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